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István Keul (Ed.)

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OF TANTRA IN ASIA
AND BEYOND**

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István Keul

Thimphu, June 2011

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Introduction

ISTVÁN KEUL

The field of tantric studies is constantly growing, nourished by the contributions of scholars from various academic disciplines using a broad array of theoretical and methodological approaches. An intensified exchange of ideas among these scholars is not only desirable but downright imperative. And that was the goal of a conference hosted in December 2008 by the Department for the Study of Religions at the Freie Universität Berlin: to provide a forum for dialogue and discussion among specialists from various disciplines who are pursuing topics that can be subsumed under the heading “tantric studies” in its broadest sense.

The theme of the conference was broadly defined and offered an opportunity for participants to discuss both ongoing and earlier projects. In order to achieve this, less emphasis was placed on an overarching thematic rigor. Instead, the participants were invited to present on processes of transformation and transfer that are discernable in the centuries-old history of tantra. This guideline proved extremely productive, not only in terms of the quality of the presented papers and the fruitful discussions they led to, but also – we hope – with respect to the present volume.

In addition to the conference papers, other scholars were invited to contribute essays from their respective areas of study.¹ The resulting volume offers a good insight into the diversity of perspectives, topics, and methods in the field, as well as its geographic breadth. In compiling the collection care was taken not to subject the contributors to an editorial wind tunnel of any kind in order to attempt to produce a more streamlined end product. Only a certain degree of bulkiness can do justice to the subject and the many perspectives in it.

Thus the present volume is conceived as a contribution to the further development of the broad, transdisciplinary field of tantric studies. An idea of the complexity and breadth of the field emerges in an overview of the

1 These scholars are Loriliai Biernacki, Jeffrey Kripal, Hugh Urban, and Kennet Granholm.

various themes and approaches, as the following summary of the individual contributions shows.

South Asia

In recent years, scholars have attempted to more precisely delimit the concept of tantra.² Many of the essays in this volume, too, have taken up similar questions, reflecting on the implications and ramifications of this concept and outlining the authors' own perspectives, often developed on the basis of concrete case studies. In the collection's first essay Annette Wilke has provided a comprehensive treatment of the diverse valences of the tantra concept. The thematic areas that, in her view, together constitute the diffuse research field of tantric studies are the outcome of complex academic and non-academic negotiations. This includes the discourses of "othering" in India and in the West; the history of academic tantra research; tantra as a totalizing or summarizing conception rather than a homogeneous category; tantra as a broad, temporally bound "zeitgeist" phenomenon from a quasi millennium (500-1300) of South Asian history, in which it straddled traditions and offered alternatives. For Wilke the predominant focus on Kaula sexual rites in Western research on tantra is problematic, because it obscures the phenomenon's polyvalence (including its *āgamic* and *mantric* roots) and inhibits an understanding of the processes of transformation and merging. A detailed analysis of the South Indian ritual handbook *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (PKS) and of the commentaries on this handbook documents the rich layering and multi-directionality of just these processes. The PKS and its commentaries form part of the Kaula tradition. At the same time they display typically Kaula features, such as the *pañcamakāra*, as being perfectly compatible with the Vedic system. The intermediate, hybrid, and composite character of the PKS (seen as an example for typical Hindu tantric blending) is evident in the fact that it is both a Śrīvidyā manual for the worship of the goddess Lalitā and a transformative text integrating early Kaula (and pre-Kaula) with Vedic teachings. While the PKS and its commentaries contain ele-

2 See, for example, DAVID GORDON WHITE, ed., *Tantra in Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) and *The Kiss of the Yogini: "Tantric Sex" in Its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003); HUGH B. URBAN, *Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); GAVIN FLOOD, *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006); GEOFFREY SAMUEL, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

ments of domestication and internalization, which have been described as general trends in the history of tantra, they also point in the opposite direction by emphasizing, for example, the importance of the ritual use of meat, liquor, and sexual intercourse. In more general terms, body practices do not preclude gnostification and interiorization; rather the two (apparently contradictory) approaches provide a basis for complex imaginations (“recodification of the natural,” “animation of the imaginary”) of embodied deification.

In his essay on the tantric sections of the mid-sixth century text *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* (attributed to the Buddhist monk Atikūṭa),³ Ronald Davidson lists the “minimum necessary requirements for Buddhist tantrism”: a gateway ritual, a *maṇḍala*, *homa* rituals, *mudrās* and *mantras*, and the admonishment to secrecy.⁴ Davidson identifies the first three and the last one of the work’s seventeen chapters as clearly tantric and belonging to the corpus of Uṣṇīṣa texts. The Uṣṇīṣa ritual system, diverse and well represented in Chinese texts (but also found in some Sanskrit and Tibetan sources), lost its importance as an independent system after the eighth century. The relevant text passages from Atikūṭa’s *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* include directions on how to construct a *maṇḍala*, how to consecrate a space, how the *ācārya* should perform the *abhiṣeka* rite for his disciples, plus instructions for performing various *homa* rituals. A comparison with an *abhiṣeka* described in the earlier *Amoghapāśaḥṛdaya* reveals differences in purpose between the two *abhiṣekas*, as well as differences in degree of secrecy. In spite of these differences, Davidson identifies “shared attributes of a ritual format,”⁵ and goes on to examine *abhiṣeka* rites in Śaiva and Pāñcarātra ritual manuals and other morphologically similar rites from *gr̥hyasūtras*. Rather than direct non-Buddhist/Hindu influences on tantric Buddhism⁶ and the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* ritual, Davidson focuses on the internal sources (the influence of the *dhāraṇī* scriptures) and external conditions (changing socio-political circumstances, the spread of *gr̥hya* and sectarian rituals

3 According to Davidson, this is an example of a threshold text: “Threshold texts incorporate both the prior and the subsequent materials into their discourses – in our case both Mahāyānist *dhāraṇī* materials and earliest tantric rites [...]” RONALD M. DAVIDSON, “Seventh Century Buddhist Tantrism in Tension with non-Buddhist Traditions: Ritual Choreography and Theistic Imagination,” paper presented at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto 2009.

4 See DAVIDSON, this volume, p. 77-97.

5 DAVIDSON, this volume, p. 88.

6 See ALEXIS SANDERSON, “The Śaiva Age – The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period,” in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. SHINGO EINOO (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 41-349.

to non-brahmanical areas, etc.), that lead to the development of tantric Buddhism.

Shaman Hatley's essay discusses the history of Mother goddesses (*mātṛs*, *mātṛkās*) in South Asia. Starting from popular divinities in various religious traditions of ancient India, he traces their development, through conceptual transformations, into the Seven Mothers in the Gupta period, to their roles in the emergence of the *yoginīs* in tantric Śaivism and of *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs* in early medieval tantric Buddhism. Kuṣāṇa-era (ca. 1-3rd century CE) sculptural evidence from the Mathura region, in addition to such important textual sources such as the *Mahābhārata* link the *mātṛs* with Skanda and Kubera. Some of these early Mother goddesses (Ṣaṣṭhī, Hārīti) were well known and worshipped in their own right. By the fifth century, a new configuration arises in the form of the brahmanical Seven Mothers (*saptamātṛkā*: Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī, and Cāmuṇḍā). In addition to their popularity in the elite traditions of the Gupta and post-Gupta period, the Seven, later Eight Mothers become closely connected to the medieval cult of the *yoginīs* in Tantric Śaivism. However, the diverse group of flying, often theriomorphic, shape-shifting, and extremely powerful *yoginīs* has in many respects clear continuities with the ancient Mother-goddess conceptions.⁷ In the early *Skandapurāṇa* (c. 6-7th century), descriptions of both a non-tantric and a tantric cult of the Mothers occur. For the latter, the text lists Śaiva *yāmalas*⁸ ("Union Tantras") and identifies them with the *mātṛtantras* ("Tantras of the Mother Goddesses") that contain rites that can be employed by (male) practitioners to acquire supernatural powers (*siddhis*). Mother goddesses appear in the *Mantrapūṭha* and *Vidyāpūṭha* texts of the *Bhairavatantras*, including the scriptures of the Kaula system. While the *yoginīs* are at the cultic focus of many of these Śaiva tantric texts, the *mātṛs* remain significant, for instance, as matriarchs of the *yoginī*-clans. Beyond the Hindu traditions, the Mothers appear as tantric goddesses in medieval Buddhism, as "wrathful Mothers," "Great Sky Mothers," or Mother goddesses associated with various cosmological regions. In later Buddhist texts *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs* come to the forefront, while Mother goddesses become less important. Still, Hatley cites numerous examples to illustrate a large variety of *mātṛ* and related traditions persisting in South Asia to the present day, in the "high,"

7 In addition, other ancient female deities have contributed to the *yoginīs*' formation, such as the *apsaras*, the *yakṣinī* and the *vidyādhari*.

8 One of these texts is the *Brahmayāmala*, several chapters of which have been edited and analysed by SHAMAN HATLEY, *The Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs, Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2007.

regional, and folk traditions of Hinduism, in Buddhist traditions in Nepal, perhaps even in Islamic contexts in Bengal.

Glen Hayes looks at the transformation of ideas, worldviews, and concepts in the tantric schools of Bengal, focusing on the period between the 17th and 19th centuries and on two distinct traditions: the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās and Kartābhajās. In the case of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the teaching lineage going back to Mukunda-deva (late 16th century) blends devotional elements from the Caitanya movement with the Nāth and Siddha tantric systems. In the texts of this tradition, the “inner Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā realms” generated by the practitioners in three ritual stages are conceptualized with the help of landscape-related metaphors as ponds connected by a river. The river is the central yogic channel that directs ritually transformed physiological substances, together with the practitioner’s consciousness, towards the attainment of cosmic unity. The places for ritual practices are referred to as villages or groves. The ritual system of this Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā tradition integrates Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava aesthetics, Caitanya *bhakti*, and tantric physiology. The dynamics of tantra in Bengal led to the development of later Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā branches, such as that of the Kartābhajās, which developed a large following in the nineteenth century. The dominant imagery in the esoteric texts composed by such Kartābhajā teachers as Dulālcānd reflects the mercantile context of this tradition. The world is a market place, the place of ritual practice is the “secret market,” and love is a good or “rice.” Instead of riverine images, the *cakra*-system and the *kundalinī* depict the flow of energies in the yogic body. The Kartābhajā tradition has been referred to as a popularized form of tantra, in which some of the central metaphors and ritual practices were remodeled in the changing context of colonial Bengal. However, some of the older Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions still seem to persist, for instance, among modern-day Bāuls.

June McDaniel’s contribution continues the investigation of Bengali tantra by looking at present-day practitioners from an anthropological perspective. Drawing on extended fieldwork in West Bengal, McDaniel argues that many of the popular (often unfavorable) representations of Śākta tantric practitioners are inaccurate, and the widely accepted characterizations, based mainly on medieval texts, do not accurately portray the living tradition. The picture that emerges from modern ethnographic research is diverse: Many tantrics are householders, often without gurus or lineages, or even any formal initiation. This despite the importance of initiation into the Kula lineage that is stressed by the *Kulārṇavatāntara*, a text regarded as the most important by McDaniel’s informants. The author distinguishes two major types of tantra in West Bengal: a text-based, classical tantra with mainly literate, high-caste practitioners, and a more popular, charismatic form called folk tantra, with low-caste practitioners who

communicate with the goddesses in their dreams and often engage in healing or astrological activities.⁹ The practitioners interviewed by McDaniel took a wide range of different paths into Śākta tantra. She also found that the position and characteristics of the female tantrics varied, and the negative assumptions connected to tantrics (insanity, black magic, cannibalism) could not be confirmed. But the *effects* of these stereotypes on the practitioners themselves were obvious. They are often targeted by communist and rationalist groups, for example, and are made scapegoats for local problems. Employed, householder tantrics maintain secrecy about their religious practices for fear of persecutions or the loss of their jobs. McDaniel's essay closes with reflections on the ways in which ethnography contributes to the field of tantric studies. The contemporary belief systems and social organizations of the tantric traditions, their manifold variants and trends call out for ethnographic research to help in more adequately mapping this multi-faceted field.

Dhūmāvati, one of the ten Mahāvīdyās, is the focus of Xenia Zeiler's essay. After outlining the development of the Daśamahāvīdyā group, the author looks at the Sanskrit sources that describe Dhūmāvati's principal features and her rituals. Although this goddess is first mentioned individually in sources datable to the 11th or 12th century (*Śāradātīlakatantra*), that is, before the formation of the group of ten Mahāvīdyās, in later sources (as late as the 19th century) she appears almost exclusively as member of the group. Quite interestingly, from the very beginning and throughout her textual history, Dhūmāvati remains connected to *siddhis* that may be used to render one's enemies harmless. A number of texts present visualizations and rituals of the dreadful and inapproachable deity. The *Phetkārīṇītantra* seems to have been the most influential. The goddess is described as a widow wearing ragged clothes and bearing a winnowing fan, with dishevelled hair and riding on a cart accompanied by a crow. Overall, Dhūmāvati's profile in the tantric textual tradition remains largely unchanged from the 11th or 12th to the 19th century. An important variation occurs, however, in the *Mantramahārṇava*, a text composed at the end of the 19th century. The relevant passages contain substantial additional information on the character, iconography, and functions of Dhūmāvati. While the tantric aspects of the goddess are preserved, her representation is complemented by a Mahādevī/Durgā-theology. In this way she undergoes a – quite predictable – (partial) domestication into a benign deity. This dual image is preserved and repeated in numerous contemporary textual

⁹ See JUNE MCDANIEL, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

sources. In the last section of her paper, Zeiler looks at the present-day worship of Dhūmāvātī. Recent fieldwork conducted by the author at the Dhūmāvātī temple in the Dhūpcaṇḍī area in Benares reveals a shift of emphasis from the tantric goddess to a protective neighborhood deity.¹⁰ The negotiation processes seem to be ongoing. In some of the temple's festivals, the temple priests (selectively) counterbalance the integral transformation of the goddess' representation by introducing ritual sequences that point to Dhūmāvātī's tantric background.

Negotiation processes have been at work at other cultic sites of tantric deities as well. My own contribution inquires into the ways in which meaning is constituted and continuities are imagined at present-day Yoginī temples, and attempts to integrate theoretically the various processes of imagining and constructing continuities. After a brief introduction of the temples in Hirapur (Orissa) and Bheraghat (Madhya Pradesh), four case studies are presented. In the first case study, an Indian Oḍissi dance master reformulates his understanding of his art after revisiting the Hirapur temple. Inspired by the goddesses' varied and expressive iconography, the artist widens the aesthetic repertoire of his choreographies by introducing new modes of expressing the feminine, and even dedicates one of his later works entirely to the Hirapur Yoginīs. The second case study is closely connected to the first: An European research scholar working on the connections between Indian classical dance and Indian temples initiates the performance of the aforementioned choreography at the site itself, and reads it subsequently as a contribution towards a "reactivation" of the temple's ritual life. The next two examples of selective encounters with tantric temples concern the Yoginī temple in Bheraghat, where an extended family from Hyderabad ritually renews its ties with a site they perceive as the main seat of their family deity, (a goddess called) Caṃsaṣṭh Yoginī. The same temple appears to a frequently returning German couple as an erotically charged, welcoming site, and the two decide to have some of the Yoginī images replicated and installed in a private tantric sanctuary in their Hamburg home. The ensuing theoretical reflections revolve around the applicability of intertextual theory to integrate these manifold individual approaches. Following the models of Gérard Genette and Michael Riffaterre, the various "readings" of the Yoginī temples become texts in the second degree, revolving around and derived from the central, pre-existing hypotext (or intertext). A possible further step would be to expand the model by inquiring into the interrelations among the individual readings,

10 See the author's forthcoming monograph: XENIA ZEILER, *Die Göttin Dhūmāvātī* (Saarbrücken: Südwestdeutscher Verlag für Hochschulschriften, 2011).

as well as at their connection to other hypotexts, such as the scholarly literature on the temples. Another potentially fruitful approach suggested in this essay would proceed along the lines of Harold Bloom's theory of influence and "map of misreading."

In her essay, Lorilíai Biernacki examines the representation of gender in a late-medieval northeast-Indian tantric text, the *Bṛhannīlatantra*, and in the 20th-century psychoanalytic model of Jacques Lacan. As psychological paradigms, the tantric and the psychoanalytic models are seen by the author to have functional parallels, but also to differ in the ways they address the issue of language and gender. The Lacanian interpretation places the category "woman" outside of language. Reformulating Freud with the help of linguistic models, Lacan interprets the oedipal phase in the child's development as an entry into language, as a stage in which the mother as an object of desire is replaced by language. By way of contrast, in the myth of the Blue Goddess of Speech from the *Bṛhannīlatantra*,¹¹ performative, "magical"/non-semantic language appears in an anthropomorphic, feminine form, suggesting that "woman" is at the origin of language: The myth's goddess generates from her body twelve *mantra*-goddesses to help win a destructive war against the demons. Both models discussed by Biernacki connect language with the idea of the feminine. While the Lacanian model puts forward a symbolic exclusion of the feminine from language (the disappearing, "absent mother"), the female protagonist of the tantric text, the uncontrollable and elusive Blue Goddess of Speech, is the very source of language.

Mongolia, Tibet, and China

Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz looks in her essay at the circumstances of the rapid spreading of Buddhism in the Mongol regions. Less than fifty years after a crucial meeting between the most powerful Mongol leader and the abbot of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery, by the first decades of the 17th century, Tibetan Buddhism had become the dominant form of religion in Mongolia. While there seems to be no clear evidence of any political motives behind this alliance, the Mongol leaders energetically promoted the new religion at the expense of the old. Among other measures, laws were issued that forbade some religious activities such as shamanizing, while

11 See the extensive analysis of this myth in LORILIAI BIERNACKI, *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex and Speech in Tantra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 149-221.

continuing to permit most of the other indigenous practices. The advance of the new teachings was aided substantially by attractive economic incentives offered to proselytes. However, the author attributes the decisive role in the quick success of the Buddhist mission among the Mongolian tribes to a generic similarity of tantric Buddhist concepts and practices to certain indigenous ones. The rapid advance of the Buddhist mission in Mongolia is explained (following Bourdieu's theory) with the similar socio-religious habitus of the Buddhists and the Mongols in a shared religious field, combined with skillfully deployed missionary strategies. Among these, competitive ritual actions and, later, the adaptation of indigenous beliefs and practices played a major role. Especially in the early stages of their mission, the Tibetan Buddhist monks made use of predominantly tantric rituals of healing, divination, or exorcism, activities that had already been the focus of Mongolian shamanic practices. Later, liturgies were written that combined Buddhist and indigenous elements, and Mongolian (ancestor) deities were gradually incorporated into a Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhist pantheon. However, the transformation, adaption, and standardization processes were not always free of problems, especially in the case of shamanic cults related to feminine religious concepts. The competition between Buddhist and indigenous religious specialists led the former to view the diverse and local shamanic practices as one system that they called the "teaching of the shamans." The designation was pejorative from the Buddhist perspective because they viewed the teachings as false, but the term was later taken over by the shamans themselves. The events and influences surrounding the emergence of the European concept "shamanism" are complex, and Kollmar-Paulenz draws attention to the striking parallels between the development of the concept in Mongolia itself and the European construction of "shamanism."

The investigation of the practical sides of Buddhist rituals continues with Geoffrey Samuel's essay, in which the author discusses tantric practices in Tibet relating to longevity. In addition to the extension of life span, these rituals are understood also as means to attain magical powers. After looking at the meaning of longevity practices in Tibet, Samuel introduces a set of contemporary rituals that focus on a form of the deity Amitāyus (a specialized form of the Buddha Amitābha), who underwent a transformation in Tibet that left him with important health- and life-giving powers. This particular form of Amitāyus is associated with the legendary guru Padmasambhava, and the related longevity practice (*'Chi med srog thig*) is popular both among individuals and in monasteries. The practice includes a number of typical Tibetan tantric ritual sequences, such as the ritual dissolution and reconstitution of reality. The central sequence is the ritual identification of the practitioner with the main deity of the maṇḍala of

long-life deities. As for the beginnings of the historical development of longevity practices, the author mentions the earliest known texts that refer to Amitāyus/Amitābha. The texts were probably composed in India in the 1st-2nd centuries CE and translated into Chinese in the 2nd century. The first instances in which Amitāyus (or Aparimitāyus) appears in connection with rituals for extending one's present life are difficult to date exactly. Chinese and Indian texts from the fifth century onwards discuss long-life practices or techniques for averting death, those associated with the cult of White Tārā being among the most significant ones. Samuel points to the differences between the Tibetan practices related to White Tārā and those related to Amitāyus, the latter focusing less on protection and healing than on restoring life energy. The author emphasizes the relationship of these practices to the Indian alchemical traditions,¹² as well as the connection with the tradition of the tantric Siddhas known from a number of non-Buddhist contexts. Contemporary longevity practices in Tibet, however, seem to include and blend elements from a number of different traditions, including those related to Amitāyus and White Tārā, but also from Tibetan conceptions related to life-forces, soul-substances or ransom rituals.

Charles Orzech begins his essay with reflections on terminology, definition, and taxonomy. What are the semantic valences of the terms "tantra" or the alternate "esoteric Buddhism" when applied to China? The various applications of these terms in connection with systems of teachings and body practices introduced into China in the 8th century and based on a distinct group of South Asian Mahāyānic texts illustrate the necessity to contextualize the use of key terms, and, at the same time, to consider carefully the meanings of related indigenous terms and concepts. The author emphasizes the adaptation, combination, and transformation processes that characterized the early history and development of esoteric Buddhism in China, in the course of which elements of various South Asian esoteric systems became part of a wide range of indigenous cultural systems (including Daoism and folk traditions). In the second part of his essay Orzech examines the translation and circulation of tantric texts in the Song period (10th-11th century), focusing on three main points. The first concerns the creation of canonical collections, and the founding of and the work at the translation institute sponsored by the Song court, as well as the differing viewpoints on Buddhism held by major political and cultural actors of the time. Another point is the bibliographical categorization in the catalogue of the works produced during the institute's first decades. Here, the texts are classified into three categories: Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and the esoteric

12 See also GEOFFREY SAMUEL, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*.

portion of the Mahāyāna collection. In addition, the fact that certain texts were obviously omitted from the catalogue raises the question whether these omissions were oversights or a consequence of official censorship. As for the circulation and influence of the newly translated tantric texts, Orzech points to a description given by a 11th-century Tendai monk of a temple on the imperial palace grounds containing deities related to one of the texts in question. Another example for the circulation of such texts is the presence at Bei shan (Sichuan) of an elaborate Song-period image of the goddess Mārīcī. The iconography of the image closely resembles the description given in one of the recent translations. And finally, the example of the Daoist assimilation of Mārīcī suggests the extent to which these texts have even influenced other religious systems in China.

In his essay on tantric ritual pragmatics in medieval China, Martin Lehnert considers problems related to (holistic) definitions of tantra that are pre-interpretive and thus do not determine clearly enough the referential relation between social phenomena and their representation. The author proposes a “particularistic scepticism” as an alternative approach that takes into proper consideration the social dimension of a tantric text. Following Luhmann’s theory of religion, Lehnert then looks at the distinctions generated by tantric texts in social reality (in terms of hierarchy and levels of perfection or accomplishment), and at the texts’ main modes of communication (secrecy, paradox, function). In the final section of the essay the author discusses the influence of the imperial authority on the uses and production of medieval tantric texts, the position of the ritual specialist with respect to the imperial sovereign, and the appeal that ritual knowledge had for the emperors, who relied on the state protection and consecration rituals of religious experts such as Amoghavajra (8th century). The relevance of Buddhist tantric rituals at the imperial court is seen in the imperial sovereign’s claim that he can – with the help of these rituals – control certain situations in a technical, pragmatic manner. Although regarded as a “Son of Heaven,” the legitimacy and sovereignty of a Tang emperor was based on power shared with high officials and military and religious experts. Lehnert concludes his analysis with the observation that the tantric rituals performed by the ranking religious specialists of the Tang-period (Amoghavajra was an “*ācārya* of the state”) were not regarded as accounts of some divine or universal order (as implied in the holistic definitions of tantra), but “were performative representations of an awareness that human knowledge basically refers to historical contingency.”¹³

13 See LEHNERT’s essay in this volume, p. 287-301.

Japan

In the first essay of the section on Japan, Lucia Dolce looks at the rituals of medieval Taimitsu, the esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai lineages¹⁴ and one of the two important traditions of Japanese tantric Buddhism. As in the case of medieval Shingon, the other major school of Tantric Buddhism in Japan, the ritual dynamics of Taimitsu have received relatively little attention. Scholars have focused primarily on the question of historical origins and doctrinal stances in their studies of Japanese Buddhism, and less on the ritual diversity of the medieval period. Between the 11th and 15th centuries, the Taimitsu school comprised two main lineages (Sanmon and Jimon), and a much larger number of sub-lineages (traditional scholarship speaks of thirteen sub-lineages). However, affiliation to one of these lineages was apparently anything but exclusive, initiations into several (often competing) traditions being quite common. The large variety of medieval Taimitsu rituals is documented in rich anthologies compiled from the 11th century on. They are veritable repositories of liturgies in the various lineages. At the same time these anthologies illustrate a certain permeability of sectarian borders, not only among the different Taimitsu orientations, but also between Taimitsu and Shingon. However, the author points out two areas that illustrate the distinctiveness of Taimitsu: the advanced initiations and the four major Taimitsu liturgies. As for intra-sectarian strategies, the two main lineages of Taimitsu each devised important “secret” rituals and claimed exclusive rights to them. The processes at work in the development of Japanese tantric Buddhist liturgies are complex at various levels. This includes the careful selection, adaption and/or construction of “exclusive” rituals that over time came to be regarded as distinctive of a tantric lineage. The material discussed by Lucia Dolce raises questions concerning the efficacy of the strategies deployed for establishing sectarian exclusiveness. Another issue concerns the relationships between the Taimitsu lineages and their political sponsors, who tended to patronize several schools concomitantly. The inquiry into the history and dynamics of medieval Taimitsu liturgy generates theoretical insights regarding ritual authority, challenging the assumption that rigidity and stereotypical repetition are foundational for a ritual’s (socio-institutional, performative) efficacy.

Richard Payne’s contribution concerns the dynamics of adaptation in the spread of tantric ritual in Japan. Emphasizing the combinatory character

14 See also LUCIA DOLCE, “Taimitsu: The Esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai School,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia: A Handbook for Scholars*, gen. ed. CHARLES ORZECZ, Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 744-767.

of Japanese religion, the author outlines first the doctrinal stages that led to the formation of Yoshida (Yuiitsu) Shintō, a school of Shintō developed in the sixteenth century and influenced by esoteric Buddhism. The initial integration of *kami* into the Buddhist system, as the local manifestations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the world, became the basis for many new lines of thought and ritual, at the end of which the relation between the *kami* and the buddhas was reversed, and the *kami* came to be regarded as the primeval forms of divine beings. In order to create a ritual system for Yoshida Shintō, the Shintō theoretician Kanetomo incorporated and adapted Buddhist tantric rituals. The practices of secrecy and the rhetoric of exoteric-esoteric found in medieval Japan were essential factors in this process. From among the ritual cycles in the Yoshida system, Payne focuses on a text describing the “Sequence of the Eighteen Shinto,” and applies linguistic methods in its examination. By means of syntactic analysis and inverted tree diagrams, the structure and relational modalities of this complex ritual become visible. These modalities include ritual “phrases” (larger units formed by a number of ritual sequences), redundancy, symmetry, abbreviations. The structural analysis not only reveals clear similarities between this Yoshida ritual and Shingon rituals, but demonstrates that, in the process of adaptation, basic ritual structures remained unchanged across religious boundaries.

Bernard Faure examines in his contribution the Three Devas of medieval Japanese religion, outlining their impressive and complex trajectories in numerous schools and traditions. In medieval Japan these three deities were perceived in different ways: as “assimilation bodies” of the Buddha, but also as relatively independent deities, an ambivalence that contributed to their integration into tantric Buddhism. As individual deities, the three devas Benzaiten (Sarasvatī), Dakiniten (the *dākinīs* worshiped as a single deity) and Shoten (Gaṇeśa) all rose to important positions and acquired henotheistic characteristics. As a triad they represent the Three Truths of the Tendai doctrine, the Three Mysteries of the Buddha Dainichi, or, in oral traditions, the three fundamental seed letters of Tantric Buddhism, but they are also invoked in medieval enthronement rituals, and worshiped in the religious traditions of Onmyōdō, Shintō and Shugendō. Painted scrolls and divination boards illustrate the popularity of the three deities. Faure gives two reasons that might have lead medieval Buddhists to group them together into a single, composite deity: the desire to enhance ritual efficiency and the importance of the number three in esoteric Buddhism. The iconographical analyses in Faure’s essay convincingly demonstrate the influx of Indian elements into the cultural traditions of late medieval Japan, showing at the same time the pan-Asian nature of tantric Buddhism.

... and Beyond

The first essay in this section, authored by Katja Rakow, covers a wide temporal and geographical span. An 11th-century prophetic and esoteric Buddhist text, the *Kālacakrat Tantra* evolved into an influential eschatological tradition, the elements of which became starting points for manifold interpretations in Asia and beyond. Building on the Hindu myth of Kalkī, the Wheel of Time Tantra reflects the historical circumstances of its time: the armies of Buddhism (and of its ally, Hinduism), operating from the mythical region of Śambhala, defeat the hostile (Muslim) forces that have conquered the earth, and inaugurate a new age of (Buddhist) perfection. Rakow begins her article with a conspiracy theory originating in one of the recent – and decontextualized – readings of this text, according to which the present Dalai Lama and the Government of Tibet in Exile intend to conquer the world and eradicate all non-Buddhists. The esoteric interpretation of the myth has another focus: the tantric practitioner's struggle with ignorance on his path to enlightenment. However, it was the political dimension that inspired interpreters over the centuries to adapt the myth for their own interests, as in the case of Agvan Dorjiev in the context of the British-Russian rivalry in Central Asia around the turn of the twentieth century. A tutor and close friend of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Dorjiev argued for an alliance of Tibet with the Russian Empire and identified the Czar with the ruler of the *Kālacakrat Tantra's* Śambhala. Rakow looks at contemporary adaptations of the *Kālacakrat Tantra* as well, namely at the mass initiations “for World Peace” conducted by the fourteenth Dalai Lama, events that she interprets as an attempt at combining the two facets of the religious leader: the Buddhist teacher and the (universal) peace advocate.

Jeffrey Kripal continues his reflexive study of the history of tantric studies with his contribution to this volume.¹⁵ In his essay he looks at the cultural, social, and political contexts of those Western scholars and practitioners engaged in the study of tantric traditions who belonged to the wide range of cultural movements in the 1960s and 70s labeled as American-British counterculture. The author not only sees structural parallels between these movements and the tantric traditions – both are transgressive with regard to “traditional,” conservative value systems –, he also

15 See, for example, his *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001 and *The Serpent's Gift: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

points out the existence of “cross-cultural echoes” between Western counter-culture and Asian tantra/tantrism. This perspective significantly adds to the complexity of both the processes of cultural transfer and of the more recent indological scholarship on tantra. One of the essay’s central theses is the latter’s rootedness in and indebtedness to the cross-cultural encounter of two countercultural streams: the Asian/tantric and the Western. The increasing importance of tantric topics in the indological scholarship of the 1980s and 90s is seen as a direct consequence of the “ecstatic countercultural embrace of Asia in the 1960s and early 70s.”¹⁶ Another important point made by Kripal is that the transmission of tantra to Western and American culture began much earlier. The first two of four selected examples of Western encounters with tantra illustrate this fact. Pierre Bernard’s intensified activities in San Francisco and New York around the turn of the 20th century are discussed in the light of their importance for the later, “countercultural Tantra,” as is the influence of the works by Sir John Woodroffe/Arthur Avalon, especially *The Serpent Power*. Examples number three and four are “archetypal expressions” of the countercultural tantra. Kripal touches on Aldous Huxley’s interpretations of tantra, and Timothy Leary’s turn to “psychedelic-Tantric orientalism,” before turning to Aghananda Bharati, the tantric practitioner and scholar whose predictions from the 1970s regarding the future itinerary of tantric scholarship in the West proved to be correct: It took another twenty years for tantra to become an important scholarly (and popular) topic, and this was followed by increasingly strong reactions on the part of orthodox Hindus, both in India and in the West. However, Kripal argues that the controversies surrounding his own *Kālī’s Child* (1995), for example, are comprehensible in light of the different cultural histories in which the participants were embedded: counter-culture (Western Indologists) and counter-colonialism (Hindu communities).

Hugh Urban discusses in his essay the development of tantra in the U.S. in the context of the wider discourse about sexuality, a category that is itself dynamic and contested at the same time. The transformation of tantra into “American Tantra” is presented as the result of a selective appropriation and adaptation of (mainly the sexual) elements of tantra by American authors, followed by a re-appropriation of the new construct by such Indian authors and teachers as Rajneesh and others. After a brief examination of the trajectory of tantra’s “complex journey to the West” (from the colonial era to the 1960s and 70s), the figure of Pierre Arnold Bernard emerges again, this time to illustrate the beginnings of

16 See KRIPAL in this volume, p. 435-456.

the first “key transformation” of tantra in its transfer to the U.S., a stage Urban describes as the “sexualization and scandalization of Tantra.” In the early 20th century Bernard re-interpreted tantra into something primarily sexual. Consequently his activities were regarded as scandalous by his social environment. The second transformation is connected to the figure of Osho-Rajneesh, whose version of tantra is described as commercialized and commodified, as a brand of Neo-Tantrism that fit well into the social and economic environment of his time (the late 20th century). Next, Urban looks at the ways in which gay, lesbian, and S&M communities have appropriated tantric practices in recent years. He concludes that the new interpretations of tantra are perhaps a logical development of the American version of tantra that “has from the beginning been about radical transformation, the violation of taboos and the use of sexual stimulation to reach intense states of ecstasy.”¹⁷ The fourth transformation, Urban argues, takes place on the Internet, which offers not only virtual ritual spaces and cyber-darshan, but also advertises a “third-millennium vision” of tantra for its online communities, offering the prospect of transformative experiences to its spiritual consumers.

The examination of Western appropriations of tantra continues in the volume’s final article, written by Kennet Granholm. The focus is on the so-called Left-Hand Path, a Western esoteric current that interprets tantra in a less sexual and a more power-oriented way than comparable contemporary movements. Granholm discusses these interpretations in the general context of Western esotericism and its employment of the “exotic other” in shaping esoteric identities. After a review of the main approaches to the study of esotericism, the essay introduces the Left-Hand Path, its history, and orientation. This movement propagates individualism, self-deification, and antinomianism, and each particular group in the movement positions itself antithetically with regard to other, “mainstream” religious groups. Granholm attributes the appropriation of tantra in the Left-Hand Path to a positive reappraisal of the feminine combined with positive orientalism. After a discussion of some of the historical developments behind these lines of thought, the author focuses on the teachings of the Left-Hand Path order Dragon Rouge (of Swedish origin) and the publications of Kenneth Grant, who in many respects carried on the work of Aleister Crowley. Granholm argues that, despite the importance they attribute to sexual practices, these interpretations of tantra could be seen as a critique of the “hypersexualized discursive reality of the modern West,” in that they synthesize the medieval Kaula practices and later, more moderate and speculative forms.

17 URBAN’s essay in the present volume, p. 457–494.

PART I
South Asia

Recoding the Natural and Animating the Imaginary

Kaula Body-practices in the Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra, Ritual Transfers, and the Politics of Representation

ANNETTE WILKE

The ritual tradition which I am going to discuss – namely the *Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra* (PKS), a ritual handbook which was probably composed in the 16th century or somewhat earlier in South India, and subsequent elaborations up to the late 19th century¹ – contains everything that contemporary educated Indian and Western readers will expect of Tantra: monosyllabic *mantras*, *yantras*, hand gestures (*mudrās*), yogic body-centres, *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*, ritualized alphabet, non-dual Śaiva-Śākta philosophy, and of course the *pañcamākāra*, the famous “five Ms” (alcohol, meat, fish, parched grain, and sexual intercourse). While the former ritual elements are pretty universal in all forms of Hindu Tantra, the *pañcamākāra* have been specific to Kaula-Tantra, the tradition which made use of natural symbols, such

1 Although commonly acknowledged as one of the most eminent Tantric manuals, the PKS has not attracted detailed studies so far, nor been translated into a European language, possibly due to the difficulty and complexity of the text and its encoded language which is almost impossible to decipher without the extensive commentaries. Besides a tradition of commentary in Sanskrit and vernacular languages, there exist a fair number of ritual citations and elaborations based on the PKS. My presentation is a work in progress within an ongoing DFG research project (University of Muenster, Germany, Dr. C. Weber and Prof. Dr. A. Wilke) on this material. I am obliged to Dr. Weber who supplied me with translations of the bulky Sanskrit commentaries of Rāmeśvara (1983), referred to as “PKS(Ba)” with page numbers and lines, and of Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe (1889), hitherto available only in manuscript form, referred to as “STV(Ms)” with numbers of chapters and pages. I wish to thank the German Research Council (DFG) for sponsoring the project and the Adyar Library for the manuscript. As a post-script I should add that CLAUDIA WEBER’s *Das Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra: Sanskrit-Edition mit deutscher Erstübersetzung, Kommentaren und weiteren Studien* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010) appeared while I was revising the galley proof of this article.

as song and dance, wine, meat, sexual fluids and intercourse preferably with women of untouchable castes, to bring about ecstatic god-consciousness and deified existence, and to share in the powers of their godhead Śiva/Śakti. However, the PKS belongs to the Śrīvidyā, the cult of the beautiful great goddess Lalitā(-Tripurasundarī) worshiped in her *śrīcakra* diagram, which is generally not identified with left-hand Kaula-Tantra. On the contrary, common expectancies would be more likely to consider a left-hand Śrīvidyā a contradiction in terms. The Śrīvidyā constitutes the most widespread Tantric tradition in contemporary India. Scholarship has described it as the culmination of a general trend within Tantric history towards domestication, semanticization and internalization.² Particularly the South Indian Śrīvidyā, common among a large community of Smārta Brahmins and the Śāṅkarācāryas, was so exhaustively purged of Kaula traits and merged so much with Vedic orthodoxy and the Vedānta that some scholars would not accept calling it Tantra any more.³ The PKS, however, is concerned with a different Veda-Tantra merger and a Śrīvidyā brand wherein we find transfer in the opposite direction. Remarkably, it presents the *pañcamakāra* as Veda-orthodox and as most vital for embodying the bliss of Brahman and making it a corporeal experience (PKS 1.12)⁴, i.e. bringing about the emancipatory goal of becoming Śiva “in all one’s limbs” and achieving liberation while living (10.50; 10.82). It designates itself as Kaula and as a “great Upaniṣad” (colophons and 10.83). There is particular emphasis on the *mantras*’ unfathomable power

2 There is wide agreement that “the spread of the Tantric cults in Indian religion is largely a history ... of domestication,” as pointed out by ALEXIS SANDERSON, “Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,” in *The World’s Religions*, ed. STEWART SUTHERLAND et al. (London: Routledge, 1988), 622. Sanderson attributes to the non-dual Kashmir Śaivas (9-13th cent. AD), whose heir is the Śrīvidyā, a major share in this.

3 Cf. ANDRÉ PADOUX, *Le Coeur de la Yoginī : Yoginīhr̥daya avec le commentaire Dīpikā d’Amṛtānanda* (Paris: Boccard, 1994), 7; DAVID G. WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric sex” in its South Asian contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). I should add that Sanderson, “Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,” op. cit., 704, acknowledges a Southern Śrīvidyā which carried on the older trends of Kaula-Trika-merger: “In purely Tantric circles it [the cult of Tripurasundarī/Lalitā] was propagated within the theological system of the Pratyabhijñā-based Trika; but, much as in Kashmir, it came to pervade the wider community of Śaiva Brahmins known as Smārtas.” See also DOUGLAS R. BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrīvidyā Śakta Tantrism in South India* (Albany: SUNY, 1992), 18-27. In contrast to Sanderson, however, Brooks (ibid. 29ff.) sees the Śrīvidyā as a genuinely South Indian product whose roots lie in the Tamil *siddha* and *bhakti* traditions.

4 The PKS follows here almost verbatim *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 5.80, which attributes to alcohol the role of embodying the bliss of Brahman. This Tantra belongs to the major Kaula sources.

and the *pañcamakāra* (1.8; 1.12; 1.24). Even up to the late 19th century the Brahmin commentators stress the *padārthas*, i.e. the real liquor, meat and intercourse, and regard the five Ms as most important (*mukhya*) ritual means. We have to wait for the 20th century to find an ‘evaporation’ of the body, which in other lineages of Śrīvidyā has already been happening since the 12th century.

The paper presents new material on Śrīvidyā and late Kaula-Tantra against the broader background of assumptions about Tantrism and Tantric history. There has been a widespread tendency to view Tantra via the lens of Kaula defined by sexual activities. I do not share this view. Tantra is a vastly complex and many-stranded issue and more of a generic name for many different traditions, some of which predate, and some post-date the Kaula. Most traditions that may be called Tantric did not include sexual contact. Probably the most widespread Tantric custom of both past and present is to view *mantras* as means of empowerment and self-transformation. This view became widespread far beyond the clan-based Tantric traditions. Speaking of Kaula introduces a blurred perspective, a focus on the deviant and the extraordinary rather than the normal and ordinary. The first part of my paper seeks to pin down the cluster of reasons why the Kaula gained so much prominence. It is about representation problems and the challenges in dealing with Tantra. I see the PKS as part of large-scale interactive blending and bifurcation processes that I regard as being just as typical of Hindu Tantric history as the general trend towards domestication and “gnostification” that has been discerned by many scholars. Regarding the Kaula-Tantra, this trend can be re-formulated as shifting attention from body to mind. The PKS may be characterized as an intermediary. It both confirms and inverts such transformations. It blends together what has often been seen as clearly distinct or even opposing, such as Tantrism and Vedism, Kaula and Samaya, super-ritualism and gnostification, language and action, exoteric and mental ritual practice, real and virtual body.⁵ I consider such kinds of blending (in different variations and degrees) to be typical of Tantra in general. Regarding the PKS my focus will be the Veda-Tantra merger and the continuity of real and virtual body-practices which are characteristic of this source. The technologies of recoding the natural and animating the virtual, and the Kaula program of placing the body in the mind and the mind in the body have been powerful

5 Very pronounced on this DAVID G. WHITE, “Transformations in the Art of Love: Kāma-Kalā Practices in Hindu Tantric and Kaula Traditions,” *History of Religions* 38,1 (1998): 172-198, and the author’s *Kiss of the Yoginī*, wherein such oppositions form a major theme. See, for instance, 219f., 234f., 242f.,

devices for creating extraordinary realities. I believe active imagination to be an important key to Tantra and suggest that it also played a decisive role in interiorizing processes. In a constructivist approach I understand imagination to be a third space that produces something new by connecting conceptual entities and real-world entities, for instance by connecting the concept of immortality and bliss and real-world alcoholic liquor. Likewise, I understand representation as production and creation rather than simple depiction, description or presentation of something.

Imagining Tantra and the challenges of representing Tantra

In 1832, the Maharashtrian Brahmin and Veda-Mīmāṃsā scholar Rāmeśvara presented his voluminous commentary on the PKS to the public. This commentary started with a long defence of Tantrism⁶ against common reproaches that Tāntrikas had left the Vedic path, and were greedy and self-indulgent, etc. What he defended was Kaula-Tantra. A highly elite Tantric insider speaks as a Vedist in favour of Tantra and does not agree with a widespread opinion in emic and etic discourse that Veda and Tantra exclude each other. It is one of many examples of the fact that Tantra is a messy field with fuzzy boundaries. Not least, it is a highly contested issue. Its very definition is part of negotiation processes within and between scholarly and popular discourses in past and present times. This pertains to etic as well as emic debates. There is a whole cluster of problematic areas to be considered:

First, the popular image of Tantra as the dangerous, debased or exotic other and the varying “othering” discourses in India and the West. Notably, the common outsider perspective has been vacillating between sex and crime. It is the crime aspect that was most prevalent in India. The indigenous negative cliché of a Tantric being a black magician if not bloodthirsty, orgiastic monster has been extremely powerful and widespread. There is a long history at least since the tenth century from classical literature, plays and hagiographies (e.g. Bhavabhūti, Kṛṣṇamīśra, Śaṅkara-Digvijayas) to modern Bollywood cinema and popular culture.⁷ In contrast, the preva-

6 Rāmeśvara uses the term “Tantra” in the singular, plural and as the adjective (*tāntrika*). He refers to the PKS as belonging to the Tantras and not to the Vedic literatures.

7 See also KONRAD MEISIG, *Shivas Tanz* (Herder: Freiburg, 1996), 129, and HUGH B. URBAN, *Tantra. Sex, Secrecy, Politics and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 37-39, 265.

lent image of Tantra in the West is the construct of a hedonistic religion. A search for the word “Tantra” on the world wide web generates thousands of hits almost exclusively concerned with sexuality, offering techniques for better sex, etc. This modern Western cliché is basically nothing other than the reversal and positive re-interpretation of negative images brought by missionaries and British administrators for whom Tantrism was the peak of a post-Upaniṣadic degenerate Hinduism judged to be obscene, perverse, and debased. The sexual perspective was popularized and amplified by Bhagavan Rajneesh who transformed a religious tradition into a form of sexual psychotherapy. Both representations, the Indian and the Western one, actually contain more self-description than an account of reality.

Second, the history of academic Tantra studies and the construction of Tantra by scholarly representations, starting with Sir John Woodroffe, also known by his pen-name Arthur Avalon, in the 1910s and 1920s. Avalon had the courage not to follow the usual Vedic studies, but to counter the negative colonial Tantra cliché by editing a number of pieces of Hindu literature called Tantra, and by showing the great sophistication and metaphoric imagination of the Tantras, their deep philosophical content, and their non-dual world-orientation.⁸ The problem was that he presented an ahistorical, essentialized and unified Tantrism shaped by his Brahmanic informants and his selective use of later Tantric works. In the 1960s, Agehananda Bharati confronted Avalon’s Tantrism with a new approach: in the spirit of the 1960s free sex and drugs came to the forefront.⁹ Whereas Avalon minimized the distinction of so-called right-hand and left-hand Tantra, and restricted sexual ritual to matrimonial intercourse or to the widespread metaphoric and symbolic use and the interior processes of yogic physio-psychology (*kunḍalini-yoga*), for Bharati Tantra was primarily defined by the fifth *pañcamakāra* (sexual contact). He stressed the use of hemp (cannabis) as a disinhibiting factor and interpreted all the “five Ms” as aphrodisiacs and intoxicants.¹⁰ For Avalon, Tantra and Veda or

8 To mention only the most important and influential titles of AVALON which witnessed many reprints by the publishers Ganesh & Co, Madras: *Principles of Tantra*, 2 vols. (original ed. 1913); *The Serpent Power* (1918, rev. 1922 and 1928); *Garland of Letters* (1922); and *Śakti and Śākta* (1927). The apology theme was very explicit in *Principles* (repr. 1991, 1-88). The major body of the text was the translation of a modern right-hand Tantra which presumably shaped also Avalon’s work on left-hand Kaula.

9 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, *The Tantric Traditions* (London: Rider & Co, 1965; rev. and enlarged Delhi: Hindustan Publishing, 1993), 228-278.

10 This is how Bharati explains parched grains to belong to the *pañcamakāra*. This “fourth M,” however, appears to be nothing more than a spiced snack to be taken along with roasted meat and wine. The PKS-commentator Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe already wondered why it should belong to the taboo substances. Neither does the hemp belong to all left-hand

Brahmanic culture were not opponents, whereas Bharati emphasized an anti-Vedic and anti-Brahmanic tendency. Lately, David White went a step further.¹¹ Whereas Avalon discovered a high-class civilized Tantra in colonial times, White postulates a subaltern Tantra in the post-colonial age of deconstruction. He traces the original Kaula and “core” of Tantra (predating the *pañcamakāra* ritual) in sexual fluid exchange and violent Yoginī cults among non-elite, subaltern groups (which he regards as including the Kāpālikas).¹² His wild Yoginīs who crave for human blood and sexual fluids are worlds away from Avalon’s spiritual sexuality, and even from Bharati’s non-conformist yogi circles. Each of the scholars produced a different Kaula, partly due to different textual sources, different questions and perspectives (philosophy, ritual, different historical and social settings), and partly due to developments in expert knowledge and the history of science, and also dependent on personal predilections and “Zeitgeist”-phenomena (e.g. Victorian prudery, etc.). There is, for instance, no real reason why Bharati interprets *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* as a substitute for sex, although it is a vitally integrative part of the ritual he is describing.¹³ His ritual shares this and a number of other features with the PKS, while other elements do largely differ. Kaula itself is pluralist.

While trying to pave the way to real-world Tantra, each scholar has his/her own share in constructing it. I do not think that there is a way out of this, although there may be more adequate or less adequate constructions, and more or less biased interpretations. While writing about Tantra, we are necessarily part of the image-making process, because there is no

traditions. The PKS does not know about it and rather stresses ritual control instead of disinhibiting devices.

- 11 DAVID G. WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric sex” in its South Asian contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- 12 For a substantial critique of this suggestive thesis see SHAMAN HATLEY, *The Brahma-yāmalatantra and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs*, doctoral thesis (University of Pennsylvania, 2007). II, fn. 33. Hatley’s counterarguments on the topic of sexual fluid exchange sound convincing. I am grateful to Shaman for sharing his dissertation before publication. Another critical point of White’s construction is the thin textual base on which he builds his argument. Even GEOFFREY SAMUEL, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), who otherwise follows White, notes the problem that “no direct textual material exists” (ibid. 327) on what White pins down as early “kula-period” (similarly there are no original works left by Matsyendra whom White traces as the initiator of the succeeding “Kaula-period”). Both White’s and Samuel’s historical reconstructions make Kaula the defining factor of Tantra, while giving astonishingly little consideration to the Āgamas (especially the Śaiva-Siddhānta-Tantras and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra).
- 13 BHARATI, *Tantric Traditions*, 228, 251-265, see particularly 255, 260, 263.

way out of positioning and selective reading considering the huge number and great variety of sources.

Third, Tantra is more of a hyperonym than a homogenous category. Except for Avalon and Bharati, Tantra did not attract much academic scholarship until recently. The past thirty years, however, have witnessed dramatic developments in the study of Āgamic Śaivism and Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra, and a growing interest in early heterodox Śaiva cults. The collection and edition of the hitherto largely unknown Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Āgamas gave access to better knowledge of Tantra, but also raised new questions. A number of Āgamas, for instance, are alternatively called Tantra, but there is no trace of the *pañcamakāra*. We have learned that almost all Śaiva traditions are more or less Tantric, or that South Indian temple culture encompasses many Tantric elements such as visualisations, sacred diagrams and repetitions of monosyllabic *mantra* formulas – the kind of issues Avalon was talking about. But by acknowledging this, the question of definition, history and origin came to a head, and not only the subject of Tantra, but also the perspectives on it multiplied. Some trace the roots of Tantra,¹⁴ for instance, in the Vedic tradition, others in the Āgama culture or in more heterodox early Śaiva movements more or less removed from the Vedic pale, such as the Kāpālika, and an increasing feminization of early Śaivism. Some see Tantra as a phenomenon of an elite Sanskritic culture, others detect folk (or even tribal) origins, while still others propose a mixture of both. Hindu-Buddhist interactions and transfers were also a matter of dispute, and in particular the relationship between Tantric Śaivism and Tantric Buddhism needs further investigation. Important work has been done on historical transformations. Alexis Sanderson noted a general trend of domestication and two major transmutations: a shift from Śaiva ascetic “cremation ground mysticism” to the Tantric householder, and a turn from self-operative ritual (held by the dualist Śaiva-Siddhānta) to an intense concern with meaning and interiority within the circles of non-dualist Kashmir Śaivism championed by Abhinavagupta (c. 975-1025),¹⁵ which was historically greatly effective even in the Śaiva-Siddhānta. Another shift

14 Some of the following opinions are found in the volume of KATHERIN ANN HARPER and ROBERT L. BROWN (eds.), *The Roots of Tantra* (New York: State University, 2002).

15 ALEXIS SANDERSON, “Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir,” in *The Category of the Person. Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, eds. M. CARRITHERS et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 190-215; “Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,” 660-704; “Meaning in Tantric Ritual,” in *Essais sur le Rituel III: Colloque de Centenaire de la Section des Sciences Religieuses de l’École des Hautes Études*, eds. A.M. BLONDEAU and K. SCHIPPER (Louvain-Paris: Peeters, 1995), 15-95; “The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir,” in *Tantric Studies in Memory of Hélène Brunner*, ed. D. GOODALL and A. PADOUX

and mutual transfer can be seen in devotionalizing Tantra and Tantrizing devotion. Tirūmular's *Tirumantiram* (whose early dating into the 7th century has been disputed), the famous goddess hymn *Saundaryalaharī* (some time after 1000 CE and before the 16th cent.), and the ecstatic Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā (16th cent.) are typical examples. Later Purāṇic sources such as the *Devī-Bhāgavatam* are full of devotional Tantra, and even the fiercest of the Tantric Daśamahāvidyā goddesses receive *bhakti*-worship just like any other Purāṇic deity.

While initially much of the Tantra studies have been confined to philosophy and history, we find now initial attempts at social history, for instance concerning the connection between Tantra and kingship, or giving more credit to popular culture, "folk" Hinduism, non-elite groups and common lay persons. There are growing numbers of case studies on text traditions and field research. Although there has been a substantial increase in the historical and anthropological data, and better access to the vast reservoirs of hitherto unedited and unpublished sources, academic Tantra studies are still in their infancy and all work on Tantra is still work in progress. One thing has become clear: the heterogeneity and complexity of Tantra and the resultant necessity to contextualize it according to different historical, regional, social and religious settings.

A post-colonial critical approach may be to resist a definition altogether. Similar to Hinduism, Tantrism has been seen as a modern construction, born of a cross-cultural interplay between Eastern and Western imaginations¹⁶ that misrepresent the great plurality of traditions. A sound antidote would be to call each tradition by its own name, instead of labeling it under the common heading of "Tantrism," i.e. to confine oneself to the proper names of the diverse early and later Śaiva traditions, the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātra, the Sahajiyā, the manifold Śākta traditions, such as Kaula, Trika, Kālikula, Śrīvidyā, the Smārta Tantra, and not to forget the non-Hindu lore like the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayāna, Jain traditions, etc. This is a solid solution, but it may not be the best one. Just as in the case of "Hinduism," the Tantric traditions in question share certain common ritual elements besides differences in negotiating, for instance, purity rules and the interface with the Veda, etc. Both the widespread distribution of certain elements like *mantra* rituals on the one hand, and the plurality of traditions and their historical transformations on the other, have to be accounted for.

(Pondicherry : Institut Français, 2007), 231-442. See also Sanderson's recent publications on Śaivism and kingship, the social basis of the spread of Śaiva Tantrism.

16 On the birth of the modern term Tantrism see URBAN, *Tantra*, op. cit.

Fourth, Tantra as a “melting pot.” Tantra is a movement that cuts across various traditions and is not confined to a specific religion. It was a predominant religious paradigm or “Zeitgeist” phenomenon from around the middle of the first millennium AD to the 13th century. This necessitates a “contact-zone” perspective which views Tantric history as one of constant interaction, and highly complex negotiation, blending and recoding processes within India and “Greater India.” The PKS is only *one* (late) version of osmosis, wherein hybridity is particularly obvious. The following construction of a global history of Hindu Tantra is certainly speculative, hypothetical and too simple (leaving out, for instance, Buddhism), but some kind of model will be needed to explain both the plurality and the instances of osmosis which actually exist. My model is based on the written tradition, which is no doubt a serious deficiency, but for historical (re)constructions it is unfortunately not possible to undertake fieldwork in the oral lore. Some of the early power-based “magic” Tantras are written in defective and very rustic Sanskrit which seems to point to the world of village shamans or other “subaltern” groups who had little training in Sanskrit grammar¹⁷; on the other hand, even the Kāpālikas of classical Sanskrit drama, who are invariably pictured as villain, power-seeking human monsters, speak polished Sanskrit, i.e. are presented as an educated elite. We must assume that at all times the contemporary Tantra cut through all social classes, and that written and oral lores existed side by side, including different strands of so-called right- and left-hand Tantra. Both forms of Tantra were “deviant” initially. I understand deviant pertaining to alternative ritual systems rather than pertaining to social stratification.

As a working definition I suggest Hindu Tantra to refer to a great number of ritual systems that were derived neither from the Vedic ritual culture nor the Smārta tradition (dharma literature, epics, and Purāṇas). Initially, Tantra and Āgama were synonymous and referred to soteriological *ritual* systems of strong sectarian movements that developed new (non-Vedic) *mantras* and centred around the universal Lord gods Śiva and Viṣṇu who had appeared in the Veda as outsider-gods – but whose profiles included world-transcending or panentheistic potential (three strides of Viṣṇu, and

17 This conjecture is also based on contents. The socio-linguistic argument alone is only partly valid, since many later Tantras – and even the epics and Purāṇas – contain hybrid Sanskrit and make deliberate use of it in places to present their discourse as something archaic and superhuman (*arṣa*). Cf. TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 27. For the following observation it is worth mentioning that the playwrights made their protagonists speak either Sanskrit or Prakrit according to their social status.

Śatarudrīya).¹⁸ Eventually the concept of Śakti, the (creative) power of the god, and personified as his spouse, grew ever stronger and more independent, superseding the male. Within India and the expanding region of Greater India, a number of transfers and transformations happened, the most important one being a growing blending of traditions and at the same time an increasing bifurcation of so-called right and left-handers. Some Tantric rites have been judged heterodox by orthodox Brahmins, while the majority of them was whole-heartedly added to the traditional Smārta rites. The early Śaiva sects already included ascetic radicals whose liberation- and divine power-seeking *mantra* practices included antinomian rites, and heterodoxy increased in the general process of globalizing Sanskrit culture in all parts of India. The left-hand Tantrics, many of them belonging to the upper, highly educated stratum of society, were ready to integrate all kinds of folk and tribal customs judged impure by the Smārta mainstream. Some of them developed a real craze for the deviant and impure (such as necrophilia, or menstrual blood, sexual fluids, faeces regarded as particularly strong power-substances),¹⁹ resulting in deliberate inclusion of radical non-conformist behaviour and wild females from folk cultures and popular Hinduism. Later Bhairava-Āgamas (including the Yāmala-Tantras) and early Kaula appear to be a result of this process, but the Kaula soon transformed itself into the more domesticated *pañcamakāra* ritual and highly interiorized forms of divine female agency. Side by side with growing and transformed heterodoxy, there was increasing inclusion in and fusion with Smārta Hinduism, due to the expanding temple culture, royal sponsorship, and not least the popularity of the non-Vedic *mantras* (not bound to twice-born) as instruments of empowerment and direct communication with superhuman forces. This Tantra-Smārta merger resulted, for instance, in a shift to pragmatic religion and non-clan-based everyday Tantra (e.g. in the development of Tantric digests with *mantras* for any deity and every situation etc.), and in mutual influence and interaction between Tantric, Purāṇic and Vedic traditions. Another result was a stronger bifurcation of right and left-hand Tantra because Tantra entered the space of Veda-based Smārta orthodoxy. In fact, so-called right-hand Tantra (starting with Āgama-based temple worship) merged so much with mainstream culture

18 More elaborately on this see ANNETTE WILKE and OLIVER MOEBUS, *Sound and Communication. An Aesthetic Cultural History of Sanskrit Hinduism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 674-684.

19 All of this is found in the *Brahmayāmala* and similar works (see HATLEY, *Brahmayāmala-tantra*, 138-141, 152, 154, 161). Regarding necrophilia one must, however, also consider that it is often visualised imagery rather than real-world practice. Here my argument on deliberate Tantric use of the reality-creating power of imagination comes into play.

that it is no longer recognized as Tantra today. The term Tantra was left to designate deviant left-hand Tantra. The connotation was one with low castes, danger, dirty things, etc., while clan-based Tantric insiders of all times saw themselves more as a spiritual elite and their rites and revelations as autonomous authority. My major point is that Tantra witnessed a highly interactional history and that various processes of negotiation took place between Tantra and normative Brahmanism which eventually transformed both. Tantra shaped “Hinduism,” and was itself reshaped. Most of the early radical so-called left-handers disappeared from the scene, while clan-based left-hand Kaulas among higher classes would heighten their codes of secrecy and be more self-assured and assertive about their Veda-superior authority. I would place Kaula works like the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* and the PKS within this trend.

Fifth, the identification of Tantra and Kaula (associated with ritualized sexuality, which has been a major factor defining Tantra in Western approaches),²⁰ rather than Tantra and Āgama (terms that are used interchangeably in the Āgama lore)²¹ or Tantra and *mantra* practice (which has been a major defining moment in Tantric insider discourses).²² The identification of Kaula and Tantra barred our understanding of Tantra as a manifold and polyvalent phenomenon that has to a large extent Śaiva-Āgamic and mantric roots and yet plural expressions since ancient times, and most of all a history of many processes of fusion, transformation and bifurcation. The focus on Kaula probably has many different reasons, or more precisely a melange of them. I suppose a not insignificant one was Kaula as the fascinating and exotic “other” par excellence – particularly if narrowed down to sexual issues. Another reason lies in the history of Western Tantra studies, which have been largely confined to Kaula or to Śrīvidyā as the latest Kaula evolute, whereas Āgama studies have emerged only in the past three decades. And finally the actual history of Tantra in India: if the historical model above is correct, Kaula was one the few remaining

20 On this construction see also URBAN, *Tantra*, op. cit. Even for Urban, however, sexuality is one of the major defining criteria (see *ibid.* I and 40).

21 See also HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, 7, fn. 20, referring to the Āgama scholar Dominic Goodall, and N. RAMACANDRA BHATT, *La Religion de Śiva* (Palaiseau: Études Āgamāt, 2000), 20f.

22 *Mantras* have been outstandingly important since the time of early Śaiva and Siddha cultures, particularly in the *Mantrapīṭha* and *Vidyāpīṭha* (distinguished by male and female *mantras*, i.e. *mantra*-deities). In later Tantra the terms Tantra and *Mantraśāstra* became practically synonyms. It should be mentioned that Bharati gave much consideration to the *mantras* as well, and Avalon was primarily concerned with the philosophy and sonic theology of *Mantraśāstra*, but less with ritual practice.

deviant systems that offended Smārta social codes and remained “visible” as Tantra. This would explain Teun Goudriaan’s observation that most literatures bearing the title “Tantra” belong to Śākta literatures of the Kaula type,²³ and corroborate his proposition that the Kaula movement is the most important and most characteristic within Tantrism.²⁴ A Kaula work of great formative influence was, according to Goudriaan, the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, which is also often glossed by Avalon and heavily quoted by the PKS (no less than 27 times). However, the *Kulārṇava* (c. 13th cent.)²⁵ already belongs to a more domesticated Kaula compared with older Kaula sources (and their wild Yoginīs) that probably developed within the Śaiva Vidyāpīṭha (centred on female *mantra*-deities and the potency of ‘impure’ ritual). The latter leads us to a pre-Kaula left-hand Tantra which is male-dominated and found in the Bhairava-Tantras or Bhairava-Āgamas. These works contain some radical, antinomian practices that apparently intensified when shifting to female dominance in Vidyāpīṭha sources (around 9th cent. or earlier), such as the *Brahmayāmala-Tantra* (one of the rare Bhairava-Āgamas which did survive). Here we find mortuary (*kāpālīka*) vows that involve things like drinking liquor from skull-cups, making fire-sacrifice in the mouths of corpses to revive the dead, offering human flesh, faeces, semen and blood from one’s own body, and also some instances of sexual ritual, because sexual fluids and menstrual blood were among the most precious power-substances for achieving supernatural powers and embodied divinity.²⁶

It is typical that the Bhairava-Āgamas (most of them extinct today) were excluded from the classical Śaiva Āgama lore, while their traditional number of sixty-four led to the indigenous tradition of speaking of sixty-four Tantras (although there are many more and opinions vary on how the number is to be achieved).²⁷ It was this radical “left-hand” section of the Śaiva Āgamas that played an important role in giving Tantra a bad name in India. Compared with it, Kaulism is more decent. Instead of ascetic

23 Cf. GOUDRIAAN and GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta literature*, 10.

24 TEUN GOUDRIAAN, “Tantrism in History,” in SANJUKTA GUPTA, DIRK JAN HOENS, and TEUN GOUDRIAAN, *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 45.

25 According to GUNNAR CARLSTEDT, *Studier i Kulārṇava-Tantra* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1974), 15, 65-66 the *Kulārṇava* must have been composed between the 11th and 15th centuries due to external evidence; WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, 152, traces it to the 13th to 14th centuries.

26 Cf. HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, 138-187. Hatley observes that ritualized sexual activity increased in course of time, when the feminine element grew stronger. This started with the Vidyāpīṭha and became a prime element in Kaula, in which, on the other hand, mortuary practice was extinguished.

27 Cf. GOUDRIAAN and GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Sakta literature*, 13-14.

mortuary and exorcist practice in lonely places, the Kaula ritual involves external and internal consorts (intoxication, bliss, *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, and the Sanskrit alphabet) and is practised behind closed doors by liberation-seeking householders. The cremation ground shifts to the body and consciousness, and we find increasingly interiorized conceptions of divine agencies, emphasis on ecstatic experience in erotic ritual, and yogic conceptions of the presence of *śaktis*; i.e. there is greater concern with internal yogic nectars than with “impure” liquids like sexual fluids and menstrual discharge.²⁸ However, exoteric manifestations did not die out, nor was the former ritual devoid of the virtual and visionary (the *Brahmayāmala* even knows the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* as inner consort, who would later simply attain much more importance).

As far as I can see there was only one late, indigenous critique to do with Kaula ritualized sexuality. It is found with the sixteenth-century Śrīvidyā purist Lakṣmīdhara who defined mere interior worship as *samaya* (orderly and orthodox post-initiatory “rule of conduct”) and accused the Kaulas of keeping the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* in the lowest body centre. It is noteworthy that Lakṣmīdhara thereby launched not only an explicit Kaula critique, but also a new definition of *samaya* (and in fact a new Samaya school). In the Āgamic lore (both the right- and left-hand type) the term simply refers to general rules for the initiates, i.e. initiatory pledges and post-initiatory stipulations of conduct (*ācāra*). *Kaula-ācāra* and *samaya-ācāra* were largely synonyms in the Kaula-Tantra and the early Śrīvidyā.²⁹ In Lakṣmīdhara the term Samaya attained the normative connotation

28 HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, 157, sees this shift (proposed by Sanderson) clearly given in a comparison of his Vidyāpīṭha source (ca. 9th cent.) with the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*. It is, however, noteworthy that the *Brahmayāmalatantra* already knows the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* related to the alphabet (ibid. 367).

29 Cf. PADOUX, *Coeur de la Yoginī*, 257, and the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 2.38, 5.96, 7.44, 11.99f., 12.62, 14.5. A similar usage of the term is found in PKS 7.1 and 10.68 (see also 10.80). It refers to a rule-governed conduct pertaining to ethics, doctrine, secret knowledge, and ritual (including the five Ms). According to *Kulārṇava* 2.14-16 the *dharma* or *samaya* of the Kaulas is the best of all *samayas*. In the common Āgamic lore the term is used in the general sense of “rule” and in later Āgamas also more technically as the first rank of initiation (*samaya-dīksā*) within a graded system of four types of practitioners or initiates (Samayin, Putraka, Sādhaka, and Guru/Ācārya). These initiations are also mentioned in the *Kulārṇava* 14.40 besides a number of other ones, but not in the PKS. However, there is another spiritual ranking system in these two Kaula texts, namely seven *ullāsas* (mystical grades). This ranking appears to be less institutionalized. The *ullāsas* do not seem to be bound to particular initiations, but to be of a more charismatic and ecstatic type (depending on the glasses of wine and immersion in the deity). Stipulated *samaya* applies only up to the grade of the “mature” or “adult,” whereas the “post-mature” states enjoy autonomy.

of “proper,” “orderly,” “orthodox” and “brahmanic”; everything that in his eyes the Kaula was not. Viewed through the sources I am going to discuss, Lakṣmīdhara was not only the founder of a new Samaya school that favoured particular forms of interior worship, but also created a split between Kaula and Samaya that did not exist before and is conspicuously absent in the PKS. There is a consistency from the *Brahmayāmala* to the *Kulārṇava* to the PKS that left-hand body-practice is itself the established norm and proper conduct, if performed according to the school’s own pledges, rules and regulations. Both Lakṣmīdhara’s redefinition of Samaya and his attack of certain meditational practices of the Kaulas are of particular interest for my discussion. His construction was greatly influential in the Śrīvidyā of Southern India where it combined easily with the moral norms and religious sentiments of the Śaṅkarācāryas and Smārta Brahmins, so that Samaya and right-hand worship became largely synonymous. Douglas R. Brooks notes that the Samaya-Kaula distinction constitutes the major issue of factionalism among contemporary Śrīvidyā practitioners in Tamil Nadu.³⁰ At the heart of the issue are the *pañcamakāra* and their dissociation from the Śrīvidyā which goes as far as to prohibit the inclusion of controversial Kaula practice in scripture and edit it out of older sources.

Tantric history reveals that it was not mere Orientalism which led scholars to select the Kaula, but it also shows that left-hand Tantra had many more facets and witnessed more than one transformation. Maybe the most important one was brought about by Abhinavagupta’s discovery of interior sense in body-ritual, which was formative for classical Kaula as well. Remarkably, even Lakṣmīdhara’s critique started at the level of sacred symbolism and visualising practice of the yogic body and the *kuṇḍalinī* energy-consciousness. In fact, real-world intercourse was not even the primary focus of attack. Kaula practices of interiority have incited controversy, right up to contemporary Samaya-Kaula debates. For my argument of the reality-creating power of imagination this will be of particular interest. It is equally noteworthy that Lakṣmīdhara’s sole concern with interior ritual was not even followed by the right-hand Śrīvidyā, in which there is clear shift of attention from the body to the mind. Most practitioners see themselves as Samayins (as opposed to Kaula), but of course they will worship the physical *śrīcakra* diagram and the image of the goddess.

Sixth, a further problematic area is the *inherent* difficulty of studying Tantra. Scholars have to tackle a vast body of anonymous works and traditions. Besides numerous literatures that are called Tantra, or alternatively Āgama (like all the Siddhānta-Tantras), there are literatures bearing other

30 BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom*, 21, 27, 180.

names, like the Yāmālas, and finally, there is a large number of hybrid texts such as certain Purāṇas like the *Devī-Bhāgavatam*. Most of these texts are of uncertain date and many practices they speak about have not survived. Many unedited manuscripts await publication. Furthermore, there are translation problems and difficulties in understanding and accessing the texts: early Tantric sources are often written in a hybrid Sanskrit and are cryptic, and later sources use a difficult twilight language and deliberate encodings, stipulate secrecy etc. Scholars who are generally not initiates (unlike Avalon or Bharati) have to deal with initiatory traditions, i.e. often several increasingly complex initiations that establish the competence to use certain sacred formulas and perform certain rites. Much of it is available only through oral communication, and moreover, the oral lore is much more extensive than the written tradition and often different from it. If commentaries exist that give better access to the secret practices and help decode the *mantras* etc., they are generally extremely bulky, do not clarify their references etc. All Tantric texts require a lot of training in Tantric terminology. Many are compilations and much knowledge is needed to understand the hidden citations and glosses. The PKS and its commentaries mirror all these difficulties. This is one of the reasons why my paper is exploratory rather than a completed examination of the field.

The Śrīvidyā of the PKS and its “Kaula cosmopolis”

The PKS unfolds a detailed ritual process in ten chapters, starting with initiation (ch. 1) and followed by the daily ritual sequences of the *kula*-clan’s major (*mantra*-)deities: the lord of obstacles Gaṇapati (ch. 2), the chief goddess Lalitā, the queen of the jewel island (ch. 3-5), her minister Śyāmā (secretly called Mātāṅgī), the goddess of music and dance (ch. 6), her fierce commander-in-chief Vārāhī (ch. 7), and Parā who is qualified as Lalitā’s “auspicious heart,” i.e. her “supreme” nature and inner essence (ch. 8). The final chapters are on Tantric fire sacrifice (ch. 9) and an integrated view of the *mantra*-deities (ch. 10). The hybrid character of the PKS can already be inferred from its self-identification: it refers to its legendary author Paraśurāma as “great Kaula master” (colophons) and calls itself proudly the “great Upaniṣad” (PKS 10.83). The worship of all the deities comprises extensive *mantra* practices, visualisations and *kunḍalinī yoga*, and also exoteric worship including wine, meat and intercourse, except for Parā, whose exoteric rites are restricted to alcohol or pieces of meat, etc. soaked in alcohol. While Lalitā is undoubtedly the chief deity (having three chapters devoted to her), Parā seems to be the secret, esoteric core of the whole PKS. Lalitā is particularly associated with eroticism and language/alphabet

rites (the symbolic idea seems to be that both are world-creating), and Parā with the principles of the universe (*tattvas*), the yogic body-centres and the seed-sound of liberation SAUḤ. Parā is most related to *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*, gnostic knowledge and cosmic awareness. Her rites are almost exclusively associated with internal worship. She does not even have a ritual diagram, because the cosmos itself, i.e. the 36 cosmic principles (*tattva*) constitute her *yantra*. In her worship the *tattvas* are absorbed and purified by visualising practices in the yogic *cakras*. The (typically Trika) goddess Parā mirrors most the Kashmirian backgrounds of non-dual philosophy. She is associated with *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, illumination and reflection, i.e. the supreme light and the dynamic consciousness, energetic power and bliss of the supreme I.³¹

The PKS is highly ritual-oriented, but clearly presupposes Abhinavagupta's "gnostic" version of Kashmir Śaivism with which it shares major philosophical tenets and terminology. However, in contrast to Abhinavagupta (early 11th cent.), who was more interested in wild deities and metaphorically coded Kaula³² than in the Veda (which in fact was unimportant to him), the PKS is eagerly interested in attaching itself to the Veda (see below) and to Vedāntic terminology, combining non-dual Upaniṣadic language with Kashmir Śaiva and Śaiva-Śākta expressions of non-dual existence. Instead of the terrifying god Bhairava and the dangerous, spooky Yoginīs of the Vidyāpīṭha and the early Kaula, there is a much more elegant female-dominated pantheon of *mantra*-deities. The PKS is clearly a Śrīvidyā text whose centre is the beautiful, benign Lalitā worshiped in the *srīcakra*-diagram. Only Vārāhī kept some terrifying and bloodthirsty traits that recall the former Yoginī cults. Unlike the rest of the PKS-deities she is worshiped at midnight and receives blood offerings during *bali* sacrifice (PKS 7.34). Her "very dark" features are expressed in names and *mantras* that call on Vārāhī and her attendants to strike and kill, to drink the

31 The PKS clearly presupposes the merger of Kaula, Trika and Krama strands of Tantra with Pratibhijñā philosophy and linguist/sonic metaphysics that are typical of the non-dualist Kashmir Śaivism of Abhinavagupta. We find not only the Trika's seed-syllable SAUḤ, but also Krama's seed-syllable KḤPHREM (PKS 10.25). In consonance with Abhinavagupta's designation of the Trika's supreme goddess we find the name Parābhaṭṭārikā in the most crucial place of the Parā cycle (PKS 8.21) where three-fold immersion is described: the non-conceptual, immersion through conceptual thought, and immersion through meditational and ritual activity. On these features of Abhinavagupta's teachings, see SANDERSON, "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir," 363, 372, 377.

32 See, for instance, his *Tantrāloka* 37.42 which hints at the dreadful *karāṇa-devīs* of *Netra-Tantra* 10 and the intoxication by ritually consumed alcohol in a highly poetic, metaphorical way, or *Tantrāloka* 37.45 speaking of flowers, but actually alluding to sexual intercourse.

enemies' blood and sperm, and bring the practitioner success. Vārāhī is seen as the “judge” and protector of the school's *samaya* (the Kaulas' secret teachings, rules and moral codes). Her protective function, autonomy and uninhibited commanding power to punish evildoers, to bind, conceal, and control, and to bestow favours, grace and enlightenment to the initiated peer-group members, are absorbed by the ritual agent after strict *mantra* practice (cf. PKS 7.1, 7.38 and Rāmeśvara's comments). While the objective of the Vārāhī ritual seems to be more profane than spiritual, the other ritual cycles aim more at spiritual effects than profane ones.

The PKS shares the Veda-Tantra merger and its major goddess Lalitā worshiped in the *śrīcakra* with the South Indian Śrīvidyā common among Śaiva-Smārta Brahmins and the monastic Śaṅkarācāryas. It is, however, a completely different hybrid. The agents and transmitters have apparently been Brahmins, but not monastics until lately. They were rather cosmopolitan free-thinkers, educated town-dwellers and members of the royal court, particularly the court of Tanjore. The PKS urges a reflected use of the *pañcamakāra*; in order to enjoy them without disturbance one should consider the situation, social conventions, different countries' customs, and one's well-being, health, and age (PKS 10.56). Alcoholic beverages should be prepared according to the custom of the region (10.62). Caste identities are to be surmounted, and purity codes become irrelevant for those rooted in the *kula*-family's own duties that lead to emancipation while living (*jīvanmukta*) and final liberation when dying (10.70, 10.82). There is an ideology free of castes which has been always typical of Kaula (at least within the ritual context). But the wealth of ritual paraphernalia needed (perfumes, beautiful garments etc.), the preciousness of the materials suggested for the production of the ritual diagrams, the Sanskrit knowledge and the free time presupposed, hint at the well-off higher classes. Even the goddess pantheon and its partially military language seem to reflect a courtly milieu. The chief deity Lalitā is the queen of the universe, residing on the jewel island in a palace made of precious stones. The royal Lalitā is far away from the wild deities and bloodthirsty flying witches whom even the Kaula reformers of Kashmir were crazy about. But she is equally far away from the Lalitā of the Śaṅkarācāryas. Her erotic features are more than metaphors. She is the deity whose Śakti-worship, i.e. the worship of a human representative, should as a rule invariably involve all *pañcamakāra*. Regarding sexual intercourse, the only inhibiting rule is that the woman must show signs of agreement. If she signals sexual arousal she *must* be satisfied; if she signals disinterest, she must be left alone (PKS 10.69). Strict secrecy is stipulated. Most of these ethical codes are more or less directly borrowed from the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, with which the PKS also shares a number of other features.

The deliberate Kaula confession stands out when compared with the more common form of South Indian Śrīvidyā. The PKS regards its own world-view and ritual practice as the true interpretation of the Veda and ultimately superior to it. In contrast to the Śrīvidyā of the Śaṅkarācāryas, which extinguished ritual substances and procedures that were offensive to the Brahmanic system of purity, the PKS may be characterized as a left-hand Śrīvidyā, in which the Veda becomes completely overlaid and absorbed by the Kaula. The *pañcamakāra* are declared as conforming to the Vedic system. And this continued and intensified in Umānanda's ritual elaboration *Nityotsava* (1745) and the learned commentaries of Rāmeśvara (1832) and Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe (1889) in the early and late 19th century. All these authors were Maharashtra Brahmins, and at least Umānanda had close connections with the Tanjore court where he spent part of his life.

The combination of Lalitā and Parā, as well as the pair Śyāmā and Vārāhī subordinated to Lalitā, point to South India as the place of origin, and more specifically to Kanchi, Tamilnadu.³³ But in fact, it is hard to discern with certainty where the PKS actually comes from because of the highly composite nature of the text.³⁴ The largest number of parallels is apparently found in those sources which are in all likelihood of Southern Indian origin, but altogether the parallels go far beyond South India and the Śrīvidyā school. The PKS incorporates and mirrors verses and ideas from Tantras from all parts of India. With some caution I would call it a late "Kaula summa." In the sixteenth century (the time when the PKS was most probably composed)³⁵ such a summa may have been particularly necessary

33 The early exchange between South India and Kashmir regarding the Śrīvidyā and the Trika goddess Parā was variously noted in scholarship, and even today (right-hand) Śrīvidyā is very popular in Tamil Nadu, where Lalitā has her seat in Kanchi. The conceptualization of Śyāmā and Vārāhī as Lalitā's minister or commander-in-chief is also known to the *Lalitā-Sahasranāma* that mirrors right-hand and left-hand Śrīvidyā/Kaula conceptions. The PKS has still a living tradition in contemporary Kerala (and a few circles in Maharashtra). It is up to fieldwork studies to discern whether it is practised in Kerala the Kaula way or whether right-hand Śrīvidyā prevails as in Tamil Nadu, where the PKS appears to play no further role nowadays, although it informed some ritual traditions like the one of the dancing Śiva in Cidambaram and enjoys invisible presence in Kaula-purged forms.

34 The major sources appear to be the *Subhagodaya*, *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, and maybe the *Paramānanda-Tantra* (uncertain date) which are quoted or glossed extensively, but there are many parallels or even verbatim correspondences with many other earlier and later Tantric sources, such as the *Śrīvidyārṇava-Tantra* (very frequent), *Gandharva-Tantra*, *Prapañcasāra-Tantra*, *Śaradā-Tilaka*, *Kālī-Tantra*, *Tantrarāja-Tantra*, *Śyāmā-Rahasya*, *Mantramahodadhi* etc.

35 The first mention is found in Kṛṣṇānanda's *Tantrasāra* (1582); the oldest preserved manuscript dates from 1675. The earliest commentary is attributed to Bhāskararāya (17th cent.), which is, however, no longer extant. On the manuscript tradition see CLAUDIA

to preserve Kaula knowledge, due to the criticism of Lakṣmīdhara, who regarded even Kaula interiorized body-practice as “un-Vedic” and “non-spiritual.” In contrast, the PKS shows how Vedic and spiritual Kaula body-practice actually is. It projects a similarly idealized timeless and placeless Kaula like Avalon’s apology for Tantra some centuries later. I will come back to these issues when discussing the Veda-Tantra merger and creative imagination, since the PKS not only differs from Lakṣmīdhara, but also from Avalon’s presentation of the yogic *cakras* and *kunḍalinī-yoga*. But my major point is that there was obviously a common stock of Tantric/Kaula-Tantric ideas and practices in nearly all parts of India at least since the 16th century,³⁶ which are assembled in the PKS and cast into a new, highly sophisticated integrated whole.³⁷ Although a well-informed reader will detect variations in the number and ritual conception of the yogic *cakras* etc., he will find a similar predilection for *kunḍalinī-yoga*, philosophy of bliss and internalized ritual, as in Avalon’s writings. So it remains striking that the PKS mirrors a sort of cosmopolitan, universal Tantra in pre-colonial times, which resembles Avalon’s unified Tantrism that was charged with heavy Orientalism and essentialism. Avalon apparently did not know the PKS, but used partly the same, partly analogous texts for his representation. Avalon’s pretended congruence with the Veda is very much there in the PKS.

I consider the PKS to be of particular interest both for theorising about Tantra and for considering its historical development. The PKS defies linear developments and reveals that Tantric history remained confusingly complex and opaque even during an epoch when the heyday of Tantra (lasting from the 5th to the 13th cent.) was actually over. By this time Tantra had

WEBER, “Manuskripte des Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra und seiner Kommentartradition,” *Münchener Indologische Zeitschrift* 1, 2008/09: 186-207.

- 36 The widespread dissemination of common Tantric ideas and practices and even of individual lineages seems to have a much older history – at least on the conceptual level. Remarkably, the *Brahmayāmala* (probably composed between the 7th and the early 9th centuries) already claims a pan-South Asian genealogy. Cf. HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, 228, 231-236, who considers this claim not totally implausible. He suspects a rural social milieu in Orissa to be the most probable place of origin. The conceptual framework was apparently a topographic *maṇḍala* that encompassed central India and the Deccan, the North-Indian heartland, and Orissa and Bengal. Possibly such a topographic *maṇḍalic* scheme is also the secret superstructure of the four goddesses of the PKS (whose major cults go back to different regions).
- 37 Regarding the artistic combination see ANNETTE WILKE, “Basic Categories of a Syntactical Approach to Rituals: Arguments for a ‘Unitary Ritual View’ and the Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra as ‘Test-Case,’” in *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*, ed. AXEL MICHAELS and ANAND MISHRA (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 215-261.

largely merged with Hindu mainstream culture, and vernacular *bhakti* traditions gained prominence in defining Hindu identities. On the one hand the PKS reveals continuities within the older Kaula strand, while on the other it indeed mirrors transfers and transformations within the Kaula-Tantra and Tantric history in general. What stands out the most is its keen interest in the Veda combined with a pronounced Kaula confession³⁸ and the interface of exterior and interior visionary ritual. The PKS apparently holds the middle ground between the Kashmirian Kaula and the South Indian “Vedicization” and “Vedāntization.” Its “step ahead” towards domestication will become clear when compared with the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* that itself already continued the Kaula reform that started in Kashmir. When it comes to theorising about Tantra, the PKS is revealing for its virtuoso blending together of exterior and interior ritual and the real and the virtual body.

The PKS was the script for many ritual elaborations, including rather recent ones such as Chidananda Natha’s *Śrīvidyā-Saparyā-Paddhati* (*Śrīcakrārcana-Dīpikā*) and Swami Karpatri’s *Śrīvidyā-Ratnākara* composed in the 1940s and 1950s. Whereas the *Śrīvidyā-Ratnākara* is quiet about the *pañcamakāra* and sexual practices, earlier commentators defended the “real thing.” But in fact, this substantial difference is not easy to discern, since the *pañcamakāra* and particularly intercourse are communicated in a rather hidden and cryptic way and remain almost invisible to a casual glance, because the verbal material and techniques of imagination are much more dominant.

There can be no doubt, however, that the PKS makes use of the *pañcamakāra*, and does so in a highly rule-governed manner. All the sequences of worship (*krama*) have strictly parallel structures that contain some permutations and inversions increasing with each successive chapter. The structural pattern (even in some of the detail) is well known from other Tantric rituals, too. I mention only the rough structural outlines of each deity cycle,³⁹ part of which will be discussed more elaborately below:

- (1) Tantrified sunrise-worship (or midnight worship), including the visionary showering of the body with the water of immortality flowing from the thousand-petalled lotus on the top of the head (the seat of the guru’s sandals and of the divine pair Kāmeśvara and Kāmeśvarī, denoting the merger of Paramaśiva and Parā in one’s consciousness) and *japa* of the root-*mantra*

38 The inspiration was probably the *Kulārṇava* 2.65 that identifies the Kaula scriptures and the Veda.

39 For a detailed description and analysis see WILKE, “Basic Categories,” op. cit.

- (2) preliminary rites to sanctify the place (worship of door, seat, and lamps, ritual diagram, and *mantra*) and deify the body (*bhūtasuddhi* and *nyāsa*)
- (3) ordinary water-*arghya* and special alcoholic-*arghya* (associated with *kāmakalā* symbolism and the A-Ka-Tha-triangle)
- (4) worship of the physically and/or mentally created image (exoteric *upacāras* or mental *upacāras* in Lalitā's case and *cakra-/kuṇḍalīmī-yoga* in Parā's case)
- (5) worship of the ritual diagram (*āvaraṇa-pūjā* of each deity-*yantra*, except for Parā, whose "diagram" is the cosmos, i.e. the 32 cosmic principles that are mentally absorbed, "melted" and purified in the *mūlādhāra*, navel, and heart, and "sacrificed" into the supreme light)
- (6) image worship continued (*tarpana*, *upacāras* with cooked food) and in Lalitā's case also *kāmakalā* meditation and visualisation of her "auspicious heart," i. e. SAUḤ (Parā's *bīja-mantra*)
- (7) concluding rites comprising Śakti-worship (with or without sexual intercourse), fire sacrifice, and meal
- (8) dismissal rites (withdrawing the deities into the heart; in Śyāmā's case special rules of social behaviour; in Parā's case no dismissal rites)

My focus will be on the Veda-Tantra merger and typical Kaula body-practices to elaborate the self-positioning of the PKS against the background of earlier Kaula body-practices and spiritualized Śrīvidyā eroticism (*kāmakalā*-meditation).

The Veda-Tantra merger and the PKS' politics of representation

Veda and (Kaula-)Tantra, respectively "Vedic" and "Tantric" (*vaidika* and *tāntrika*), have often been cast as opposite ends of the spectrum of Hinduism in etic and emic sources, and there are reasons for this. But the relationship is much more complex⁴⁰ and depends on the perspective taken. Within the Tantric traditions the relationship to the Veda ranged from disinterest (probably the most common case), or simple acceptance and even verbal respect although a ritual course of extreme impurity was followed (e.g. in the *Brahmayāmala*), to heavy censure (some later Kaula texts), or the other

40 On this subject see also GOUDRIAAN, "Tantrism in History," in GUPTA et al. *Hindu Tantrism*, 15-17; SANDERSON, "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions," 661; BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom*, 92-97, 103-105, 149-151; JÜRGEN HANNEDER, "Vedic and Tantric Mantras," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 71 (1997): 147-168; and the articles of LORENZEN, BROOKS and COBURN in HARPER and BROWN (eds.), *Roots of Tantra*, 25-36, 57-75, 77-89.

way round to the claim to be the true original Veda (Pāñcarātra) or the better revelation, more powerful soteriology and final source of the Veda itself (partly Śaiva Āgama). More “conformist” adaptations see themselves as Veda-congruent and even declare themselves to be “*upāsana khaṇḍa*,” the third, esoteric Veda section devoted to meditation (right-hand Śrīvidyā). Among Brahmins, for instance in Nepal and South India, combined Vedic and Tantric ritual practice is quite common, while “impure” substances are treated differently (regional varieties of Hindu Tantra).

The PKS fits more or less into all these categories, except the first. It shows anything but disinterest. On the contrary, its interest in the Veda is extraordinary and the deliberate merger by recoding the Veda in a Tantric way is one of its most defining features.⁴¹ This merger is no smooth Veda-Tantra continuum as in the well known South Indian Śrīvidyā, although the PKS draws heavily on the Vedic tradition, too. It is rather a complete transformation of the Veda. Some of the features of Tantricizing Vedic elements are widespread in the Tantric literature, such as adaptations of the *Gāyatrī-mantra* and the sunrise-ritual (*sandhyā*),⁴² and particularly of the fire-sacrifice (*homa*). The PKS both includes Vedic *mantras* (from the Ṛgveda, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads)⁴³ and mimics Vedic/Upaniṣadic imagery. The important Tantric Arghya-rite (the alcoholic “special *arghya*”) makes use of Ṛgvedic *mantras* combined with Tantric ones.⁴⁴ This is most

41 See also ANNETTE WILKE, “Negotiating Tantra and Veda in the Paraśurāma-Kalpa tradition,” in *Negotiating Rites*, ed. UTE HÜSKEN and FRANK NEUBERT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2011). Above I summarize some major tenets and introduce some new perspectives.

42 In the PKS all deities, except for Vārāhī who is worshiped at midnight, are associated with the Brahmanic sunrise ritual (PKS 2.2; 3.2-6; 6.3-5; 8.4-5), the most Vedic one which persists in daily Hindu worship. The Vedic-Brahmanic worship of the sun, the water offerings and the repetition of the *Gāyatrī-mantra* are blended with Tantric features, such as invoking the guru and the goddess in the *brahmarandhra-cakra* and visualising a stream of nectarine mental water of immortality and bliss bathing and cleaning the interior body. We find repetition of the root-*mantra* of the goddess, visualisation of the goddess in the rising sun and Tantric *Gāyatrī-mantras* for Gaṇeśa and Lalitā. These latter features are exactly the same in the (modern) Kaula ritual reported by BHARATI, *Tantric Traditions*, 247-248.

43 See PKS 2.2, 3.26, 3.31, 10.10-11, 10.20.

44 The Arghya-ritual, known in right and left-hand Tantra, is particularly informative about recoding the natural with cosmic symbolism, and performed with (perfumed) water in the right-hand ritual. It is a fixed element in the Āgama culture and the same ritual pattern will be found in many Tantric sources. Some, such as the *Śyāmā-Rahasya*, include the same *mantras* from the Ṛgveda 4.40.5, 1.154.2, 7.59.12, 1.22.20f., 10.184.1f. like the PKS (representing the five cosmic gods Brahma, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśāna, Sadāśiva), whereas others, such as the *Subhagodaya* (being the oldest Śrīvidyā source which informed the

impressive in Lalitā's special *arghya*, i.e. the transubstantiation rite which converts liquor into the nectar-water of immortality, i.e. the "ever wet" goddess Lalitā herself who is thereafter "offered into the *kuṇḍalini*" (by sipping a drop of the liquid goddess in the form of alcohol).⁴⁵ More important than direct adaptations of Vedic *mantras* are, however, the implicit adaptations in the form of rhetoric and Upaniṣad-like formulas. These are spread throughout the text and found most markedly in the programmatic first chapter, which relates to the rules of initiation.

It is striking that the deliberate Veda-Tantra merger becomes obvious from the first Sūtra (PKS 1.1) onwards: "Hence we unfold initiation" (*athāto dīkṣām vyākhyāsyāmah*). This formula imitates verbatim the famous Mīmāṃsā Sūtras. However, the Veda is clearly subordinated. Whereas the Veda-orthodox Brahmins regard the Veda as having no beginning and no author, PKS 1.2 postulates that the Veda originated from the supreme godhead Śiva⁴⁶ who revealed the Tantric lineages that alone grant liberation. The cosmology and ritual practice is clearly Śaiva-Tantric: 36 principles make up the world and there is essential non-duality between the supreme godhead and the individual (PKS 1.3-6). The *mantras* and the *pañcamakāra* are marked out as most important practices (1.7-8; 1.12) for attaining Śivahood. The power of *mantras* is said to be unfathomable. The major *mantras* are of course Tantric seed-syllables (*bījas*, generally given in encoded form) or *bījas* combined with revealingly Tantric goddess names and epithets. But there is also inclusion of Vedic *mantras* at those critical points where liquor, the first M, most offensive to the Vedic world-view, plays the chief role in ritual and where the highly erotic, "ever wet" goddess Lalitā is visualised. Already in the initiation chapter, the "five Ms," (1) liquor (*madya*), (2) meat (*māmsa*), (3) fish (*matsya*), (4) roasted

PKS), do not include the Vedic *mantras*. In the PKS there are two *arghyas*, the ordinary one performed with water and the special one performed with alcohol (PKS 2.5-6; 3.22-31; 6.18-19; 7.10-11, 18; 8.11-12). Both the vessels filled with liquid are worshiped as representations of the cosmos and its divine source, but the alcoholic *arghya* involves highly symbolic extra features, such as the letter ī (in the centre of the Arghya-diagram or drawn into the liquid) representative of the goddess' sexual parts (*kāmakalā*), the letters of the alphabet in the order of the A-Ka-Tha-triangle, and a large set of *mantras*, including the Ṛgvedic ones and other Vedic imagery. The special *arghya* is closely related to the worship of the feet/sandals of the guru and of the divine pair Śiva and Śakti, which have been mentally established on the head of the disciple by the guru during initiation.

45 See PKS 3.28ff. and 3.31 using a *mantra* from the *Taittirīya-Araṇyaka* 10.1.15. For a similar meditation on the goddess in alcohol, but not including Vedic *mantras*, see Bharati's *Tantric Traditions*, 259-260.

46 This postulate predates the PKS. It will be also found in some Āgamas and the Śaiva-Tamil poetry tradition (which frequently combines Tantra and *bhakti*).

and spiced chickpeas, beans, or grains (*mudrā*), and (5) sexual intercourse (*maithuna*),⁴⁷ are declared to be in conformity with the Vedic system. They make the bliss of Brahman an embodied experience (PKS 1.12). This postulate differs greatly from the abstract bliss of Śaṅkara's Advaita-Vedānta and it also differs substantially from the Śrīvidyā of the Śaṅkarācāryas, whose highly Vedānticised version is found in the *Lalitātrīṣati-Bhāṣya*,⁴⁸ a commentary on the three-hundred names of Lalitā Devī who is also the chief goddess of the PKS. In the PKS we find a lot of Vedānta, too. Consider PKS 1.28: "There is nothing higher than reaching the Ātman." Such Upaniṣad-like statements, occurring throughout the text, will always be combined with physical activities and visualizing practices. The final aim is embodied perfection and divine power; or in the words of PKS 10.50 to become Śiva in all one's limbs, i.e. to attain corporal emancipation while living.

This embodiment is not least guaranteed by the *pañcamakāra*, of which alcohol is the major substance. In this aspect and many others the PKS follows the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*,⁴⁹ one of the most important Kaula texts and composed around the 13th century. In fact, the *Kulārṇava* was the source of the most daring assertions found in PKS 1.12 and 1.30. Both are almost verbatim quotations. While PKS 1.12 postulates that the bliss of Brahman resides in the body and is made manifest by the *pañcamakāra*, the *Kulārṇava* (5.80) states that liquor makes the Brahman bliss manifest. PKS 1.30 equates the Veda with a prostitute, while praising its own tradition as higher secret knowledge, just as the *Kulārṇava* (11.85) did. Both Tantric sources are not really criticisms or opposites of the Veda. They regard prostitutes as highly venerable. There is a rule in the PKS that prostitutes, vessels for alcohol, cremation grounds, elephants in the rut, etc. should be given respect (PKS 10.66), and this rule again comes from

47 The PKS mentions only the summarizing term "*pañcamakāra*" and never the proper names. If individual Ms are part of a ritual, relational terms are used (*ādima*, *upādima*, etc.). Familiarity with them is taken for granted.

48 Cf. ANNETTE WILKE, "A New Theology of Bliss: 'Vedāntization' of Tantra and 'Tantrization' of Advaita-Vedānta in the *Lalitātrīṣati-Bhāṣya*," in *Sāmarasya. Studies in Indian Arts, Philosophy and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. S. DAS and E. FÜRLINGER (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005), 149-175.

49 The PKS inherits a number of core ideas from this Tantra, or a common stock of ideas inspired by this Tantra. It shares the centrality of the *Parā-bīja* SAUḤ and its interpretation as the merger of the female and male godhead and the underlying unity of the cosmos, the credit given to the Veda while calling it a "prostitute," the predilection for pleasant wines, the interiorized sacrifice of the Kaula-Tantric yogi, Tantric ethics, etc. But in many ways the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* is more extreme, while the PKS is more inclusive regarding the Vedic tradition.

the *Kulārṇava* (II.57-58). Calling the Veda a prostitute is an interesting twist. Here “prostitute” apparently means something exterior and publicly available. The Veda is seen as the exterior, outermost layer of the more esoteric Tantric tradition that is regarded as more powerful soteriology than the Veda-determined values.⁵⁰ There is great stress on strict secrecy that belongs to the ethical code of Tantric behaviour, just as on a positive attitude towards the *pañcamakāra* and the requirement to eventually give up caste affiliations. All of this correlates with the *Kulārṇava*, but the PKS shows much greater interest in deliberately associating and merging with the Veda. Correspondingly, there is greater secrecy and discretion regarding the *pañcamakāra*. They are never mentioned by name, but instead by relational terms (the first, the middle one, etc.). There is much stronger ritual control and Kaula practice becomes almost invisible. Although the PKS borrows extensively from the famous 13th-century source by quoting it at least 27 times more or less verbatim, the following daring verses of the *Kulārṇava* are conspicuously missing:

Only by ecstatic delight is the goddess satisfied. By his (alcohol) delirium he [i.e. the Tantric hero “satisfies” or “becomes”] (Śiva-)Bhairava, and by his vomiting all the gods. (*Kulārṇava* 7.101)⁵¹

Excited by passion, treating other men as their own beloved, the ladies act wantonly. Men also, exhilarated in extreme ecstasy (*prauḍhānta-ullāsa*), behave likewise. Intoxicated men embrace men... Yogis take food from each other’s vessels and, putting the drinking pots on their heads, dance around. Filling wine in their mouths they make ladies drink it from their lips. Putting pungent things in their mouths they transfer them to the mouth of their beloved. The Kula-Śaktis ... sing songs whose words are indistinct, and tottering dance around. Exhilarated Yogis fall on the ladies, and intoxicated ladies fall upon men. (*Kulārṇava* 8.67-74)⁵²

For the *Kulārṇava*, these agents indulging in heavy drinking and sexual liberty are higher yogis, the post-mature heroes, who have lost their normal state of mind and are intoxicated with the wine of god Bhairava. Here we encounter a very powerful example of imagination as a creative ‘machine’ to recode the real and animate the imaginary. Excessive drinking is conceived

50 This corresponds to what SANDERSON, “Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions,” 660-661, pointed out as a major Tantric feature.

51 *ānandāt tṛpyate devī mūrccchayā bhairavaḥ svayam | vamanāt sarva-devās ca tasmāt tri-vidham ācaret ||* The famous verse is also quoted in PKS(Ba), p. 184, line 17f. as part of an extensive discussion of alcohol consumption in Rāmeśvara’s commentary on PKS 5.22 (prescribing the consumption of “the rest of sacrifice”).

52 I have adopted here RAM KUMAR RAI’s translation (Varanasi 1983), 152-153, except for a slight change in style regarding KT 8.67.

of as a form of possession trance. It invariably belongs to the higher mystical grades.⁵³ The Tantric “hero,” who has reached “post-maturity,” is in an exalted state of mind beyond ordinary consciousness. Engrossed in ecstatic god-consciousness, rapture and divine madness he has lost all fear of hell. The PKS mentions these grades but does not describe them (PKS 10.68). The commentators are a bit more explicit. They quote Tantric passages about holy frenzy and explain them with great empathy. They have particularly long glosses on alcohol and how it is produced. They also regard alcohol consumption as necessary for Brahmins. The consumption apparently increases with the stages of maturity and “heroic” post-maturity. Umānanda’s *Nityotsava* allows extra portions of alcohol to be added after the *pūjā* when consuming the food and drink as holy “rest of sacrifice.” But Rāmeśvara censures this custom because it is not prescribed in the PKS. Concerning the notorious “Fifth,” sexual intercourse, they are largely in agreement. It is a must like the other *pañcamakāra* and substitution is allowed only when the real thing is not available. The PKS is extremely short and cryptic about this part of the ritual, and even the commentators disagree on whether all the cycles involve sexual intercourse or only the cycle of Lalitā. In any case, the woman or girl must agree (PKS 10.69). Sexual rites belong to the ritual obligations amongst other ritual duties, i.e. they are not particularly stressed, and alcoholic beverages seem to be at least as important.⁵⁴ They have been seen in Kaula cults as self-revelation of the deity. Their consumption meant literally absorbing the essence of the godhead in the body. The intoxication was a state of divine possession and divine bliss. Sexual union apparently had a similar function, the immediate participation in the godhead. It may be an obsession of Western recipients to emphasize so much the sexual elements only, because alcohol is socially accepted and even part of the Christian mass. Sexual rites may be less provocative in the Indian tradition than other transgressions, and there are reasons to suppose that for the Kaula Tantrics themselves alcoholic liquor

53 See *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 8.4(-6, 83, 93-95) and PKS 10.68, in which seven initiatory stages or “mystical” grades (*ullāsa*) are mentioned, starting with the “beginner” and going up to the “Praudhānta” and beyond – the last one apparently denoting states of complete rapture far beyond the “mature” (*prauḍha*). See also Rāmeśvara, PKS(Ba), p. 281.18f. on PKS 10.68, and LAKṢMAṆA RĀNAḌE, STV(Ms), vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 148 and 195.

54 The most often mentioned items throughout the PKS are alcohol and meat, which are often combined (meat soaked in liquor) when being offered to gratify the deities. Alcohol is particularly important in the “special *arghya*” ritual and is invariably one of the offerings to the human Śakti and the consumption of food and drink (“the rest of sacrifice”) after the ritual is over. For the priority of alcohol see also Umānanda’s *Nityotsava*, Rāmeśvara’s commentary on PKS 3.31, 5.22, 10.62, and the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 5.11-43, 5.77-85, 7.81-102, and other passages.

may have been a more important and equally exciting means of stimulating bliss in the body and making divine autonomy, creativity and non-dual rapture a sensuous and corporal experience.

Instead of ecstasy and frenzy, in the PKS we find excess control by aesthetic and gnostifying cognitive attracters, cultivated behaviour and most of all strict ritual and rule governance. But the difference from the *Kulārṇava* is only one of degree (alcohol consumption, etc., yes of course, but only in highly rule-governed fashion), or may possibly be explained by increased secrecy (since the *Kulārṇava* stresses rule-governance, too, in the previous and succeeding chapters, while even the PKS 10.68 acknowledges freedom from rules in the higher state of god-immersion). Revolting passages like those of the *Kulārṇava* would sound to outsiders like wild drinking parties and libertine group sex. Even taken as mere literary topoi they must have been particularly shocking and revolting (and for the insiders particularly emancipatory) in a society with exceptionally rigid social codes and grids. It is easy to conceive why circles like Śaṅkarācāryas did not approve of Kaula practice. So much physical god-consciousness that the Kaula “hero” is expected to embody would not quite fit (even as a literary topos) with the propriety codes of celibate monks, nor even meet the taste of the ordinary Smārta and Śaiva householder. But orthodoxy and heterodoxy are always dependent on the perspectives and group interests. The *Kulārṇava* presents transgressive behaviour as performance of the extra-ordinary and as sign of high spiritual grades. The otherworldly character of divine experience is physically staged by means of an extreme break with the normal conduct of daily social life. But the scene of transgression is embedded in a graded system of Tantric adepts, and a package of stipulated rules pertaining to initiation, strict secrecy, moral and ritual duties, and not least dispassion, spiritual codings, *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* and non-dual cosmology. This set of rules, and ultimately the whole cluster, make up the *samaya-ācāra*, the rule-governed orthodox conduct of the Kaula practitioner. Rule-governance and ethics are substantial. The term *samaya-ācāra* is used quite frequently in the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*⁵⁵ and occurs in the PKS in the context of the “mystic” grades (*ullāsa*) (PKS 10.68). The more ancient Bhairava-Tantras, such as the *Brahmayāmala-Tantra*, which know extremely antinomian and macabre (mortuary) rites that no longer exist in the Kaula, already used the term *samaya-ācāra* for their initiatory pledges.⁵⁶ To break the pledges means becoming “food for the Yoginīs” (i.e. becoming

55 *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 2.38, 5.96, 7.44, 11.100, 12.62, 14.5 etc.

56 See HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, op. cit., 17; 180ff.

their tortured prey and having a dreadful end).⁵⁷ Remarkably, bad conduct involves not only taking up the *mantras* on one's own and violating "the essence of the Tantras," but also being critical of the Vedas!

These discourses are present and refined in the PKS. There are no more flying witches, but in Vārāhī's names there still appear all those dreadful things that the Yoginīs do with the evildoers. Vārāhī is the fierce protector of the Samaya. There are no wild drinking parties, but the general structure is retained. In the PKS the same type of package inclusive of ritually and ethically controlled usage of the *pañcamakāra*, *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* and non-dual world orientation is called "*samaya-ācāra*." This is noteworthy because the PKS was probably contemporary with the sixteenth-century Lakṣmīdhara for whom Samaya is a completely different thing.⁵⁸ He rejects Kaula and prescribes a Samaya based on pure interiority and caste. The different approaches mirror interesting negotiation processes. Lakṣmīdhara considers Kaula to be un-Vedic, unworthy and despicable and definitely not applicable to twice-born.⁵⁹ He does not only scorn the consumption of wine and physical worship, but positions his Kaula critique within a critique of improper *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* that does not "rise" from the *mūlādhāra-cakra* (at the end of the spine near the genitals) to the upper body-centres. Samaya is to him interior worship of the *śrīcakra* and the Śiva-Śakti union in the *brahmarandhra* (thousand-petalled lotus) above the head and the only method for the twice-born. In contrast, there is no caste-restriction in the PKS. The Vārāhī cycle involves *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* in the *mūlādhāra-cakra* (PKS 7.6). Even the (merely interior!) Parā worship follows a very different procedure than the one proposed by Lakṣmīdhara. Instead of leading the *kuṇḍalinī* up into the highest *cakra*, the worship starts with the (intensely visualised) raining down of "immortality water" from the highest *cakra* (8.4), and proceeds concentrating on the body-cen-

57 HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, op. cit., 17. The same threat appears in the *Kulārṇava* 2.38 in the context of stipulated secrecy, and implicitly in the PKS, ch. 7.

58 The source of the following discussion is Lakṣmīdhara's famous commentary on the *Saundaryalaharī*.

59 See also BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom*, 23-27; GOUDRIAAN, "Tantrism in History," 26, 33, 44f.; WOODROFFE, *Serpent Power*, 12, 251. I am relying largely on secondary literature regarding this, and have not yet reviewed the whole *Saundaryalaharī* commentary of Lakṣmīdhara. But the discussion is an ongoing theme in the Śrīvidyā. Cf. BROOKS and A. KUPPUSWAMI, who edited the *Saundaryalaharī* along with a great number of commentaries (Delhi: Nag Publishers, 1991). Kuppuswami refers in his own glosses on the verses 8-41, particularly SL 8, 31, 41, (ibid. 14ff.) very frequently to the Samaya mode, leaving no doubt that he favours it and regards Kaula and other forms of left-hand worship or mixed worship as debased, low-caste, un-Vedic and un-Brahmanic, and accordingly not to be followed by the twice-born.

tres navel, *mūlādhara*, and heart (8.10, 8.17). These are the body places where the cosmos (the 36 cosmic principles) is absorbed and melted into one like "heated metal" by breath-control, *mantra* repetition and active imagination. The cosmos becomes Parā's yogic seat and diagram (8.18) and after she is visualized as cosmic unity and great illumination and reflection (*mahā-prakāśa-vimarśa-ruṣinī*), the cosmos is mentally sacrificed into the supreme goddess form that is supreme non-dual blazing light (8.21-22). The clear vision of light (*prakāśa*) as the true form of the deity is stated to be the highest objective (10.73).

Compared with earlier left-hand sources the PKS may be regarded as a document of increasing domestication and internalization, but compared with Lakṣmīdhara it mirrors continuity with older Kaula left-hand ritual. The ritual described in the PKS is first of all a highly rule-governed activity. Unlike in the *Kulārṇava*, ch. 8, it is not so much a cult of bliss that is propagated. It is primarily ritual absorption, the "ecstasy" of which lies in the synaesthetics of sensual, verbal and mental performance. But no doubt, the *pañcamakāra* are used and play a significant role. Umānanda made the implicit *Kulārṇava* connection of the PKS explicit by re-organising the ten chapters into seven, according to the seven mystical grades.

The typical Kaula view of regarding the *pañcamakāra* as major ritual elements alongside the *mantras* has been faithfully kept by the 19th century commentators. Whereas the PKS defended this view by the remarkable statement that nobody who acknowledged other countries and customs would censure the *pañcamakāra*, this liberal standpoint would no longer do in the 19th century when the British firmly established their rule in India and when the first translation of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (1785) and first edition of the *Ṛg-Veda* (1849-73) were published, while other expressions of Hindu culture were regarded as "debased" and Tantra was greatly despised. The Maharashtra Brahmin and Veda-Mimāṃsā scholar Rāmeśvara obviously sees a new need to argue for Veda and Tantra as continua. As already mentioned, he started his PKS-commentary (1832) with a long defence of Tantra. Rāmeśvara apparently defines Tantra with reference to Kaula, and defends combined Vedic and Tantric worship⁶⁰ against common reproaches that Tantrics have left the Vedic path, they are greedy and self-indulgent,⁶¹ and that Tantra is only for women and Śūdras.⁶² He expressly argues that *all* the *pañcamakāra* substances *must* be included and substitutes may only be allowed in daily worship if the physical sub-

60 PKS(Ba) p. 2-16 on PKS I.I.

61 PKS(Ba), p. 3.7ff.

62 PKS(Ba), p. 7.15ff.

stances are not available, whereas in special rites (*kāmya* and occasional) they are always needed because they are the most important (*mukhya*) substances.⁶³ It is of special interest that Rāmeśvara does not argue against Lakṣmīdhara or Śrīvidyā-Samayins (who raised the kind of objections mentioned), but against *and* with the Vedist Kumārila Bhaṭṭa of the 7th century! Remarkably, he does not only attribute to Kumārila a censure of the Tantra (which was in fact more of a censure of the irrationality of the Purāṇic creator god and the superhuman knowledge associated with *yoga*), but also cites Kumārila as confirmation of his own PKS interpretation and as “proof” that Umānanda was wrong adding new *bīja-mantras*. Just as there can be no change in the *mantra* material of the Veda, there cannot be any change in the *mantra* material of the PKS. I think Rāmeśvara’s markedly Vedist apology of the Kaula-Tantra was more than a school quarrel. It also had to do with colonial India, i.e. with the new prominence that the Veda gained under the British Orientalists and their Brahmin informants. Another point of interest to be underlined is Rāmeśvara’s emic (sic!) identification of Kaula and Tantra. His Kaula is of course defined by the whole package of the *pañcamakāra* (not only by sexual rites). In contrast to the *Kulārṇava* (and its ecstatic Kaula) and the PKS (and its ritual Kaula), however, Rāmeśvara strongly emphasizes the need for *bhakti* and faith. He argues that otherwise it would be hard to keep the senses and the mind under control while consuming meat and alcohol, getting drunk and seeing a beautifully decorated young woman.⁶⁴ It is of special interest, however, that he is critical about the custom of adding additional alcohol to the ritual vessel after the *pūjā* (which the earlier *Nityotsava* allows), i.e. at the point in ritual when the *pañcamakāra* are actually consumed, and he seems to restrict sexual intercourse (to which the human Śakti must agree) to the spouse(s) (*sva-yoṣit*) of the practitioner. This rule is not known in the PKS, nor in the *Nityotsava* (1745) or Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe’s unpublished PKS-commentary of 1889. They use the common terms Śakti, Suvāsini,⁶⁵ and Dūti,⁶⁶ but not Yoṣit. None, however, mentions the (low) caste of the female partner in contrast to the earlier *Kulārṇava*.

63 PKS(Ba), p. 39.10f. on PKS 1.24. The commentator maintains that if the “five M” substances are lacking, the major thing is lacking. This is based on PKS 1.23-24 that enjoins daily ritual duty even if the substances are missing. See also Rāmeśvara’s commentary ad PKS 5.21 and 10.69.

64 PKS(Ba), p. 15.24-27, on PKS 1.1.

65 Whereas the PKS uses only the term “Śakti,” the *Nityotsava* generally applies the term “Suvāsini” (a woman whose husband is living); cf. *ibid.* p. 62-63.

66 This term is used in the Buddhist Tantras to denote untouchable or low caste female partners. Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe distinguishes two forms of physical Śakti-worship, one being

So a slow domestication within a Kaula continuum may be traced and a remarkable closeness of Rāmeśvara's Kaula to the one of Avalon regarding sexual practice. He defends the Tantra some decades before Avalon in a similar apologetic fashion. I am not sure, however, whether Rāmeśvara's restriction to matrimonial intercourse (he considers also imagined intercourse as valid substitution) can be interpreted as puritanical, reactionary, or bourgeois. Rather, he is simply pragmatic, considering that he argues that intercourse actually *does* belong to the daily ritual duties of the Lalitā cycle and can only be left out if no woman is available or when she shows signs of disinterest. Since he considers all *pañcamakāra* to be daily duties if they are available, intercourse with one's own wife is the easiest way to achieve this goal.

It is noteworthy that even the late 19th century commentator Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe still stresses very much the real-world things. According to him, *alcohol* is a metonym of Śakti and *meat* a metonym of Śiva, the satisfaction arising from their union is what is meant by the formula *tat tvam asi*. He equates the *sāmarasa* or supreme blissful state of sense gratification (including sexual activity) with the state of deep sleep as described in the *Bṛhadāranyaka-Upaniṣad*. There it is said that in deep sleep the father is no longer a father, the Brahmin no longer a Brahmin, the thief no longer a thief, and the dog-eater no longer a dog-eater. All are immersed in their innate nature of pure existence and bliss. This extreme recoding of the Veda by blending sensuous body-practice and religious imagination is typical of the PKS tradition.

From the PKS-elaboration *Nityotsava* (1745) up to Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe's unpublished commentary (1889), we find a PKS tradition insisting on "the real things." This changed in the second half of the 20th century. In the 1950s Swami Karpatri compiled a new PKS-elaboration, the *Śrīvidyā-Ratnākara*. Karpatri's aim was to bring new life to a lost tradition, and indeed his ritual manual follows the PKS closely. However it does not mention left-hand practices. Instead we find enriched verbal material (more *nyāsas* and *stotras*) and approximation to the right hand Śrīvidyā of the Śaṅkarācāryas. A casual look, however, will reveal hardly any difference, since the verbal material is already present in the PKS in such abundance that the *pañcamakāra* (particularly sexual rites) are almost invisible, or

part of the *pūjā*, and the other being the "*Dūtī-yāga*" ("sacrifice to the messenger," "procuress" or "female attendant") which provides the sexual fluids or the "fifth" substance that is needed for Lalitā's offering (cf. STV(Ms), vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 117, and vol 2, ch. 3, p. 168.5, ch. 7, p. 71.6). The female partners during *pūjā* are called "Śakti" (in the goddesses' *kramas*) and "Suvāsini" (in the Gaṇapati chapter). The *Dūtī-yāga* is also known to Rāmeśvara, but he seems to reserve the term *dūtī* to a supernatural attendant (see below).

seem to be trifles compared to the *mantras*. While the increase of *mantra* material may be seen as a typical trend of later Kaula, it should not be forgotten that even in earlier Kaula and pre-Kaula traditions the Tantric emphasis on the body and sensuality included the voice and the interior senses, and a large amount of imagination, symbolizing power and metonymy.

Recoding the Natural and Animating the Virtual: Śakti worship, Kāmakalā meditation and shifting attention from body to mind

In the PKS, physical super-ritualism and gnostic contemplation cannot be separated. Exterior and internal ritual, and the real and virtual body (i.e. yogic body schemes) are two sides of the same coin. There is such intimate and intense interaction between body-practices, visualization techniques and *mantra* utterances that the inside-outside distinction breaks down and one often does not know what is real and what is imagined. This kind of de-differentiation of the borderlines of reality has always existed in Tantra. Consider Sanderson's description of the radical antinomian practices occurring in the pre-Kaula female dominated Śaiva cults of the Vidyāpīṭha (centred on female *mantra*-deities and practised in lonely places):

The initiate moved from the domain of male autonomy ... idealized by the Mīmāṃsakas into a visionary world of permeable consciousness dominated by the female and the theriomorphic. Often transvestite in his rites he mapped out a world of ecstatic delirium in which the boundaries between actual women and the hordes of their celestial and protean counterparts, between the outer and the inner, was barely perceptible. Intoxicated with wine, itself the embodiment of these powers, he sought through the incantation of *mantras* and the offering of mingled menstrual blood and semen, the quintessential impurities, to induce these hordes to reveal themselves. Taming them with offerings of his own blood, he received from them the powers he desired. At the same time he was alert to perceive their incarnation in human women.⁶⁷

Some seven hundred years later the same oscillation between the real and the virtual is found throughout the PKS and not least in the worship of the human Śaktis, the worldly counterparts of the clan's deities, but the scene has completely changed. Although the cultural memory verbally retains some horrific features of the boar-faced Vārāhī who once belonged

67 SANDERSON, "Purity and Power," 201-202.

to those hordes of dangerous female theriomorphic spirits (the retinue of the ferocious cosmic deities Bhairava or Kālī) that informed Sanderson's description, her worship is entirely transformed. Consider the civilized and aestheticized Śakti-worship (at the end of the domestic *pūjā*) occurring in Vārāhī's ritual cycle of the PKS:

He should call in three Śaktis who are in the blossom of their youth, of ravishing beauty and entirely infatuating, and a boy (*baṭuka*). He should worship them, bathe them and decorate them with fragrant scents and the like. One of the Śaktis is to be positioned in the centre while perceiving her with determined mind to be Vārāhī. The other two are placed on her side with the thought that they are Krodhinī ("the Wrathful one") and Stambhinī ("the Paralysing one"). The boy positioned in front of them is to be meditated as Caṇḍoccaṇḍa Bhairava. He [the ritual practitioner] should please [the divinities] with all substances and address them: 'May I have perfection in the *mantra* of the sacred Vārāhī.' And they should reply: 'Let the presiding deities be pleased.' (PKS 7.36)⁶⁸

It would be informative to explore the successive transmutations from the Vidyāpīṭha scriptures like the *Brahmayāmala-Tantra* (between the 7th and early 9th cent.) to the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* (c. 11th cent.),⁶⁹ the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* (c. 13th cent.) and the PKS (c. 16th cent.), up to 20th century sources like the left-hand *Vāmamārga*⁷⁰ and the right-hand *Śrīvidyā-Ratnākara* that is based on the PKS. There is unfortunately insufficient space for this in this article. But the passage quoted is in itself already informative enough. It illustrates the character of the PKS as a ritual script that prescribes each action in a controlled and highly rule-governed fashion, sometimes in great detail, sometimes in a summary way. Remarkably, the passage quoted is the longest, most descriptive and most explicit one on Śakti-worship in the whole PKS. But it is explicit only up to a certain point. The subsequent gratification "with all substances" may or may

68 *sampūrṇa-yauvanāḥ sa lakṣanā-madanonmādinīs tisraḥ śaktīr āhīya baṭukaṃ caikam abhyarcya snāpayitvā gandhādibhir alaṅkṛtya vārtālī-buddhyā ekāṃ śaktiṃ madhye krodhinī-stambhinī-buddhyā dve itare pārśvayoś caṇḍoccaṇḍa-dhiyā baṭukaṃ agre sthāpayitvā sarvair dravyaiḥ saṃtoṣya mama śrī-vārtālī-mantra-siddhir bhūyād iti tāḥ prativadet tās ca prasīdantv adhidevatāḥ iti brūyuh //* (PKS 7.36)

69 This Kaula-Tantra still includes *caru* substances (particularly menstrual blood and semen, and occasionally also faeces, urine, and marrow), but interior ritual and *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* have gained predominance. See HATLEY, *Brahmayāmala-tantra*, 157-162 and fn. 90. On dating the earlier *Brahmayāmala* see *ibid.* 211-228.

70 See BHARATI, *Tantric Traditions*, 264, on a similar ritual procedure as in Vārāhī's Śakti-worship preceding ritual copulation.

not include sexual intercourse (as Rāmeśvara debates and decides it does not).⁷¹ It is noteworthy that the merger of physical eroticism and aesthetics, being most outspoken in this passage (7.36), combines with the most gruesome goddess image who is verbally invoked to strike and kill, and drink blood and sperm (7.28). And, as in the other *kramas*, the eroticism turns into non-dual mysticism. The “sacrifice” concludes with flower offerings, *mantra* practice and the prescription of uniting one’s soul with the board-faced Vārāhī (7.37).

The only passage that all commentaries unanimously agree as referring to sexual intercourse occurs in the Lalitā cycle (PKS 5.21), but it is extremely dry and short. There is nothing more than the statement that “a single *śakti*” who resembles the goddess should be worshiped by means of the “girl *mantra*” (in decoded form AIṢ KLĪM SAUḤ) and attendances (*upacāra*), and thereafter “satisfied by the five Ms.” This apparently includes *maithuna*, “sexual union,” but nowhere does this term actually occur, and even the codeword “the Fifth” is used only once,⁷² and the readers are given no details. The only conclusion is that in the PKS the “real thing” seems to be there, but there is also a great amount of gnostic overlay and deliberate secrecy. We only know for certain that each deity cycle incorporates different forms of Śakti worship at the end of the *pūjā*, which includes consuming at least the first two “Ms” and in Lalitā’s case all five. Regarding “the Fifth,” neither the PKS nor the commentators relate how it is actually performed: whether orgasm or sexual fluid exchange is the major aspect, whether homosexual acts are involved,⁷³ or whether sexual arousal is stimulated to attain erotic sentiment and unending longing while withholding the semen like in the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā⁷⁴ that also developed in the 16th century in Bengal. The Vārāhī ritual sounds very similar, but it remains unclear whether the ritual agent is actively involved in erotic and homoerotic activities, or merely a witness of the play of the boy and the beautiful girls,⁷⁵ but not part of it himself except for bathing and decorating four

71 According to him “all substances (*dravya*)” means only alcohol, meat and fish (PKS(Ba), p. 223.13f.), whereas Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe sees no reason to exclude sexual intercourse.

72 PKS 10.56 speaks about a positive inclination towards *pañcamādi*, “the fifth M and so on,” but the term may also be translated to mean “the five M and the rest.” Apart from that, “the fifth” occurs only as normal ordinal number (e.g. the fifth *mantra*) and not as a codeword.

73 These exist, for instance, in the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 8.68.

74 Cf. EDWARD DIMOCK, *The Place of the Hidden Moon. Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā Cult of Bengal* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), 53f.

75 It is too speculative to attribute homoerotic (or paedophile) practices to the PKS. See HARIPRIYA RANGARAJAN’s *Images of Vārāhī. An Iconographic Study* (Delhi: Sharada

pretty children. Neither do we know what the “rest of sacrifice,” which is consumed and “sacrificed into the fire of consciousness” (*cidagnau havis*, PKS 5.22) after Lalitā’s Śakti *pūjā*, actually entails. It possibly refers to the Tantric practice of gathering the male and female sexual fluids produced by ritual intercourse in the special *arghya*-vessel to which alcohol, meat, fish and parched grain are added, whereafter they are offered to the deity and consumed by the ritual agent(s) – the *guru* and disciples – as “the rest of sacrifice.”⁷⁶ In the PKS ritual, it may mean nothing more than a fine meal and more or less large quantities of wine consumed in the circle of initiates (Umānanda’s *Nityotsava*, Rāmeśvara⁷⁷), or indeed sexual fluids added to the other items (Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇaḍe⁷⁸). Note that even the later PKS tradition is in dissent about the realm of the real. Apart from negotiations in one and the same lineage, and maybe lost knowledge or changed practice in the course of time, this has to do with the blend of the real and the visionary in the PKS. The only clear aspect is that the “rest” must be offered to the “fire of consciousness” (the interior *kuṇḍalini*), i.e. that the corporal and spiritual must merge at some point in the ritual. “Sacrifice” itself is a polyvalent term in the PKS. It may signify the real fire sacrifice (*homa*) as well as a frame of mind, a spiritual fire-sacrifice, a contemplative act, or a visualization. PKS 1.26 extends sacrificial terminology to every activity: everything that can be known (the cosmos) is the offering, the senses are the ladle, the capacities are the flames, one’s self is the fire, and Śiva (or one’s enlightened self) is the priest.⁷⁹ The resulting fruit of sacrifice

Publishing House, 2004), 95 and 118, where a similar ritual is described: a little boy represents the handsome son (*suputra*) of Vārāhī and is seated on her lap.

- 76 GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Worship of Mahāgaṇapati according to the Nityotsava* (Delhi: Kant Publications, 2003), xxvi, mentions a number of sources for this practice, but not the PKS tradition.
- 77 Rāmeśvara’s discussion is quite lengthy, cf. PKS(Ba), p. 176-186 ad PKS 5.22.
- 78 Lakṣmaṇa partly distinguishes “the rest of sacrifice” (*haviś-śeṣa*) from the “rest of food” (*ucchiṣṭa*) and suggests different procedures dependent on the deity cycle. He discusses the five Ms/”the rest” in various contexts. See STV(Ms), vol. 1: ch. 1, p. 94f., 98, 179, 190, ch. 2, p. 117, 170 (lengthy discussion); vol. 2: ch. 3, p. 168, ch. 4, p. 37-38, ch. 5, p. 51-52, ch. 7, p. 71. See also Rāmeśvara on PKS 2.6, where he seems to accept the mixture with sexual fluids, but (unlike Lakṣmaṇa) during *arghya* sacrifice.
- 79 On the surface level this is reminiscent of *Bhagavad-Gītā* 4.24: “The oblation is Brahman, the clarified butter is Brahman, the fire unto which it is offered is Brahman, the offerer is Brahman”; see also BhG 9.16. But considering the previous Sūtra PKS 1.25 that speaks of a mind-frame of “absolute fearlessness” (*nirbhayaṭā sarvatra*), the implied meaning is presumably less spiritual. PKS 1.26 would be more reminiscent of *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 8.59ff., in which the activities of the Tantric “hero” in ecstatic rapture are introduced with a similar statement: “[In this state] chatter is the fruit of *japa*, drowsiness is *samādhi*, passionate excitement is the worship ...”

is said to be the inner vision of one's objectless awareness (*nirviṣaya-cid-vimṛṣṭiḥ phalam*) (1.27). The real fire sacrifice, on the other hand, includes the visualisation of the lovemaking (*mithunī-bhāva*) of Vāgīśvara ("Lord of Speech") and Vāgīśvarī ("Mistress of Speech") (9.8).

Far more explicit than the bodily acts are erotic imaginations that combine with exterior and interior ritual and linguistic mysticism. This is most noticeable in the Lalitā cycle. Quite in contrast to the extremely short and condensed hint at sexual activity are the lush descriptions of Lalitā's mental image, her diagram and her visualizing practices that involve a large amount of sexual imagination and interior worship. This starts with the mental animation of the abstract *śrīcakra* that turns by way of active imagination into the well-known image of the jewel island and Lalitā's innermost bed-chamber (PKS 3.10, 4.3, 4.5), and ends with the meditation of her "parts of love" (*kāmakalā*), i.e. her face, breasts, and vulva (5.16), followed by actual Śakti-worship (5.21). What I call recoding the natural (for instance the real-world woman perceived as the goddess) and animating the virtual (for instance Lalitā's image) involves an intensely *interactive* interface. Ultimately speaking, what is imagined takes such a dominant place that the real-world woman becomes but a faint shadow compared with the extremely erotic goddess whose image gains a hyperreal life of its own by being constantly called to mind. Lalitā is repeatedly described as "ever wet" (3.5, 3.28-30) and each of her fifteen emanations (Nityā goddesses) is characterized by highly sexual terms like vulva, sperm etc. (4.9), but these emanations are at the same time the vowels of the alphabet. The externalization of the goddess is at once an internalization, her sexuality is highly metonymic and metaphorical, and her worship largely mental and verbal. Like the other ritual cycles the one of Lalitā involves a substantial amount of contemplation of non-duality. This is expressed in statements like "The goddess am I" (3.14) and "The brahman am I, I am the brahman... unto which I offer" (3.31). The framing of Lalitā's ritual is to create the goddess by active imagination (involving breath control, *kuṇḍalinī-yoga*, and concentration on the heart *cakra* in which the erotic goddess is meditated upon as immortal consciousness and constant bliss), transfer her into the innermost point (*bindu*) of the *śrīcakra* and withdraw her after worship back into one's consciousness (4.1-3, 5.23). Even the sixty-four offerings made to Lalitā's physical *śrīcakra* and image are purely mental (*kalpayāmi*) (4.4f.). The descriptions of this part of the ritual and of the beautiful *śrīcakra*-jewel island (3.10) are the most vivid and persuasive ones in the entire PKS, and inspire the practitioner rhetorically to feel as though he were actively participating in the divine play. After bathing and adorning the goddess, the ritual agent enters, so to speak, along with the goddess her precious palace of rubies and pearls and luxurious

bed-chamber, he ascends with her the throne of pearls whose feet are the great cosmic gods and reclining on the prostrate body of her divine husband, he drinks the “wine of immortality” and enjoys unending bliss by uniting with Śiva-Kāmeśvara (3.10, 4.3, 4.5). In the subsequent *śrīcakrapūjā* and later Śakti-worship he re-assumes, as it were, the male role. The connector is another intensively erotic imagination. The worship of the nine circuits of the diagram ends with the *bindu*, the central dot, which is to be expanded mentally into three (or four) and visualized as the “parts of love” (*kāmakalā*) of the goddess, i.e. her face, the two breasts and the vulva (5.16). This is followed by contemplating “the auspicious heart,” i.e. Parā’s *bīja-mantra* SAUḤ (the “seed” of liberation), offerings of alcohol, meat and fish, and the worship of a human Śakti who is beautiful like the goddess and is to be satisfied by means of the “five Ms” (5.17-18, 5.21).

An insistence on Kaula body-practice and sexual ritual in particular may be misleading. What I have left out is the prime stress on *mantra* recitation. But even my narrow focus on the sexual elements makes clear the degree to which mental, verbal and physical acts form an unbroken continuum. There is indissoluble linkage between body-practice and interiority. By means of non-dual statements and meditations the practitioner constantly calls to mind and ascertains his identity with the divine. Physical worship is intertwined with deliberate ritual animation of the virtual. The statements of non-duality as well as the erotic goddess descriptions, the *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* and the *kāmakalā*-meditation are powerful cognitive attractors. Ultimately they play a more important role in the PKS than physical intercourse does, even though the ideology and objective remains *embodied* divinity – an objective the PKS shares with older Kaula and pre-Kaula left-handers. Compared with them it has gone a long way. The pronounced interiority, the implicit and explicit *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* and the aesthetic eroticism are apparently indicators of later developments. What remains – even enhanced – is the deliberate vacillation between real and virtual. The intoxication experienced is spiritual (“wine of immortality”) *and* real (alcoholic liquor), the “rest of the sacrifice” is a collective meal *and* an offering “into the fire of consciousness,” and the *kāmakalā*-meditation of the sexual parts of the goddess *and* the intercourse with a real-world woman do belong together. Erotic imagination and erotic practice form a continuum in which the borderlines between the real and the virtual break down. While the stipulation to engage in ritual intercourse is so short and cryptic that it is easily read over, the imaginative practices of bathing and adorning the goddess and worshiping her “parts of love” probably form the secret script of Śakti-worship and real intercourse.

The commentators have little more to say about the actual performance. Rāmeśvara is the only one who gives a bit more information, and

this is once more significant regarding the merger of body and mind. There are three ways, according to Rāmeśvara, in which *maithuna* (sexual intercourse, union) can be practised⁸⁰:

a) as “sacrifice” (*yāga*) to the “messenger” or “attendant” (*dūtī*).

The term *dūtī* is used in Tantric works for both female attendants of a god (or goddess)⁸¹ and Tantric female partners (preferably low-caste) besides *śakti/yoginī/suwāsini*. The *Dūtī-yāga* is, according to Rāmeśvara, the divine *maithuna*, restricted to Śiva – which may, however, also mean the enlightened practitioner who has realised his divine identity. Or it may refer to the internal “innate” consort who traverses and transcends the body⁸² and is expressed in various forms; in non-dual consciousness, in intoxication and bliss, in the energy power *kuṇḍalini-śakti*, in the Sanskrit alphabet, or in the interiorized supreme goddess visualized as supreme light.

b) as intercourse with one’s own wife (or wives) (*sva-yoṣit*).

This is in fact the only *maithuna* that Rāmeśvara seems to have in mind when he speaks of physical union;

c) as imagined intercourse, i.e. performed purely mentally in one’s imagination.

This would be a “natural” extension of the *kāmakalā* meditation on the goddess’ vulva. This third form of *maithuna* is particularly interesting for my argument of the power of imagination and the formative role of imaginative techniques regarding interiorizing processes. Imagination is obviously an accepted means that can totally replace the physical activity.

Lakṣmaṇa Rānaḍe quotes this passage in his commentary and inserts a quotation from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* 4.3.21 on the bliss of sexual intercourse, in which inside and outside knowledge disappears. Lakṣmaṇa’s comment is noteworthy concerning the complete merger of the virtual (body *cakra*) and the real (sexual fluids, female organ). He states: if the white drop of the male, which is inside the *brahmarandhra*, enters into the “love chamber” of the woman and merges with her red drop, then complete bliss occurs, the pure bliss of Brahman, wherein there is no more knowledge of inside and outside. He concludes: therefore there is necessity of “the Fifth.”

80 See his commentary on PKS 10.63, PKS(Ba) p. 277-278.

81 GÖSTA LIEBERT, *Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions. Hinduism – Buddhism – Jainism* (Delhi: Satguru, 1986), 84.

82 I gather this interpretation from Hatley’s discussion of the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* which also recognizes a tripartite classification and associates with the three kinds of external consorts (wife, courtesan, and low-caste woman) three types of internal consorts. Cf. HATLEY, *Brahmayāmala Tantra*, 159.

Equally interesting are the subsequent reflections of both commentators. Rāmeśvara holds that if the three forms of *maithuna* are missing or if the woman is not inclined to have intercourse, one may take recourse to substitutes. The male is represented by red oleander and sandal paste that connotes the semen, while the female is represented by a flower called “blue clitoris” and looking like one, and by saffron that symbolizes blood. Such substitution was a handy new way to recode the natural without violating the purity codes. Wine, meat and sexual fluids were replaced by the metaphorical, merely symbolic encoding of inoffensive physical substances. Even the PKS tradition generally resorts to this solution in modern times, whereas the 19th century commentators preferred to animate the virtual. Substitutes are only considered if even imagination of intercourse should be lacking. Moreover, Rāmeśvara, and to an even greater extent Lakṣmaṇa Rāṇade actually do not see a necessity for substitutes since they interpret any enjoyment, most of all the meal at the end of the *pūjā*, as *maithuna* that makes the Brahman bliss manifest. If the woman is already satisfied with food and drink (wine will be always present), it is good enough. It is as if the fifth *pañcamakāra* has been performed. Satisfaction and delight are what primarily count.

This rule was a clever hermeneutical and pragmatic stratagem. Within left-hand ritual it solved the problem of two possibly conflicting rules that the commentators extracted from the PKS: on the one hand being faithful to the *pañcamakāra* as major (*mukhya*) ritual means, and on the other giving priority to the wish (or disinterest) of the female partner regarding sexual activity. So there was always the possibility that at least one, i.e. the fifth, *pañcamakāra* might be lacking. The solution of interpreting any sense-gratification, delight and mental satisfaction as *maithuna* solved the problem and shifted attention from the body to the mind. From this focus on inner gratification and intentionality it was but a little step to non-objectionable forms of ritual sense-gratification like gifts of garments to the girl or woman – a common practice of right-hand Tantric and Purāṇic goddess veneration which of course also involves only non-objectionable *pūjā* offerings.

It is noteworthy that Rāmeśvara’s third form of *maithuna*, sexual imagination, involves a shift from the body to the mind as well. But this shift is of a different kind, because the mental form itself is sexual. The conversion to right-hand worship was accordingly more difficult, and if it was sought at all, it was only achieved by a shift in the mental form itself. This happened in fact with the *kāmakalā*-meditation that could not easily be dismissed, because it belonged to the most ancient stratum of Śrīvidyā (which was closer to Kaula than most of the later forms). The shift in the mental was achieved by stronger accentuation of the metaphorical,

philosophical, linguistic and yogic (rising *kuṇḍalinī*) contents and codings, whereas the actual practice of sexual imagination became controversial. A bifurcation between the real and the virtual happened which does not exist in the PKS. On the contrary, precisely the vacillation between these two poles and their blend is deliberately sought. I suggest that in doing so, the PKS follows a specifically Kaula agenda to consciously place the body in the mind and the mind in the body in order to unite flesh and spirit and transgress the human frame by experiencing non-dual awareness, divine rapture and cosmic existence in the mind *and* the body. Sexuality was not the only way, but is one of the most powerful. Imagined sexuality was not only a means of internalization, but also one of embodiment, i.e. of socializing and channelling bodily awareness.

The merger of real and virtual eroticism in the PKS is most explicit in the *kāmakalā*-meditation and subsequent Śakti-*pūjā* in the Lalitā cycle. The *kāmakalā* is actually much more important than physical intercourse, and like the latter it is polyvalent and has more corporal and more spiritual levels. The *kāmakalā*-meditation activates vitally corporal facts in the mind, which belong to the major attractors of real-world life (at least for the males), namely the face and sexual organs of women. The meditation on the face, breast and vulva of the cosmic woman (who is said to attract and delude the worlds) is not only one of the most ancient Śrīvidyā practices, but also one of the most typical. It already occurs in the oldest existent source (c. 11th cent.), the *Nityāśoḍaśikārnava* 1.186, and in most later Śrīvidyā texts. In this practice one has to expand mentally the innermost dot (*bindu*) of the ritual diagram into a triangle of three dots and visualise the face, the breasts and the vulva of the goddess. The same erotic meditation may be performed by means of graphemes, particularly the letter “*i/īm,*” and also the written *bīja* “*hrīm*” or the syllable “*ha,*” which are conceived as graphic similes of the face, breasts and vulva. The PKS 5.16 describes the procedure as follows:

“By means of the dot/drop (*bindu*) he should create [imagine] the face, by means of the two dots [or: the duplication of the dot] the two breasts, by half of the “*ha*” (*sapara*) [he imagines] the vulva (*yoni*). This is the way to visualize the *kāmakalā*.”⁸³

83 *bindunā mukhaṃ bindu-dvayena kucau saparārdhena yoniṃ kṛtvā kāma-kalām iti dhyaṭvā* // (PKS 5.16). *Sapara* is known as a code-word for “*ha*.” Cf. WEBER, *Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra*, 338.

The rhetoric hints at the innermost point (*bindu*) in the diagram as well as at graphic representations.⁸⁴ The graphem “ha” (particularly in Brāhmī script) may convey the impression of a vulva. The phoneme “ī” was written in early post-Gupta and ancient Newari scripts as a sign consisting of three dots that formed a triangular shape (pointing up), and a curve (pointing down) in between the two dots below.⁸⁵ The *ī* / *īm* appears in the PKS in the centre of the alcoholic *arghya* diagram (without a description of the imaginative practice). The place of ritual in which the *kāmakāla*-meditation occurs is the end of the *śrīcakra-pūjā* (*āvaraṇa-pūjā* of the nine circuits of Lalitā’s ritual diagram ending in the *bindu*). The meditation is obviously performed on the diagrammatic *bindu* and involves imaginary manipulation of it. As already mentioned, this meditation concludes Lalitā’s worship in the PKS, and precedes the worship of a “goddess-like” human Śakti.

It is noteworthy that the *kāmakālā*-meditation also appears in a number of so-called right-hand Śrīvidyā sources, such as the famous goddess hymn *Saundaryalaharī* attributed to Śaṅkara, Durvāsa’s *Saubhāgyacintāmani*, the ritual manual followed in Kanchi, and the ritual script *Śrīvidyāratnākara*. In these texts the mere imagination and hymnic praise (*stotra*) replace the real physical acts. The Śakti-*pūjā*-equal in the *Saundaryalaharī* is a highly artful head-to-toe description of the beautiful goddess,⁸⁶ and the hymn itself is often sung in Śrīvidyā worship at the end of the *pūjā*. Or if physical Śakti-*pūjā* follows the *kāmakālā*-meditation, as in the manual *Śrīvidyāratnākara*, it is reduced to the adornment of a girl or young woman with vermillion, offerings of flowers and pure food, donations of garments and bethel-nut, and the like. Whereas Lakṣmīdhara, the most famous commentator of the *Saundaryalaharī*, considered the *kāmakālā* to be simple love magic (*madana-prayoga*, cf. SL 19), other Śrīvidyā sources see much deeper meaning in it: the supreme deity is meditated upon with face, breasts and womb as the source of the universe. According to the more esoteric Śrīvidyā-

84 This may be the reason why Rāmeśvara (PKS (Ba), p. 171, lines 11-17) suggests the vowel “ī” or alternatively the “ha” or the *bindu* as the basis for the *kāmakālā* meditation.

85 Cf. MADHU KHANNA, *The Concept and Liturgy of the Śrīcakra based on Śivānanda’s Trilogy*. Doctoral dissertation (Oxford: Wolfson College, 1986), 122, 280, and DIRK JAN HOENS, “Mantra Constituents of Tantric Practice,” in: GUPTA et al., *Hindu Tantrism*, 95-96. The graphic base may even have been the more ancient Brāhmī scripts in which the phoneme “īm” (the *ī* with the *bindu* or *anusvāra*) is represented by four dots.

86 This forms the second part of the famous hymn, while the first 41 verses contain Tantric ideas and also hint in a highly metaphorical way to Kaula practices (see, for instance, the verses 9, 13, 19 (*kāmakālā*), 31, 34, 41). The major focus is on *mantra* practice, *kuṇḍalīnī* and *cakra-yoga* and Śrīvidyā philosophy.

Śākta cosmogony, the *kāmakalā* represents the blissful union of Śiva and Śakti, the cosmos in its causal state and the first impulse for creation of the world. The *kāmakalā* was charged with profound philosophical and cosmological content, linguistic speculation and esoteric yogic symbolism.⁸⁷ Avalon regarded it as one of the greatest mysteries of Tantra,⁸⁸ Madhu Khanna as “quintessence of the Śrīvidyā worship.”⁸⁹

This highly symbolic content was certainly the major reason why the *kāmakalā*-meditation was not removed even in sources that replaced the Kaula body-practices completely with the mental world. The *kāmakalā* was part of the mental world. But it was also undoubtedly sexual, and the explicitly erotic imagination itself was powerful enough to be perceived as highly ambivalent among the Śrīvidyā Samayins and other conservative right-handers – particularly contemporary ones. Brooks points out that “the aspect of desire meditation” is one of the most controversial Tantric rituals among Śrīvidyā adepts.⁹⁰ Whereas the intellectual interpretation of the worship of the female organ, i.e. the *theory* of Śākta cosmogony, was/is acceptable even to conservative Śrīvidyā adepts, the actual *kāmakalā*-*meditation* was/is regarded as objectionable. Obviously imagination is not that harmless, but instead it is indeed reality-creating and a powerful way of world-making. This applies to both right and left-handers.

In the PKS the approach to *kāmakalā* is first of all ritualistic. The major function of the meditation in the Lalitā chapter seems to be to create a powerful mental image and sacramental attitude towards sexual pleasure, so that actual sense-gratification is seen as something divine. The same function is attributed to *kuṇḍalīnī-yoga* in *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 5.106ff. Normal drunkenness and sexual intercourse would be “animal-like”; it is the religious and ritual coding that makes it divine.

In the PKS the philosophical and cosmological content of the *kāmakalā* is there, but established performatively in the practitioner’s body and mind. Instead of philosophical explanation, we find ritualistic application in various contexts. These contexts are invariably the most obviously “Tantric” ones. The *kāmakalā* forms a secret link in the goddess cycles and appears in increasingly subtle and esoteric forms:

87 See AVALON, *Serpent Power*, 43-48, 485, 491f., 499f.; BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom*, 50f., 96, 108, 120; KHANNA, *Concept and Liturgy of the Śrīcakra based on Śivānanda’s Triloggy*, 121-124, 280f.; White, “Transformations in the Art of Love,” 172-187.

88 AVALON, *Serpent Power*, 482-500.

89 KHANNA, *Concept and Liturgy of the Śrīcakra*, 280.

90 BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom*, 51, 65, 94.

a) the visualisation of the sexual parts of the goddess is the final, most esoteric aspect of *śrīcakra* veneration. It initiates the concluding rites of the chief goddess Lalitā (PKS 5.16-23) which comprise SAUḤ meditation, offerings of alcohol, meat and fish to the goddess, and physical Śakti-pūjā wherein all five *pañcamakāra* occur;

b) the *kāmakalā* also appears in merely graphic form as the phoneme *ī(m)* in the centre of the A-Ka-Tha triangle (the Sanskrit alphabet arranged in a triangular shape). This representation belongs to the alcoholic *arghya* and is mentioned in the cycles of Śyāmā, Vārāhī and Parā (PKS 6.19, in summary fashion 7.10, 8.12). There is esoteric cosmological/cosmogonic content associated with it, particularly the purification of the disciple's own body made of the 36 cosmic principles (3.32). Esoterically the alcoholic *arghya* also refers to Lalitā (the "wet" goddess in the liquid form of alcoholic liquor, the burning "water of immortality," 3.28-30) and the mantric veneration of the guru's pair of sandals (2.6, 3.31) that represent at the same time the divine red and white feet of the united pair Śiva-Kāmeśvara/Śakti-Kāmeśvarī which have been established on the disciple's head during initiation by esoteric visualizing practices of the guru (1.35, 1.40f.). In the alcoholic *arghya* there is more implicit than explicit reference to *kundalini-yoga*. We find only the prescription that the ritual sip of alcohol is to be "sacrificed into the *kundalini*" (3.31);

c) finally, the *kāmakalā* occurs in a still more hidden and subtle way in the Parā cycle at the crucial point where the luminous goddess is contemplated (PKS 8.21), i.e. where the world-transcending highest goddess aspect in form of illumination and reflection is called to mind, the supreme "I" being the non-dual dynamic consciousness in which there is union of the male and female godhead. This completely interiorized *kāmakalā* is mentally, verbally, and visually "embodied" by Parā's *bija-mantra* SAUḤ, known as Lalitā's "auspicious heart" and the seed-sound of liberation. The three phonetic parts of the *mantra* are correlated with illumination (S), reflecting power (AU) and the union of illumination and reflection (Ḥ) while at the same time visualized as the *mūlādhāra*, heart, and face of the supreme, luminous divinity (to whom the cosmos is offered thereafter). Here *kāmakalā* refers to the involution and world-transcendent aspects of the divine. Note that the imagination starts with the lowest *cakra*, the yogic vulva, and ends with the face, whereas in the previous forms it refers to the evolution and world-creating aspects. In the Śrīvidyā both belong to the inner dynamism of the godhead.

In the PKS ritual sensuality and abstraction go hand in hand⁹¹ just like exterior and interior ritual, sexual body-practice and sexual imagination,

91 Maybe the original background of *kāmakalā* meditation was much less abstract than a basis of dots and graphemes. Its prototype was possibly Lajjā, an iconic image with pronounced sex organs and a lotus instead of a face (maybe indicative of the thousand-petalled lotus?). In some places the headless goddess Lajjā attained a real face, but invariably the breasts and vulva remained emphasized. This image enjoyed an almost pan-Indian spread between the 4th and the 11th centuries, after which it suddenly disappeared.

eroticism and esoteric linguistics (both sexuality and language are world-creating). Ultimately, the mental world is more important than the physical one even in the PKS. There exist different forms of *kāmakalā* and *maithuna* side-by side, the physical ones being only one aspect of them. There are no boundaries between the erotic goddess and the real-world woman, the abstract unitary point in the centre of the *śrīcakra* and the grapheme *ī(m)* written into the alcoholic *arghya* diagram, and the sensory and mental satisfaction and delight of the human counterpart. One is an index and icon for the other, each representing in metonymic way the blissful union of Śiva-Kāmeśvara and Śakti-Kāmeśvarī and the world-creating and world-transcending power of their non-dual union. This esoteric meaning of the *kāmakalā* is never verbally expressed, but instead established in a performative way.

It is easily conceivable that the mutual coding of real and virtual body-practices had its own dynamism that led to even more interiorized forms of worship. After all, only one aspect was enough in the metonymic field of interactive coding (encoding and decoding) to allude to the other. In the PKS active imagination or visualization already play a role equally powerful to that of real-world intercourse, and according to the commentators mere intention might replace the real. Although they insist that sexual union should actually at least be part of the Lalitā cycle, they leave space for understanding any form of corporal delight as bliss. Furthermore I call to mind that despite the five Ms being mentioned several times more or less explicitly in the original source, and particularly alcohol being one of the daily ritual offerings, there is a much greater amount of verbal and mental activities. The percentage is such that it will hardly be noticed that Swami Karpatri's PKS reception leaves out what earlier commentators regarded as major ritual elements, the real *pañcamakāra* including real-world intercourse. In the original source *mantras* and litanies already constitute the

Remarkably, however, the name was retained as an epithet of Lalitā in the *Lalitā-Trīśati*. The archaeologist Dr. Nagaswami suggests that Lajjā was the prototype of Lalitā (personal communication). But no textual tradition of Lajjā exists, and her connection to Lalitā and the *kāmakalā* meditation is highly speculative. CAROL RADCLIFFE BOLON, *Forms of the Goddess Lajjā Gaurī* (Delhi; Motilal Banarsidass, 1997) assumes Lajjā to be a fertility goddess, worshiped by couples without a son, who was functionally replaced by linear abstract Tantric symbols after the advent of Muslim rule. The textual tradition of the Śrīvidyā, on the other hand, always connected abstract symbols with the *kāmakalā*, be they the dot in the diagram or the "mere" phonemes *īm* or *ha*. The dots and graphemes fit well with a *mantra*-deity. However, this does not exclude pictorial meditative devices. So Lajjā may have been a Kaula representation used to visualize the *kāmakalā*.

much larger part of the ritual script, and I need not repeat how strongly visualizing practices are also emphasized.

In recent studies present or absent body-practices have sometimes been given exaggerated attention and internalization was seen too much as an antidote to the corporal. There was little notice taken of an interesting process that points to a different direction: on the one hand the growing inclination to interiority indeed reduced the dichotomy between right and left-hand practice (as has often been pointed out), but on the other it reinforced it at the same time (this has barely been acknowledged because the role of imagination was underestimated). As a matter of fact we find some very significant differences where we might expect them the least, i.e. precisely in the interiorizing practices, in divergent forms of imagination techniques and content, and in the *cakra*- and *kuṇḍalinī-yoga* itself, the performance of which not only connects, but also separates traditions, as the discussion of Lakṣmīdhara made amply clear. The distinctions go beyond the body; they have to do with collectively shared imaginary spaces, semiotic ways of world-making and identity formation through intense active imagination. The controversies about *kāmakalā* show that imaginative practices have been more than a minor detail and exceed scholastic disputes. I suppose that this was/is the case because such practices are “technologies of the self” (Foucault). The practice of leading the *kuṇḍalinī* up into the higher body-centres and concentrating on Śiva-Śakti union in the thousand-petalled lotus above the head creates a different bodily awareness than those practices of *cakra-yoga* which appear in the PKS in the context of the supreme goddess form Parā. Her worship starts when one rises at sunrise, with flooding the body with the nectar of immortality oozing from the topmost *cakra* and concentrates thereafter on the lowest *cakra mūlādhāra*, the navel region and the heart *cakra*, i.e. the trunk of the body. This apparently creates a corporal awareness that corresponds with the Kaula objective of *embodied* deification. It is a different technology of the self than concentrating on the head-*cakra*.

The Parā cycle of the PKS does not simply present a top-down *cakra*-model replacing the bottom-up *cakra*-model described in Avalon’s *Serpent Power* on the basis of the *Ṣaṭcakra-Nirūpana*, the 6th chapter of the *Śrīrattvacintāmaṇi* (1577 AD). Avalon provided generations of scholars and popular culture with (a certain) knowledge about Tantric *yoga*. The PKS presents an approach that is different altogether and by no means a systematic *cakra*-/*kuṇḍalinī* theology. There is no system of mystical stages (or only a very vague one), no pictorial representation associated with the *cakras*, nor any indication that the *kuṇḍalinī* has to rise and “pierce” her way through the yogic body channels and centres from the

lowest to the highest *cakra* (*brahmarandhra*).⁹² Even the number of *cakras* differs. Avalon speaks of six plus one whereas the PKS 10.10 mentions five. The only place where something like Avalon's presentation occurs is in the Vārāhī cycle (PKS 7.6). This is an interesting passage because it contains what Lakṣmīdhara so much abhorred: the concentration on the *mūlādhāra cakra*. But this is a highly solemn and spiritual exercise in the PKS. The *mūlādhāra* is the body place where the practitioner connects/unites himself with Śiva by meditating "Śiva am I." This correlates in Vārāhī's worship with an important ritual exercise, the "purification of the elements" (*bhūta-śuddhi*), i.e. sanctification of the physical body made of the elements earth, air etc. (which are "purified," i.e. transformed back into their "pure" mantric form YAM, RAM etc.). This ritual element belongs to each Tantric *pūjā* before actual worship starts. In Vārāhī's case the imaginary practice (performed verbally) is particularly dramatically described, but the drying out (by the element of air) etc. follows a common ritual script: the old, sinful body is dried out (YAM), burnt und cooked (RAM), before it is showered with the immortality water of Śiva (VAM) and united with him (LAM). The procedure is very similarly described in Śyāmā's cycle, and also connected with yogic body imagery and Śiva consciousness, but not with a bodily *cakra* (PKS 6.9f.), nor in the Lalitā cycle where the practitioner unites with the goddess instead of Śiva.

In the Parā chapter, which is most closely associated with *cakra-yoga*, only four *cakras* occur and the ritual procedure differs greatly from Avalon's representation. I recall the whole sequence: one should imagine one's body flooded with the fluids of the "water of immortality" (PKS 8.4), kindle the "fire of consciousness" in the *mūlādhāra cakra*, absorb therein the 36 principles of the cosmos (8.10), concentrate them in the navel region, and lead them like a "fluid of heated metal" into the heart lotus (8.17) where they are to be imagined as Parā's "yoga seat" and "diagram" (8.18). The goddess is invoked as one's own reflection on cosmic unity (8.19). Thereafter one meditates on her as supreme light and brilliant fire into which the cosmic principles ("everything that can be known") are sacrificed (8.21-22). This supreme light (illumination cum reflection-)meditation involves what I have summarized above as the third, most spiritualized form of

92 The word *brahmarandhra* is not used in the entire PKS, but synonyms appear in various contexts. Cf. PKS 2.2, 4.1, 6.3, 6.9, 7.6, 8.4, 10.10, 10.49. See also PKS 1.36, 3.3, 6.12, 8.4, 10.10, 10.47 where the term *brahmabila* or synonyms of it are used which appear partly (generally?) distinguished from the *brahmarandhra*, and partly identified with it (cf. PKS 10.10, 10.47 and 10.49).

kāmakalā.⁹³ One might expect the *brahmarandhra* to be connected with it and see a correspondence with what Avalon presented as *kāmakalā*: the sporting of Śiva and Śakti, or illumination and reflection, in the topmost *cakra* above the head. But in the PKS 8.21 no body *cakra* of the practitioner is mentioned (in contrast to the body *cakras* of the goddess), and the image is more world-absorbing than world-creating. The previous *cakra*-visualisation is in fact a purification of the subtle body (the micro-cosmos consisting of 36 elements like its macro-cosmic correspondent) to deify it for the *Parā-mantra*-Supreme-Light-worship (the supreme godhead in male-female form), the *arghya*-sacrifice and the *guru*-veneration which mark the culmination of the *Parā* cycle. Although this cycle is devoted to merely interior worship, it involves alcohol, i.e. it is not only centred on the yogic body and the mental world. *Parā* herself has a double nature: she is the cosmos (connected with the lower *cakras*) and world-transcending (no *cakra* mentioned). In her first meditation verse (before leading the cosmic *tattvas* into the heart *cakra* to form her *yantra*) she carries a piece of *meat*, in her second one (before one meditates on her as supreme light) she carries a *book*. I interpret this as mirroring the Kaula program of uniting flesh and spirit and absorbing the bodiless supreme Śiva (PKS 1.5), whose body is pure knowledge, in all one's bodily limbs (10. 50).

David White made a good point that there is no standard system of the yogic *cakras*, the subtle body system.⁹⁴ But he was himself fixed on the bottom-up model publicized by Avalon, whom White criticizes, and maybe too little interested in the ritual contexts. Avalon was certainly not. His major interest was philosophy, and he had a special inclination for the top-most *cakra* and its esoteric associations. Although he was far from being horrified by the *pañcamakāra* (in contrast to Lakṣmīdhara), he read the Kaula so to speak through the lens of Lakṣmīdhara's *Samaya*. A number of semantic fields which Avalon discussed in the context of *cakra*-/*kuṇḍalinī*-*yoga* and the *kāmakalā*, such as Śākta cosmogony, sound mysticism, esoteric guru veneration, Śiva-Śakti-union, illumination and reflection, self-transformation, and bliss also appear in the PKS, although more implicitly than explicitly, in the context of *kāmakalā* – particularly the second mode mentioned above. There are close correspondences with Avalon's second source, the *Pādukā-Pañcaka* (seven verses on esoteric guru veneration), which he published, translated and commented on along

93 See also PKS 10.26-27, where the *Parā-mantra* SAUḤ is verbally related to Śiva (illumination, pure knowledge) and *Parā*.

94 WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, 222. For his entire *cakra*, *kuṇḍalinī* and *kāmakalā* discussion *ibid.* 220-245. Most of it does not apply for the PKS.

with the *Ṣaṭcakra-Nirūpana*. But the *cakra-/kuṇḍalinī-yoga* practice of the PKS differs. It is ritualistic and appears in two ritual contexts: the purification/sacralization of the body and the invocation/creation of the deity in the mind. The first occurs not only in the *Śyāma*, *Vārāhī*, and *Parā* cycles, but also during initiation. Here purification and the bottom-up model coincide: the guru (by means of intense visualization) “bathes” the disciple’s body from the *mūlādhāra* to the *brahmarandhra* (*brahmabila*) with a wave of light (*prakāśa*) whose rays burn all the sins. I recall that the reverse visualization, i.e. the showering of the body with the nectar/water of immortality (oozing from the *brahmarandhra* in which the guru’s sandals and *Kāmeśvarī-Kāmeśvarī* have been located since the initiation), is performed by the practitioner himself immediately after waking up every morning (*Gaṇapati* and *Parā* cycles). Or as a variant, a bottom-up visualization of blazing light (destroying all sins) similar to that during initiation is repeated (*Lalitā* and *Śyāmā* cycles). *Vārāhī*’s variant, the concentration on the *mūlādhāra* (in which the old, sinful body is dried out, burnt, cooked, etc. and made into a pure mantra *body*) has already been mentioned. The second function of *cakra-yoga*, the invocation, creation and animation of the deity of the cycle, is restricted to two *cakras*: the heart lotus (*Gaṇapati*, *Lalitā*, *Vārāhī*, and *Parā*’s cosmic form) and the *brahmarandhra* (*Parā* as supreme light, *mantra*-deity and “auspicious heart” of *Lalitā*).

Cakra-yoga in the PKS is thus less a technique of interior yoga, but has very specific ritual functions. It serves a) the cleansing and ritual deification of the physical body, the subtle body (the psyche) and the psycho-somatic yogic centres, and is largely identical with what is called “purification of the elements” in the Tantra. And it provides b) a focussed interior ritual space for making the deity an inner experience and animate reality before she is externalized and worshiped in an image or diagram. Both the purification and invocation/animation-rites are generally combined with *prāṇāyāma* and *haṭha-yoga* exercises. All have something to do with the *kāmakāla*, but in much greater variety than the supposedly standard model of the *kuṇḍalinī* “rising up” and “piercing through” the knots to finally unite with *Śiva* in the topmost *cakra*, the thousand-petalled lotus above the head. It is impossible to confirm that the only thing that was left in later Tantra was “phonematic energy,” “phosphorescing drops of sound” and “gnoseology,” as White suggests. The old picture of immortality water raining down on the body is very present in the PKS. The vacillation between the real and the virtual body is particularly strong regarding the yogic *cakras*. These are body places and at the same time they transcend the body’s physical frame. In the PKS the *cakra* practices are very much related to the corporal sphere. The body must be transformed to be worthy of worship and the

deity conversely takes shape in the body. In both processes a major role is played by the *cakras/cakra-yoga*.

The real and virtual body-practices in the PKS both confirm and invert the shift to domestication of heterodox practices. The PKS is anything other than a juicy description of erotic ecstasies and wild drinking parties, as we find in some Kaula texts in which Yogins and Yoginīs move around completely drunk, dance till they fall down and enjoy in their sexual play and orgasms the “nectar of immortality” and the ecstatic flight in the “void space of consciousness.” The PKS is first of all a complex ritual script, in which corporal, verbal and mental acts are closely intertwined. My proposition is that deliberate active imagination played a decisive role in the transformations and transfers of Hindu Tantra and particularly the Kaula Tantra. One of the reasons outlined is this: as late as the 19th century we find the Brahmin commentators emphasizing the *padārthas*, that is the *real* liquor, meat and intercourse. They do not see any need for physical substitutes, such as garlic instead of meat. They regard the visualised and the mental worlds as just as real as the intersubjectively perceived tangible reality, and stress the continuity of physical and mental satisfaction. I suggest these kinds of cognitive blends and technologies of imagination, which were invented to reinforce the Kaula program of embodied deification by placing the body in the mind and the mind in the body, helped to pave the way for shifting attention from the body to the mind and establish internalized sensuality. The PKS itself is full of internalized sensuality. It is, however, also full of internal meaning given to the sensual, a meaning that surmounts the borders of the physical world. My argument is that this is not mere “superstructure,” but production of new realities and collectively shared imaginary spaces that are hyperreal for the participants.

I regard the Tantrics (irrespective of their time and creed) as masters of deliberate imagination as a technique for making the virtual hyperreal, bringing the extraordinary to life, and sacrilizing and cosmizing themselves. The creative power of imagination was not least also decisive in new meaning construction, the re-shaping of traditions and ritual transfers and transformations. Imagination connects conceptual entities and real-world entities that are perceived by the senses. By doing so, imagination functions as a third space and cognitive blend where something new emerges. In the playful blending of private fantasies and subjective mental worlds with the intersubjective perceptible world of objects, persons, social relations and visible actions, a powerful virtual world emerges in which mental images are experienced as hyperreal and the natural world as completely transformed. Sounds become animate, the body attains a cosmic dimension, liquor turns into the water of immortality and graphic signs into erotic goddesses. These kinds of ritualistic transfers and transformations are very

important in the PKS tradition and lie at the heart of any Tantric practice, be it Kaula or not. But this central role of imagination may also explain which cognitive and ritual processes paved the way for complete internalization and why attention could shift from the body to the mind quite easily. Sexual rites have been most prominent in Kaula Tantra. But the Kaulas also developed substitutes, and one of their most ingenious inventions was a highly gnostified sexual mysticism and *kunḍalinī-yoga* centred on visualization practices, breath control and the yogic body-scheme. According to the *Kulārṇava-Tantra* 5.106-108, there is a need for *kunḍalinī-yoga* and the taste of internal blissfulness, to consume alcohol etc. in an appropriate state of mind, and this seems much in consonance with the PKS tradition. But this emphasis on internalized spirituality also made it possible to keep the ritual intact even when “purged” of all “impurities,” and helped to spread the Śrīvidyā, the latest school of Kaula Tantra, even in the most orthodox Brahmanic circles of the South Indian Śankarācāryas where sexuality retained a powerful metaphorical character while body-practice was completely removed. Instead, interior body schemes of *kunḍalinī-yoga*, sonic cosmogony and Vedic-Vedāntic influences were stressed. This culminated in the assertion that Tantric *mantra* practice and contemplation were the third, secret contemplative part of the Veda, its *upāsana-kāṇḍa*.⁹⁵

I propose that the PKS tradition is an intermediary link. The real and virtual merge to such an extent that they are hardly distinguishable as separate realities. Precisely this blend and de-differentiation of borderlines is a major distinguishing factor of the PKS in comparison with the better known right-hand Śrīvidyā, that of the Samayins and the Śankarācāryas. This distinction goes beyond the body. It includes different kinds of imaginative techniques and differences in *kunḍalinī- / cakra-yoga*.

Summary

Avalon’s Tantra studies presented a timeless and placeless unified Tantrism; today we know that there have been a number of transformations, shifts and breaks within a multiplicity of Tantric traditions. Such transformations are also mirrored in the PKS and its commentary tradition. The PKS

95 This claim also occurs in the later PKS tradition; cf. GOUDRIAAN, “Hindu Tantric Literature,” 11, fn. 43. See also <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ambaa-1/message/6007> (accessed 22-03-2009) in which a follower of Lakṣmīdhara’s Samaya extols a PKS-commentary in Telugu by Anandarama Shastrigal, expounding the metaphysics “behind” the Kaula practices, as preferable to Rāmeśvara’s Kaula-based commentary.

tradition belongs to the Kaula-Tantra, i.e. one of the few Tantric lores that survived in history perceptible as Tantra. The Kaula-Tantra was even stylized as Tantra par excellence in India and beyond. I have suggested a number of reasons that might explain this selective process and the problems of representation connected with it. Regarding representation, another general observation is of interest. Remarkably, my sources reflect a Kaula cosmopolis whose practices resemble in many ways the timeless and placeless Tantra of Avalon. So, on the one hand, Avalon was not completely out of place in essentializing and unifying Tantra, because the Tantra of his time and his Brahmanic milieu may be assumed to have been precisely that way, i.e. represented that way, and probably the situation was the same in other parts of India. On the other hand, Tantra is of course not the unified whole presented by Avalon and by indigenous authors such as Rāmeśvara. Even the late Kaula, which both Avalon and Rāmeśvara refer to, is far from homogenous. The *cakra* discussion above and other observations have demonstrated this in detail. In the following I am going to summarize some features that are quite specific to the PKS and shed new light on the Śrīvidyā – features that I consider relevant for the historicising and theorising Tantra.

The PKS belongs to an epoch when the golden age of Hindu Tantra, lasting from the 5th to the 13th century, was over. During this period Tantra merged so much with mainstream Hinduism that most of it is nowadays no longer recognized as Tantric. In the PKS tradition, i.e. the sources surveyed from the 16th till late 19th centuries, we find an inversion of this general trend. Set in a historical perspective, the PKS is interesting for four striking features.

First, its being a Tantric and more precisely a Śrīvidyā source that kept genuinely Kaula features at a relatively late date. By doing so the PKS deviates from common expectations: a “left-hand” Śrīvidyā is conceived of today almost as a contradiction in terms.

Second, its keen interest in deliberate association with the Veda, but in quite different ways – some of which are even in opposition – to other Southern Śrīvidyā texts, namely by presenting the Kaula *pañcamakāra* as conforming to the Vedic system.

Third, its highly composite nature and hybrid character in which Veda and Kaula, gnosis and ritual, merge and create something new. It is clearly a Śrīvidyā text centring on the goddess Lalitā. But in contrast to the heavily Vedānticised Śrīvidyā works on Lalitā known in South India the PKS is an interesting intermediate text preserving older Kaula trends while incorporating the Vedic lore, and thereby transforming both.

And *fourth*, the PKS holds on to a more ancient Tantric tradition (Kaula and even pre-Kaula) that regards the left-hand practices (incorporating

many regulations) as *samaya*. The post-initiatory rules to be followed establish right conduct and orthodoxy, whereas the famous Lakṣmīdhara who flourished about the same time heavily criticized the Kaula as heterodox and created within the Śrīvidyā a definite split between Kaula and Samaya, narrowing the Kaula down to physical worship and the Samaya to interior worship. The PKS is very rich in both.

So my paper was devoted to a tradition which reveals a different Veda-Tantra-merger and a different kind of internalization than the more commonly known form of South Indian Śrīvidyā, the Śrīvidyā of the Śāṅkarācāryas and a significant segment of Smārta Brahmins. My sources suggest that even later Tantric history was more ramose and variegated than is generally acknowledged and that we have to take into account more closely the interactional processes in the contact zone of India which led to merging as well as bifurcation processes as two sides of one coin. My sources reveal a tradition that inverts domesticizing trends, but also partakes in them. They demonstrate strong features of internalization, an influx of *mantra* practice and an emphasis on *kuṇḍalīni-yoga* based on the yogic body schemes, the interior body and inner senses, and visualizing practices. But the PKS tradition makes equally clear that gnostifying tendencies and heavy emphasis on *mantra* practice and *cakra-kuṇḍalīni-yoga* did not necessarily extinguish body-practices and that meditation and ritual action may well go hand in hand.

I suggest that the PKS and its commentary tradition continue, intensify and expand a typical Kaula program of placing the body in the mind and the mind in the body to bring about embodied deification. This was done by recoding the natural and animating the imaginary. So my paper was largely about the role of imagination. I propose that imagination must be taken into account as an analytical tool that has so far been underestimated. There has been the curious presupposition that body-practice and mental ritual are mutually exclusive. The early Vidyāpīṭha and its heir, the Kaula, illustrate that this might be a Euro-centric and logo-centric judgement that simply does not apply to Tantric traditions. The Kaulas sought to transcend the human frame by deliberate de-differentiation of the borderlines of reality. Techniques of imagination therefore played a crucial role. The way the *pañcamakāra* and the *cakras* are used throughout the PKS illustrates how well superritualism and gnostification go together, and how very fluid the borderlines are between the “real thing,” verbalization and imagination. In other Śrīvidyā traditions and modern PKS receptions there was so much shift of attention from the body to the mind that the body disappeared completely (with the exception of the voice). But this break with the Kaula agenda did not only concern the corporal and it involved more than eliminating objectionable body-practice. The animation of the

virtual acquired an increasingly important role, while the recoding of the natural was minimized. However, the situation was partly also the other way round: practices of imagination were reduced and substitutes invented instead of creating things in the mind. The PKS tradition also occupies a remarkable intermediate position in this respect. The active animation of the virtual is very pronounced while genuinely Kaula body-practices still persist. Even Parā, who has no physical image or diagram and receives no Śakti-pūja, has alcoholic *arghya* involving meat soaked in alcohol. Corresponding to this she carries according to her meditation verses a piece of meat and the liquor of immortality in her hands besides a book – a nice example of Kaula identity and representation politics.

Concerning theorising Tantra, the PKS is interesting for the following features, all of which have to do with ritualized imagination:

First, regarding Kaula body practices the most important ritual substance of the PKS appears to be alcohol as the physical “fluid of immortality” or “nectar of bliss,” and a metonym of the goddess herself. This correlates with earlier Kaula sources who favour alcohol as the principal substance, equating it with the god Bhairava and the goddess, i.e. their self-revelation.

Second, the pronounced double nature of the text regarding the borders of reality becomes most clear regarding sexual practice. Sexual ritual is real and physical, as well as having a strong virtual nature in which imagination turns into hyperreality within the ritual space. This merger of the real and the virtual is the most distinctive feature in comparison with better known forms of Śrīvidyā who “purged” the ritual not only of real intercourse, but also of the virtual, i.e. sexual imagination like the *kāmakalā* meditation, keeping only the *kāmakalā* philosophy intact. The blend of real and virtual connects the PKS with older Kaula and pre-Kaula left-hand ritual. However, the virtual and verbal is so much increased and the physical (particularly regarding sexual ritual) is so briefly and secretly hinted at, that it can hardly be made out any more.

Third, the virtual body-practices, interior ritual and sexual imagination are ultimately much more important than the physical acts. The erotic chief goddess Lalitā becomes more alive than her beautiful human counterpart. However, the virtual body-practices themselves involve a large amount of corporal awareness. Contrasting Lakṣmīdhara’s concentration on the *brahmarandhra*, there is concentration on the trunk (*mūlādhāra*, navel region and heart centre) even in the worship of Parā, Lalitā’s supreme form whose worship is merely mental (but includes alcohol!). Vārāhi’s ritual involves concentration on the *mūlādhāra*, a practice judged by Lakṣmīdhara to be unworthy, non-Vedic and disgusting. In the PKS the ritual is very solemn and spiritual, involving intense non-dual contemplation (“Śiva am I”).

Different forms of non-dual meditation (female, male, androgyne) belong to each deity cycle.

Fourth, the *kāmakalā* turned out to be a secret semiotic code-system running through the whole text. Śakti cosmogony is very present, although not so much in teaching, but inscribed performatively into the body and the mind by diverse ritual activities. There are several forms and levels of *kāmakalā*, the *kāmakalā*-meditation that belongs inseparably to physical Śakti-worship (which should invariably be there at least in Lalitā's worship, unless the partner disagrees) being only one of them. In the succeeding goddess cycles, the *kāmakalās* become increasingly subtle and concerned with mantric mysticism and the inner consorts.

Fifth, there are two forms of *cakra/kunḍalinī-yoga* throughout the text, none of which corresponds the "bottom-up model" that was disseminated by Avalon. The primary function of *cakra-yoga* in the PKS is "the purification of the elements," i.e. the ritual deification of the physical and subtle body and the mental. The second function is to animate the deities in the body-centres of the heart lotus or the *brahmarandhra* before their worship takes place. Both are in accordance with the Kaula objective of embodied deification and the ancient Āgama rule that Śiva can only be worshiped when the worshiper has become divine himself.

Sixth, internalizing processes have had different faces. The PKS commentators, for instance, prefer sexual imagination to physical substitutes and paved the way for seeing any delight and satisfaction as a form of intercourse. We have to wait, however, for the 20th century to find complete disappearance of the physical body in the PKS tradition.

Seventh, my suggestion is to see imagination-practices as technologies of the self and ways of world-making. They create socially shared interiority that was obviously a vital part of identity and representation politics. The controversy about proper *kunḍalinī-yoga* performance raised by Lakṣmīdhara and the acceptance or rejection of sexual *imagination* (*kāmakalā*) reveal the importance of the role played by imagination regarding disputes, negotiations, transfers and transformations of Tantric identities.

So my proposition is that it is not sufficient to look for the occurrence or removal of physical body-practices and to trace substitutions (i.e. new forms of recoding the natural, for instance garlic instead of meat), but one must also be aware of the particulars of imaginative techniques (the ways of animating the virtual) in the processes of transfers and transformations. These processes entailed blends and bifurcations regarding traditions (for instance between Kaula Tantra and Smārta Hinduism), regarding ritual (for instance the PKS ideology of blending the virtual and the real and presenting Kaula body-practices as Veda-conforming and right behaviour

(*samaya*) on the one hand, and Lakṣmīdhara's split between Kaula and Samaya leading to bifurcating exterior and interior ritual on the other), and regarding techniques of imagination (for instance accepting or rejecting *kāmakalā* meditation). In the PKS the acceptance of the *pañcamakāra* has a pronounced cosmopolitan flair; a person who has seen other countries and taken different customs into account will be well-disposed to them.

Like the physical ritual acts, mental techniques are specific means of world-making and technologies of the self. They channel perception and create different forms of bodily awareness, depending on the way they are exercised. Imagination has been an underrated category in scholarly studies. Not only allowed and forbidden practice has been the subject of constant negotiation in Tantric history, but also the kind of imagination connected with it. Giving imagination the attention it deserves, we are able to differentiate a varied range of interiorizing schemes and programs. My initial thesis was that active imagination was so powerful for seeing the interior as the real that in the end only the interior was left. But this thesis needs to be specified. The acceptance or rejection of the *kāmakalā*-meditation in the right-hand Śrīvidyā shows that even internalization was of two types: on the one hand there were those who rejected physical intercourse but kept virtual sexuality intact, and on the other there were those who found virtual sexuality just as contemptible and undesirable as physical sexuality. The latter was Lakṣmīdhara's position, in whose interiorized ritual system direct experience of the union of Śiva and Śakti in the *brahmarandhracakra* lost any corporal associations. By contrast, the PKS hugely increased the virtual, but kept corporal associations *and* physical activities intact. We find the most pronounced *kunḍalinī-yoga* precisely in that place which was abhorred by Lakṣmīdhara the most, namely in the *mūlādhāra* meditation in Vārāhi's cycle. Possibly the PKS and Lakṣmīdhara reacted to each other; possibly both reacted to one and the same practice in very different ways. However it may have been, it is clear that it would be too simple and naive to see internalization only as a shift from the body to the mind. We also have to ask about imaginations that were allowed and those that were not allowed, which parts of the virtual body are activated or neutralized, and whether embodied deification or a state of bodilessness while living or something else is the religious ideal.

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Some Observations on an Uṣṇīṣa Abhiṣeka Rite in Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*

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ABBREVIATIONS:

- T. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, ed. TAKAKUSU and WATANABE, 1924-34.
To. sDe-dge canon nos. from UI, HAKUJU, et al, eds. *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons (BKaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥgyur)*, (Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934).

The origins of Buddhist tantrism have been subject to much speculation, but even approximate understanding has been impeded by the reality that the majority of the important early documents do not survive in Sanskrit, with the exception of part of the *Amoghapāśamahākālparāja*, or texts integrated into chapters of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and a few related works. The majority of the other documents are found in Chinese or occasionally in Tibetan, and their understanding has remained problematic for some time, in part because modern scholars usually have a grasp of Sanskrit materials or an understanding of Chinese texts, but seldom both. Yet there is clear evidence that the Chinese documents, if viewed as Indic products, can often be our best sources for sixth- to eighth-century Buddhist developments. This paper will provide a preliminary assessment of some factors in one *abhiṣeka* ritual associated with arguably the earliest tantric system of integrated ritual in Indian Buddhism: the Uṣṇīṣa rites that survive in more than a dozen separate sources, beginning with Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* of 654 CE. Atikūṭa's document is the earliest text that puts together into a single place the minimum necessary requirements for Buddhist tantrism: it provides a gateway rite, the *abhiṣeka*, into a *maṇḍala* of Buddhist divinities, employing *homa* rituals and implicating *mudrās* and *mantras* while admonishing the candidates to secrecy, perhaps the earliest surviving invocation to secrecy in Mahāyānist history. This paper will argue that the initial Uṣṇīṣa *abhiṣeka* ritual found in this *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* owes its form to a synthesis of rituals of site consecration fused with an abbreviated imperial rite of coronation. This is in distinction to the other medieval sectarian ritual systems, where the *abhiṣeka* plays a lesser, supporting role to the Saiddhāntika or Pāñcarātra gateway rite of *dikṣā*.

No study of the Buddhist ritual of *abhiṣeka* can avoid discussion of Michel Strickmann's several studies of the late fifth century text, the *Consecration Scripture* (佛說灌頂七萬二千神王護比丘咒經 T. 1331). In his first published discussion of the text, Strickmann outlines his understanding of its place in literature, and rebuts its critics.

Japanese sectarian scholars have generally denied that the word "consecration" (*kuan-ting*), as found in our sūtra's title, is to be understood as designating a rite of empowerment by aspersion (*abhiṣeka*) of the sort that marks the stages of initiation into the mysteries of the later Sino-Japanese Tantric Buddhism system [...] This is an excellent example of the way that narrow sectarian concerns can obscure or distort plain fact. The Buddha expressly outlines the rite of consecration in the scripture's opening chapter. Despite its simplicity when compared with the refined system of seventh- and eighth-century Mantrayāna as still practiced in Japan, "consecration" here already clearly carries its full sense of a quasi-royal rite of empowerment. [...] However, the description in our text is the earliest extant reference anywhere in surviving Buddhist literature to *abhiṣeka* as a concrete rite, performed in a Buddhist context by mortals rather than buddhas. The *Book of Consecration* should therefore be given full credit for the feature that it announces so prominently in its title, and it must henceforth be taken into account in studying the development of rituals that were to occupy a central position in later Tantric Buddhism.¹

Much of Strickmann's statement is of course true. The scripture does mark the first time that *abhiṣeka* is employed in Buddhist religious history as a ritual of transmission. However, it would appear that Strickmann's concern for questioning Japanese sectarianism has led him into an adversarial position that has obscured some of the differences between the ritual in the *Consecration Scripture* and the ritual of *abhiṣeka* as observable in authentically Indian tantric texts, even though there is common acceptance of Strickmann's position that the *Consecration Scripture* is apocryphal. Having spent much time in reviewing many of the instances of *abhiṣeka* rites in fifth- to seventh-century Buddhist documents, I find it quite unlikely that this short rite at the beginning of the *Consecration Scripture* is on a lineal continuum with the rituals that become part of the tantric materials.² The purpose of the rite is the transmission of a text, instead of the entry into the *maṇḍala*, and while these may appear similar in the East Asian context, they are only infrequently found together in South Asia. It is my hypothesis

1 MICHEL STRICKMANN, "The *Consecration Sūtra*: A Buddhist Book of Spells," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. ROBERT E. BUSWELL (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 75-118, p. 85.

2 See R. DAVIDSON, "The Place of *Abhiṣeka* Visualization in the *Yogalehrbuch* and Related Texts," in *From Turfan to Ajanta: A Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. ELI FRANCO and MONIKA ZIN (Lumbini, 2010), vol. 1, 185-98.

that the author of the text presented a physically enacted *abhiṣeka* rite derived in part from an oral background received from Indians in China and in part by the frequent mention of such ritual behaviors in Buddhist literature. It would appear to me that the author has propounded a Chinese ritual primarily based on literary examples and perhaps on hearing Indian narratives of royal consecration, rather than through the direct Indian cultural understanding we find in the other examples at our disposal. In distinction to the *Consecration Scripture's* invocation of *abhiṣeka*, Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* articulates forms of the rite that are firmly grounded in the ritual vocabulary of South Asia, and so we may turn to that text to observe one of its uses of *abhiṣeka*.

Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* (T.901) is a very lengthy document, extending over twelve rolls and encompassing 113 pages in the Taisho edition.³ As a rough guide, this relative length would suggest that Atikūṭa's text is about 60% longer than either the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* as known in its eleventh century translations (T.1191, To.543) or the much earlier *Vidyottama-mahātantra* (To.746); it is about twice the length of either the *Abhidhānottara* (To.369) or the eighth century *Vajrapānyabhiṣekatantra* (To.496), about 10% longer than the relatively late *Tārāmūlakalpa* (To.724), and only about a third shorter than the longest received medieval Buddhist tantra, the *Amoghapāśamahākālparāja* (T.1092. To.686). This would mean, if we choose to count it this way, that Atikūṭa's text might be the second longest Indian tantric Buddhist scripture of the medieval period. Both of the longest texts (*Dhāraṇīsamgraha* and the *Amoghapāśamahākālparāja*) are mid to late seventh century works, with multiple Amoghapāśa translations between 693 and 707 CE.⁴ Given these parameters, it means that our two longest surviving tantric Buddhist scriptures are among the earliest examples of tantric Buddhist literature, a fact that is counter-intuitive but nonetheless apparently true.

3 MICHEL STRICKMANN, *Mantras et mandarins, Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), pp. 133-36, 145-59, relates some of the many therapeutic rituals found in the text; he considers these its main purport and the text fundamentally Chinese. As he says, "L'objectif principal de la *Collection* est donc d'abord et avant tout thérapeutique." In Strickmann's discussion throughout he follows the Chinese and Japanese assessment of the text, so that when he indicates "chapter," he means fascicule (卷) rather than the actual chapter divisions of the text itself (品).

4 A three-roll *Amoghapāśakālparāja* (T.1097) was translated by Mañicintana in 693 CE, and its contents and relationship to other Avalokiteśvara translations has been examined in MARIA REIS-HABITO, "The Amoghapāśa Kālparāja Sūtra: A Historical and Analytical Study," *Studies in Central & East Asian Religions* 11 (1999): 39-67; see also ANTONIO FORTE, "The Activities in China of the Tantric Manicintana," *East and West* 34 (1984): 301-347.

The rapidity of formation of these texts, from the middle of the seventh through the middle of the eighth century, belies the normative Indological supposition that Indians of any tradition took centuries to compose ritual texts. My estimate is that even the longest Buddhist tantric texts could have been formulated between a few years to few decades. This is certainly not true of all such tantras; the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, in its modern version, continued to grow well after its eleventh century translations, as Matsunaga has shown.⁵ However, when we see the rapidity with which Atikūṭa and his colleagues pieced together over the course of a few years the second longest Buddhist tantric text of the period, we can appreciate that textual formation in India could be, and doubtless sometimes was, an exceedingly rapid event.

Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* was noticed in 1931 by Arthur Waley, who dismissed it as not-Vairocana-oriented, and by Strickmann, who saw it as a Chinese text of the *dhāraṇī* genre that approximated tantric practices.⁶ What these eminent sinologists did not entirely recognize, is that the document has various layers of Indian material contained within it, but not traditionally identified as such. Reflecting a more traditional analysis, Matsunaga in his introduction to the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* repeats the simple assessment of the text possibly first articulated in Zhisheng's 730 CE *Kaiyuan shijiaolu*, that the first two of the twelve rolls are focused on the Buddha, the next three on the bodhisattvas, and lesser figures taking up the balance.⁷ This appraisal was probably culled from interlinear notes attached to the text, placed there either at the time of its final synthesis or shortly thereafter, and has been substantially replicated in Yuan-Zhao's 778 CE *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*.⁸

While Matsunaga's assessment is a direct reflection of the Chinese editors' and catalogers' categories, it obscures much about the organization of the work, which divides itself into seventeen chapters (*pin* 品 = ? *pātala*, *parivarta*, *pariccheda*). In the appendix, I have provided the titles of the seventeen chapters, along with their hypothetical Sanskrit renderings, a

5 MATSUNAGA, YUKEI, "On the Date of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 22 (1985): 882-894.

6 ARTHUR WALEY, *A Catalogue of Paintings Recovered from Tun-Huang by Sir Aurel Stein* (London: Trustees of the British Museum and the Government of India, 1931), p. XIII; STRICKMANN *Mantras et mandarins*, p. 134, "De plus, les types d'actes rituels sont essentiellement les mêmes que ceux du tantrisme «pur»."

7 MATSUNAGA, YUKEI, "Introduction," *The Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Osaka: Toho Shuppan, Inc., 1978), p. XIV; *Kaiyuan shijiaolu* 開元釋教錄 T. 2154.599a25f; similarly STRICKMANN *Mantras*, p. 134.

8 *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, 貞元新定釋教目錄 T. 2157.929b.

problematic but possibly helpful aid to those not reading Chinese. Even these chapter titles are not as useful concerning the contents as one might wish, in part because the text as it exists was clearly assembled from Indian texts and traditions in China rather than in India. This is evident from, among other places, the introduction to a short sūtra on the goddess Śrīdevī appended to chapter 15, which states that the text was transported to China by Atikūṭa and translated there.⁹

中天竺國菩提寺僧阿難律木叉師迦葉師等共瞿多法師於經行寺翻

The masters *Saṅghānandavimokṣa and Kāśyapa from the Bodhivihāra in Central India (Magadha), together with [Ati]kūṭa translated [the *Śrīdevīnaya scripture in one roll] in Scripture Practice Monastery.¹⁰

Moreover, the text bristles with odd and peculiar types of Buddhist lore, including an alternative *Heart Sūtra* teaching *śamatha* in the contemplation of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, texts dedicated to Hayagrīva, Ucchuṣma, Vajragarbha, Avalokiteśvara, Cāmuṇḍā and others, some of which are found in whole or part replicated elsewhere. To mention but one example, part of the second paṭala entitled **Mahācakravajradhāraṇī* (大輪金剛陀羅尼) is substantially replicated as first part of the *Three Chieftains' Mantras* (呪三首經 T. 1338), in a 676-688 translation attributed to Divākara.¹¹ In its being pieced together from various pericope, Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* is similar to many of the early Buddhist tantras, like the *Vidyottamatantra*. Yet it also follows somewhat the aggregation path of earlier *dhāraṇī* scriptures and is a prelude to the *sādhana-saṃgraha*l-*samuccaya*l-*mālā* of later times.¹²

9 KOICHI SHINOHARA, "The All-gathering Maṇḍala initiation ceremony in Atikūṭa's Collected Dhāraṇī scriptures: Reconstructing the evolution of esoteric Buddhist Ritual," forthcoming, *Journal Asiatique*, has identified this as having been largely abstracted from *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, chapter 8, using Dharmarakṣa's translation (T. 663) as a base; I thank Shinohara for graciously sharing the ms. of his article with me. It is appropriate to note that this text is appended to another appendix to the Ucchuṣma materials; this prior appendix is dedicated to Marīci, T. 901.18.869b24-874b24.

10 T. 901.18.874b26. As has been noted before, the name 僧阿難律木叉 is a problem, and I assume that the character *lü* (律) is an error, perhaps for *bi* (筆) or *bi* (畢), which would yield **Saṅghānandavimokṣa*; 畢 is a character used for transliteration, but as in this instance, the solutions to names in the text generally remain elusive.

11 **Mahācakravajradhāraṇī*, 大輪金剛陀羅尼, is found in T. 901.18.803b11-23; *Zhou san-shoujing* 呪三首經, T. 1338, the three chieftains being Mahācakravajra, Sūryaprabha and Marīci.

12 The intertextuality of some earlier *dhāraṇī* scriptures is discussed in JONATHAN SILK, "The *Jifayue sheku tuoluoni jing* – Translation, non-translation, both or neither?" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 31/1-2 (2008 [pub. 2010]): 369-420.

The opening three chapters and the closing chapter of Atikūta's text are of particular interest, and what has been overlooked so far is that the nature of the rituals invoked is somewhat different from the other *dhāraṇī-sūtras* and is fully tantric Buddhist in nature, even while betraying a strong *dhāraṇī* background. The first part of the text, embedded in the first three *paṭālas* is reasonably unified, clearly placed in the position of importance, and was probably composed only shortly before Atikūta included it in his work. This assessment is validated by T. 947, an anonymous translation featuring some of the same material as the first three *paṭālas* of Atikūta's text.¹³ Their intertextuality leads me to believe that T. 947 was possibly also translated by Atikūta's group – or served as the basis for their rendering – and expresses a slightly earlier form of the oral or textual material that was augmented and aggregated by Atikūta in the compilation of the first *paṭāla* of his *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*.

These chapters and many related texts feature the system known as Uṣṇīṣa, Buddhōṣṇīṣa or Tathāgatoṣṇīṣa,¹⁴ but more properly Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣa-cakravartin, a Cakravartin revealed from the Buddha's uṣṇīṣa and encapsulated in one of those complex and sometimes unpronounceable single-syllable *mantras* found in tantric works. This Uṣṇīṣa material stands revealed here as arguably the earliest surviving integrated system of Buddhist tantric practice, one that did not continue intact but was eclipsed by more popular systems from the eighth century forward. Yet for almost a hundred years, it was perhaps the best represented of tantric Buddhist ritual traditions and is set forth in more than a dozen texts surviving in Chinese and by a few surviving materials in Sanskrit and Tibetan, especially in five chapters from the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.¹⁵ The Uṣṇīṣa corpus is also closely related to *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* and the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya* texts, for these feature many of the same images, figures and rites.

13 *Dafoding rulai fangguang xidaduo bandaluo dashenlidu she yiqie zhouwang tuoluonijing dawei de zuisheng jinlun sanmei zhoupin* T. 947 大佛頂如來放光悉怛多般但羅大神力 都攝一切呪王陀羅尼經大威德最勝金輪三昧 呪品.

14 The rendering of 佛頂 as Uṣṇīṣa or Buddhōṣṇīṣa is not unproblematic, since the two character combination is used to represent more than one term. However, in our text, the term is used in the following compounds: *tathāgata-uṣṇīṣa* (786b10-11: 多他揭都烏瑟膩沙), *sarvabuddha-uṣṇīṣa* (796a13: 薩婆善陀烏瑟膩沙), and *uṣṇīṣa* alone (888c1-2: 烏瑟尼沙). In related texts translated by Bodhiruci II, T. 951 and 952, we find *bhagavad-uṣṇīṣa* (幡伽囉底瑪瑟膩瀧); *Yizi foding luwangjing* T. 951.19.256c28, 257a8, 257a18, 257b1, 257b9, 257b16, 257b28, 257c16, 258a2; *Wufoding sanmei tuoluonijing* T. 952.19.282a23, 283b8, 283b12, 283b16.

15 T. GANAPATI SASTRI, ed., *Mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa* (Trivandrum: Oriental Manuscripts Library of the University of Travancore, 1920-25), chapters 9, 14, 25-27.

The Uṣṇīṣa materials were in direct competition to one other Buddhist tradition, that of the Amoghapāśa system associated with Avalokiteśvara, and we are fortunate that approximately two-thirds of the *Amoghapāśamahākālparāja* survives in an apparently unique Sanskrit manuscript, being edited by Kimura Takayasu. Part of the verification of the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*'s authenticity, in fact, is dependent on this manuscript, which demonstrates a ritual morphology sometimes similar to the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* and related texts, yet somewhat distinct from the next phase of tantrism, that of the Vajroṣṇīṣa materials (金剛頂), whose name has been incorrectly Sanskritized as equivalent to Vajraśekhara, an error already noticed yet curiously dismissed by Giebel.¹⁶ The Amoghapāśa and Uṣṇīṣa works can claim pride of place at the threshold of Buddhist tantrism, and of the two, it may be that the Uṣṇīṣa system is slightly earlier and is much better represented with more literature in its early phases. However, the Uṣṇīṣa ritual complex was almost entirely eclipsed as an independent system in the later centuries, a fate that did not befall the Amoghapāśa rites.

Let us turn to the Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣa-cakravartin *maṇḍala* delineated toward the end of the first paṭala of the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*. There we find several ritual events subsumed under the thirty-second division of this first paṭala, identified there as the **Ekākṣara-uṣṇīṣa-nayamantra* (一字佛頂法呪). Section thirty-two begins by specifying the single syllable (*ekākṣara*) *bhlim/bhlin/blin*, depending on how the Chinese characters (苾凌) were to be pronounced.¹⁷ The section continues with subsections on consecrating the place, creating the *maṇḍala*, visualizing the *maṇḍala*, performing the consecration with *homa* rites, consecrating the disciples with the *abhiṣeka*, various seven-day *homa* practices, and concludes by invoking secrecy after the consecration. This thirty-second division acts as the culmination of the other thirty-one sections, references some of them, and is in turn referenced later in the text. Clearly, while T. 901 is a composite text, and while its proofreading is haphazard, that does not mean it lacks an editorial vision. It is evident to me that Atikūṭa and his colleagues had some overall ritual format that they were following, one that they could generally agree

16 ROLF W. GIEBEL, "The *Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei*: An Annotated Translation," *Journal of Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies* 18 (1995): 107-201, p. 109. There are references to Vajroṣṇīṣa elsewhere in surviving Sanskrit Buddhist literature, but space precludes a complete list.

17 There was much variation in the "single syllable" found in Uṣṇīṣa texts. The same transcription for the syllable is found in T. 901.18.832a7, and is possibly equivalent to the 勃琳 of T. 951.19.226c25, but the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*'s "single" syllables are *kḷbīm* (p. 81.14) and *bbrūm* (pp. 130.6, 285.21).

on. It seems that some stray sections were provided ritual supplements, and others appear to have been edited to reference related textual sections.

The *abhiṣeka* represented here is short, and the *maṇḍala* into which the disciples are introduced is anomalous by later standards, for many reasons. It involves an asymmetrical platform of fifty figures in various arrangements and whose exact positions are difficult to decode from the complex and often contradictory instructions provided in the text. Just as obscure is the Sinic representation of some of their names, seemingly done through a medieval Prakritic pronunciation. Nonetheless, it is evident that the central figure as the lord of the *maṇḍala* is identified as Tejorāśi-Śākyamuni (中心帝殊羅施鑠雞謨爾為道場主), a name of great curiosity. He is featured in several sections in the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*, and occurs in various other tantric texts. Even before this, however, Tejorāśi is a name found as number 573 in one of the lists of the thousand Buddhas in the *Bhadrakalpikasūtra*, which was first translated between 291-300 in T. 425, ascribed to Dharmarakṣa.¹⁸ *Tejas* (splendor), certainly, is one of the common designations found attributed to various Buddhas, as is the term *rāśi* (mass), but the name has a wider dispersal as well, and various figures in the *Mahābhārata* and in several Purāṇas are identified with the epithet, such as Agastya, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Śiva, Nārada, etc.¹⁹ Be that as it may, the activity identified with our Tejorāśi-Śākyamuni is anomalous by any standard, and the text includes a dramatic introductory myth of the interaction between him and Avalokiteśvara.²⁰ Moreover, Tejorāśi's place in the center of this *maṇḍala* in the earliest tantric system is rather extraordinary. Yet his exalted status was equally short lived, for the other Uṣṇīṣa texts do not all provide him the same degree of centrality, and he went on to become a lesser figure in the Vajroṣṇīṣa materials as well. Eventually, he was to take a place as an ancillary persona in several other systems, as when he is listed as number seven among the eight *uṣṇīṣa-rājas* found in chapter two of the

18 FRIEDRICH WELLER, *Tausend Buddhanamen* (Leipzig: Asia Major, 1927), 70-71; the Dharmarakṣa translation seems to read Tejorāja (威德王), as noted by WELLER; T. 425.14.48c27.

19 E.g., V. S. SUKTHANKAR, et al, eds., *Mahābhārata* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1927-66), 1.15.5a, 3.81.160c, 3.105.25a, 3.158.53c, 4.26.9c, 5.49.6d, 5.88.27a, 5.128.51c, 6.33.17b, 8.24.40b, 12.203.3b, 12.318.53c, 13.84.18b; *Agnipurāṇa* (Poona: Ānandāśrama, 1987), 206.3, 206.16; RAMSHANKAR BHATTACHARYA, ed., *Garuḍapurāṇa* (Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 1998), 2.17.13; K. M. BANERJEA, ed., *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1855-1862), 82.18b.

20 T. 901.18.790a-c.

Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, or a minor figure in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* and the *Susiddhikara*.²¹

Returning to the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*, after the mantrin constructs the eight-cubit *maṇḍala*, with its various sections, and consecrates the area, then he prepares to perform the *abhiṣeka* on the disciples. The following directions for the *ācārya* concerning the *abhiṣeka* are given in the text.²²

燈一百盞。及約位作飲食。種種香華種種飲食種種香水椀。及十六水瓶。各各皆呪一百八遍。從東北角。下燈下食下瓶。瓶著四角四門中心。供養作法。一一如前。七日八日兩夜不睡。十三十四十五夜不睡。月八日十三十四十五日不食。得食藥及酥乳粿等。月別十五日五更頭。取十六瓠水。西門行著。用金剛印。印瓠呪一百八遍。禮拜發願弟子某甲今從佛。請三昧陀羅尼功德之水。灌頂身心。三業清淨行願具足。即將水瓶。上牛糞香水壇上。脫去衣裳。面正東立。擎水瓠頭上淋。口云。十方一切佛。賜與我某甲一切菩薩行願。先從中心帝殊羅施。灌頂身心。以次取瓠。灌盡著衣服。入道場行道作業。行者得行願時。及種種相貌。不得向一人說。行道作業亦不得向一人說。又法欲令一切羅闍心歡喜者。煮粳米乳粥。於道場西門。先呪乳粥一千八十遍。從門南頰。取穀木柴。火鑪上然。請釋迦佛。坐火鑪中蓮華座上。取少許乳粥。呪一遍一擲火中燒。如是滿一百八遍。旦起午時黃昏作法。滿七日一切羅闍奉請迎喚。種種供養生大歡喜。

又法呪酥合香一千八十遍。於正西門寶火鑪上。請釋迦佛。坐於火中蓮華座上。取前蘇合香。呪一遍一擲火中燒供養。晝夜六時作法。五時亦得。時別誦一百八遍。一切諸佛一切菩薩金剛天等生大歡喜。

[Assemble] one hundred oil lamps and depending on the positions [in the *maṇḍala*] prepare different food, various kinds of incense and flowers, and various kinds of distinctive food and various kinds of fragrant water in a basin. Also sixteen water pots, each and every one to be empowered with *mantras* one hundred eight times. From the northeast corner, set down lamps, food and pots. The pots are placed in the four corners, at the four gates, and in the center. Making offerings, one performs the proper method, each as before.

On the seventh and eighth, these two nights, do not sleep. On the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth nights do not sleep. On the eighth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth of the month, do not eat. Then obtain food, medicine up to ghee, milk, grits etc. The other fifteenth of the month, in the five watches of the night, take the sixteen water pots, going to the four gates [etc.], place them using the *vajra-mudrā*. Empower the pots with *mantras* one hundred eight times.

Worship [the *maṇḍala*] and generate the aspiration (*praṇidhāna*) [saying], “May this/these disciple(s), so-and-so, now invite water of the *samādhi-dhāraṇī*-attributes (*samādhidhāraṇīguṇa*) from the Buddha. Asperse his/their mind and body, that the three [doors of] *karma* have pure practice of aspiration in all

21 *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, p. 41; *Susiddhikara* T. 893.18.612c24, 625a11, 627a23, 627c6; TADEUSZ SKORUPSKI, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 182.8, 35-38.

22 T. 901.18.794b11-c9.

ways.” Then just grab the water pot and pour the fragrant water over the cow manure platform.

Then remove your outer garment (*uttarīya*). Facing exactly due east, you stand and raise the water pot, pouring it over the head [of the disciples]. Then each of them should say, “May all the Buddhas of the ten directions bestow on me, so-and-so by name, the entire bodhisattva practice of aspiration (**prañidhānacaryā*).” First in the center, where there is Tejorāśi, you consecrate [the disciple’s] mind and body. Then once the consecration with the pot is complete, you replace your clothing.

Then enter the platform and practice the path through performing the ritual. When you as the practitioner obtain the practice of aspiration on up to various aspects of appearance, then without facing any single person, you say, “Practice the path and perform the ritual.” Again do not face any single person and then say, “Moreover, all you desiring Dharma, the things that cause all the kings’ minds to be delighted consist of boiled rice and milk congee.”

In the western gate of the path platform, first empower the milk congee with *mantras* one thousand eighty times. From the gate’s east auxiliary building, take grain and firewood. Stick them in a fire pan (*kunḍa*) and invite Śākyamuni Buddha to sit within the fire pan and on top of the lotus seat. Take some milk congee and recite one *mantra* for each throw into the fire. Do this for the entire one hundred eighty times. In the morning, when you rise, during noon time and at twilight, perform this practice for a complete seven days. All the *rājas* [of the *maṇḍala*] are respectfully invited, welcomed and invoked. Make various kinds of offerings and generate [in them] great happiness.

Again [offer] the *dharmamantra*-rose storax incense one thousand eighty times in a jeweled fire pan, requesting that Śākyamuni come sit in the fire on a lotus seat. Take the previously mentioned rose storax incense, recite one *mantra* for each of the [one thousand eighty] times you throw it in the fire as an offering. Day and night, six times each day, do this offering. [Even doing it] five times [a day], you get [the results of a complete seven days]. Then there will be a special recitation of one hundred eighty times. All the Buddhas, all the *bodhisattvas* and the *vajradevas*, etc. all will generate great happiness.

There are many things that may be commented on with respect to this rite, but because of its length, only a few will be noticed here. First, the *abhiṣeka* unction itself is extraordinarily rudimentary. It does not contain the royal insignia that are conferred in the later versions of the *abhiṣeka* ritual, such as the consecration by a vajra, by a crown, by name, and so forth. Nor does the disciple throw a flower here, although that action is included in a later, much longer *abhiṣeka* rite found in the final *paṭala* of the text.²³ Instead, we are provided previous to this rite a complex act of establishing a *maṇḍala* inside the *maṇḍapa* pavilion, a relatively complex

23 T. 901.18.891b20-24. This much longer ritual is the subject of SHINOHARA, “All-gathering Maṇḍala.”

anomalous arrangement of the figures, a very simple ritual of consecration, followed by complex *homas*, involving rice, milk congee, and continuing on after the translated section with the further offering of various other kinds of incense. The entire section concludes with forbidding the disciples to speak of the *maṇḍala* to anyone who has not received the *abhiṣeka*. Despite the fact of a paucity of royal symbolism, the inhabitants of the *maṇḍala* are expressly referred to as kings (*rāja* 羅闍) twice.

To understand this specific rite, we might backtrack a bit, and look at the earlier *Amoghapāśahṛdaya*, that is, the short *mantra* text that was first translated by *Jñānagupta/* Yaśogupta in 587 CE, retranslated again several times, and given pride of place at the beginning of the longest tantric text, the *Amoghapāśamahākālparāja*. Its importance during the period is evident from the inclusion of Amoghapāśa material in the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha* as well (827c7-828a17). Not very clear in Meisezahl's otherwise excellent work on the text, the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* includes an *abhiṣeka* rite that operates, not as a transmission ritual, but as a purificatory rite that can pacify the disturbances of a country.

*sīmābandhe pañcaraṅgikasūtram ekaviṃśativārān pariṇipya | catuḥṣu kha-
dirakīlakeṣu baddhvā caturddiśam nikhātavyam | sīmābandho bhavati |
sarvarakṣā sūtrakena udakena bhasmakena vā | sarvagraheṣu pañcaraṅgika-
sūtrakam | sarvajvareṣu śvetasūtrakam | sarppakīṭalūtalohalingagalagraheṣu
madhupippalīyutam | cakṣūrogeṣu gandhodakam palāśodakam vā madhu-
yaṣṭiyudakam vā | sarvakalikalahavivādābhyākhyāneṣu udakam pariṇipya
mukham prakṣālayitavyam | balaviṣayarājyārāstropadravarakṣāsu pūrṇa-
kalaśam sthāpayitvā śucinā śucivastraprāvṛtena mahatiṃ pūjām kṛtvā vacayit-
avyam | mahāśāntir bhavati | tena codakena sektavyam |²⁴*

In binding up a border, say the *mantra* twenty-one times over a five-colored thread, tie it to four stakes of acacia wood, and stick them in the ground in the four directions, so that the border becomes secure. All forms of protection come from a string, water or ash. The five-colored string is for protection against seizure by demons of the planets (*graha*). A white thread is employed in the cases of fevers (representing spirit possession). In instances of snakes, insects, spiders, carbuncles and hoarseness, employ a mixture of honey and pepper. In cases of ocular diseases, fragrant water, Bengal Kino water (*palāśa*: *butea frondosa*), or licorice water is employed. In the case of all strife, quarrel, fighting, dispute or slander, say the *mantra* over water and rinse the mouth. In the case of protection from calamities affecting troops, districts, kingdoms

24 R. O. MEISEZHL, "The Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī: The Early Sanskrit Manuscript of the Reunji, Critically Edited and Translated," *Monumenta Nipponica* 17 (1962): 265-328, p. 325 [translation mine]; cf. KIMURA TAKAYASU, ed. "Transcribed Sanskrit Text of the Amoghapāśa-kālparāja," *Taiishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kenkyūjo Nenp.* 20 (1998): 1-58, p. 19; here reading *balaviṣaya-* with Kimura instead of *paraviṣaya-* of Meisezahl.

or empires, having placed a full vase on the ground, the purified [*mantrin*] clothed in fresh clothing performs a great offering and then pronounces the *mantra* [over the water]. There will ensue great peace. Then with that water, he anoints [the place].

Here there is no *maṇḍala* into which any candidate is introduced, for this is not a ritual of transmission. The pouring of water (*sektavya*) appears to be onto the ground, and that is how *Jñānagupta understood the rite in his 587 CE translation.²⁵ Moreover, like all normative *dhāraṇī* literature, the *sādhaka* is enjoined in the process to spread this teaching far and wide, and elsewhere in the text there is a specific prohibition against the infamous “*ācāryamuṣṭi*,” the “teacher’s fist” first mentioned in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, where the Buddha admonishes his disciples not to differentiate between an inner and an outer group but to share the teaching to one and all.²⁶ The same statement is found in the **Mahādharmadīpadhāraṇī-sūtra* (大法炬陀薩尼經 T. 1340), a lengthy *dhāraṇī* scripture translated by *Jñānagupta in 594 CE.²⁷ Sixty years later, this openness is directly contradicted by the Uṣṇīṣa section of the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*, and eventually other Buddhist tantric systems will adopt secrecy as their leitmotif, as is well known.²⁸

So if they are so different, how is the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* connected to our Uṣṇīṣa *abhiṣeka*? If we step back from their respective purposes, we can observe that they share attributes of a ritual format, and ultimately some ritual vocabulary, for they involve staking out an area, the sanctification of water in pots, and the sprinkling of water onto an object. In that regard, we should notice that the *ācārya* sprinkles twice, the first at the end of worship of the *maṇḍala*, after which he changes his clothing, followed by the actual *abhiṣeka* of the disciples, after which his clothing is replaced. Here we may note the change of clothing before and after the *abhiṣeka*, similar to what we observed in the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya*, and clothing changes may be seen in other ritual environments, where they often mark changes of ritual source or process.²⁹

25 T. 1093.20.401b29-c1. The rendering of his name (闍那崛多) as either *Jñānagupta or *Yaśogupta has been disputed for some time.

26 MEISEZAHN, “The Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī,” 318-19.

27 **Mahādharmadīpadhāraṇī-sūtra*, T. 1340.21.747a8; this is how *Jñānagupta translated *na ācāryamuṣṭi*; cf. T. 1093.20.400a27.

28 For a cursory introduction to the problem, see R. DAVIDSON, “The problem of secrecy in Indian Tantric Buddhism,” in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, ed. BERNHARD SCHEID and MARK TEEUWEN (New York: Routledge, 2006), 60-77.

29 We note in the *rājasūya* the awkward change and resumption of clothing, indicating that the *abhiṣeka* rite has probably been placed in a position it initially did not occupy;

Indeed, we can build on such indications if we examine similar rituals elsewhere in India. It would appear that Śaivas began to adopt *abhiṣekas* for some of the same reasons Buddhists did. Neither the *Pāśūpatasūtras* nor Kauṇḍinya's commentary mention *abhiṣeka*, but employ the metaphor of lustration for a thrice-daily ash or *mantra* bath (*Pāśūpatasūtra* 1.2-4). The metaphor is carried over in the short mention of *abhiṣeka* in *Vināśikatantra* 47, where a disciple is consecrated with *bījamantras*, which are then conferred on him (*abhiṣicya svabījais tu bījān tebhyaḥ pradāpayet*). Conversely, some of the Śaivāgamas that Goodall lists as early include lengthy chapters on *abhiṣeka*, and the greatest overlap I have noted is in the *Kiraṇāgama*, which puts into place a bit longer form of *abhiṣeka* than seen in this early version of the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*. The *Kiraṇāgama* specifically invokes royal symbols for the *pīṭha* as a place of consecration by the attachment of ornaments, turbans, umbrellas, and the yak-tale chowrie (*sālaṃkāraṃ ca soṣṇīṣaṃ sacchatraṃ cāmarānvitam*); the consecration is also said to bring victory to a king (*prokto 'yam abhiṣekaḥ syād vijayārthaṃ nṛpasya*).³⁰ We see that the same metaphor is invoked earlier in the *Kiraṇāgama*, where a ritual of site consecration (*adhivāsavidhi*) is done by the officiant wearing a turban (*uṣṇīṣaṃ dhārayen*) in the manner of a king (*nṛpabhūpavat*).³¹ Even then, Śaivāgamas tend to integrate the theological vocabulary of the relationship of the divinity to the disciple bound in existence (*paśu*) into their rituals, which become more distant from the royal rite as the literature develops.³² For its part, the Pāñcarātra *Jayākhyasamhitā* simply indicates that the *abhiṣekas* for various levels of

J. C. HEESTERMAN, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration: The Rājasūya Described According to the Yajus Texts and Annotated* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co, 1957), 93.

30 *Kiraṇāgama* T0401, p. 96-7, T0998, p. 96-7. The *Parākhyatantra* appears to have no *abhiṣeka* associated with its rarefied *dīksā* discussion in ch. XV.I would take the *abhiṣekavidhi* of the *Sarvajñānottarāgama* T0334, pp. 100-104, as a slightly later form than the *Kiraṇāgama*'s, as I would the self-consciously abbreviated form of the *Sārdhatriśatiklottarāgama*, pp. CXLIX-CL. A discussion of Saiddhāntika relative chronology is found in *Parākhyatantra*, GOODALL 2004: XLVIII. SANDERSON 2009 has argued that both tantric Buddhism and Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavism are derived from tantric Śaivism. The omnibus scope of his argument cannot be treated here, but suffice it to say that he has not considered the earliest Buddhist materials. It is unfortunate that the *Nīśvāsasamhitā* is yet to be available in an accessible form; see GOODALL and ISAACSON 2007; *Nīśvāsakārika* chapter 7, T127, pp. 60-2, T150, pp. 87-9 seems to represent a later presentation.

31 *Kiraṇāgama* T0401, p. 64, T0998, p. 62.

32 E.g., *Mṛgendrāgama* VIII. 170-238; HÉLÈNE BRUNNER-LACHAUX, *Mṛgendrāgama: section des rites et section du comportement* (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 1985), pp. 309-335. Cf. HÉLÈNE BRUNNER-LACHAUX, ed. and trans., *Somaśambhupaddhati* (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 1963-98), vol. 3, pp. 456-524.

disciples and masters are to be done with rituals appropriate for generals, counselors of state, crown-princes and kings.³³

In this instance, rather than a process of direct appropriation, I would see the relatively wide distribution of such rites concomitant with the emerging ideology and importance of kingship in the period, an importance already reflected in non-sectarian ritual manuals, like the *Ṛgvidhāna* (4.106-114) and the *Sāmavidhāna-brāhmaṇa* (3.5.1-4), the *Ādipurāna*, the *Bṛhatsamhitā* and other sources.³⁴ Buddhist documents were aware of such rituals and employed various forms at least since the early fifth century, as I have shown elsewhere.

There are, moreover, other rites that are not patterned after kingship rituals or employed for transmission to disciples, but that still share ritual morphology with both the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* and the *Dhāraṇīsamgraha*. These are – as in the case of the *Amoghapāśahṛdaya* – rituals of lustration, specifically found in the consecration of a site for home construction and indicated in many *gṛhyasūtras*.³⁵ Such quotidian practices would have been familiar to most caste Hindus over a relatively wide area. Other temporary uses of lustration rites are also encountered: perhaps a divinity is called down to protect an area, to inhabit temporarily an image, or to sanctify a site for the annual royal consecration (*puṣyasnāna/ puṣyābhīṣeka*). Similar rituals are also found in other sources, like the *Mayamata*, the well-known architectural work.³⁶ The record appears to be that the ritual of aspersing the ground was widely distributed and observed in both Vaidika and sectarian groups, and now by the Buddhists as well, who undoubtedly borrowed in some measure from both.

If we return to our rite, we can see the curious feature that the ācārya is called on to consecrate the ground between formulating his aspiration that the disciples receive the blessing of the Buddhas and the actual *abhīṣeka* of the disciples. I would argue that what we see is two rituals grafted together,

33 *Jayākhyasamhitā*, ch. 18: *senāpatikrameṇaiva samayajñasya sarvadā | mahāmantritva-vidhinā putrakasyābhīṣekam || 34 || yuvarājavidhānena dātavyaḥ sādhakasya ca | rājopacāraavidhinā abhīseko guroḥ smṛtaḥ || 35 ||*

34 IKARI YASUKE and HAYASHI TAKAO, eds. “Ādipurāna,” in *A Study of the Nīlamata: Aspects of Hinduism in Ancient Kashmir*, ed. IKARI YASUKE (Kyoto: Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University, 1994), 83-136; HEINRICH KERN, ed. *Bṛhatsamhitā* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1865), ch. 48.

35 JAN GONDA, *Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites* (Leiden-Köln: E. J. Brill, 1980), pp. 230-40.

36 BRUNO DAGENS, ed. and trans., *Mayamata* (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 1970-76), 18.189-193. Other examples are discussed with a bit of detail in Davidson, “*Abhīṣeka* Visualization,” pp. 186-88. Cf. N. R. BHATT, ed., *Ajitāgama* (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 1964-91), vol. 3, vv. 74.57c-65.

with the fault lines at this place. The extensive consecration of a *mandapa* found in several ritual systems appears joined here with a rudimentary *abhiṣeka* rite similar to the brief *abhiṣekas* found in image bathing rites, where an image is to be consecrated on a *mandapa*. The royal vocabulary in such instances was not unusual, for divinities were being accorded royal metaphors on a regular basis. We should also note the presence of the *homa* immediately following the *abhiṣeka*, and although it is apparently disconnected from the transmission ritual, it is much more extensive, going on for the entire column in the Taisho edition.³⁷ As it did with so many other rites in India, the *homa* appears to effect or to seal the previous ritual event, with the presence of the Buddha brought down into the fire and fed the offering materials.

So we should address the central question that many scholars have proposed various solutions for: how is it that the Buddhists, here for the first time, assemble so many ritual materials previously under the purview of Brahmins or non-Buddhist religious agents? The answer to that must be tentative, but a few important observations may be made. First, it is clear from the various appendices to the Vedic schools – the *vidhānas*, *pariśiṣṭas*, *gr̥hya*, *dharmā* and *smārta-sūtras* – that some of the rituals previously set to a higher value, specifically a *śrauta* value, became over time reregistered, so that one or another became associated with a single fire and the activity of a single officiant, rather than the three fires of the *śrauta* rites requiring the minimum presence of three officiants. Thus some of the formal *śrauta-yajñas* became recast as optional (*kāmya*) appendixes to the *gr̥hya* or *smārta* rites, and some of these may be performed by a twice-born householder other than a brahmin.³⁸

At the same time, and probably in concert with this change, we find the greater dispersal of rituals to those who are not, by Vedic standards, authorized to perform the twice-born rites, even while non-brahmanical forms of ritual were being integrated into the ritual syllabus as optional *gr̥hya* rites.³⁹ In this regard, I would suggest that the processes of brahmanical colonization into new areas, coupled with the simultaneous renunciation or conversion of those with brahmanical backgrounds into Buddhism or other *śrāmaṇa* groups, were methods effecting the distribution

37 T. 901.18.794c.

38 Caland gives the example of the *piṇḍapitryajña*; W. CALAND, *Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1929), p. XII.

39 PETER BISSCHOP and ARLO GRIFFITHS, "The Pāśupata Observance (*Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 40)," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 46 (2003): 315-348.

of *homa*-related rituals into ascetic communities.⁴⁰ The population dispersal to the rural areas accelerated from the mid sixth century forward, as has been noted many times before, so that those without caste status would have begun participating in Brahmanical rituals. For individuals desiring to leave the world, renunciation would have brought knowledge of householder rites into the ranks of the *śrāmaṇas* or the *munis*. Yet the attraction to the specifically Buddhist system would probably have been evident under such circumstances. Orthodox renouncers are understood not to perform physical *homa*, for their fires have been abandoned; in later times it was understood that they were internalized as part of the renunciation rite (*agnisamāropana*).⁴¹ In the case of those loath to surrender their attachment to their physical fires upon renunciation, the development of a Buddhist willingness to accept these rituals represented an opportunity. The integration of fire into the Buddhist ritual cosmos would have dovetailed with the wider distribution of *homa* and aspersion rites that had certainly been observed before this, as evinced in the *Sūtra* and *Vinaya* records, where we find figures like the witch in the *Maṭaṅgī-sūtra* employing a *homa* to captivate Ānanda.⁴²

Internally, Buddhists had been prepared for a more baroque ritual syllabus by the *dhāraṇī* scriptures, which invoked *mantras*, protection rituals, offerings of various types and further liturgical events since the second century.⁴³ Such texts must be taken into account in any description of the origins of Buddhist tantrism, as they represented much of the foundational structure and have yet to be thoroughly considered.⁴⁴ Both the internal

40 R. DAVIDSON, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 70-71.

41 Discussed in PATRICK OLIVELLE, *Vāsudevāśrama Yatidharmapṛakāśa: A Treatise on World Renunciation* (Vienna: De Nobili Research Library, 1977), part II, 41-42.

42 This text survives in SUJITKUMAR MUKHOPADHYAYA, ed., *Śardūlakarṇāvadāna* (Santiniketan: Viśvabharati, 1954), I-II; for a discussion of the relationship of *homa* to the earliest strata of this scripture, see MICHEL STRICKMANN, "Homa in East Asia," in *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, ed. FRITS STAAL (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), vol. 2, 418-455. Strickmann observes (p. 432) that Hayashima Tomojirō had reconsidered the provenance of the various Chinese translations and had concluded that the only text with the full *homa* was T. 1300, probably a mid-late 5th century CE text; this revised chronology reinforces the basic argument on the medieval distribution of *gṛhya* and associated rites.

43 The ritual systems of these works have been unfortunately often overlooked by Indologists; a first article in a series of discussions of *dhāraṇī* texts is RONALD M. DAVIDSON, "Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature I: Revisiting the Meaning of the Term *Dhāraṇī*," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37/2 (2009): 97-147.

44 One early *dhāraṇī* scripture has been partially translated by PAUL SWANSON, "Dandala, Dhāraṇī, and Denarii: A T'ien-t'ai Perspective on *The Great Vaipulya Dhāraṇī Sūtra*

and external dynamics began to work in concert when Buddhists extended their rites into *homas* and *yajñas* just before the *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*. Strickmann proposed that the earliest authorized Buddhist employment of fire sacrifice occurred in the second half of the sixth century, with the *Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara-dhāraṇī* translated between 564-572 CE, although this is done without the aspersion ritual found in the *Amoghapaśahṛdaya* translated only a few years later.⁴⁵ However, the ritual use of fire, as in an earlier **Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* (T.1336, trans. asc. 502-557 CE), seems to have been prior to this, and there appears to be some continuity between incense offerings and *homa* rites.⁴⁶

Given the performative threads that came together under the aegis of the *dhāraṇī* scriptures, it may be germane to note that the earliest esoteric scriptures, from Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* through the translations of Śubhakarasiṃha, sometimes identified themselves as the *dhāraṇī-naya* (陀羅尼法), the method of *dhāraṇīs*, even though they had gone beyond the method of *dhāraṇīs* as it had been previous known in Mahāyānist circles. Consequently, the leap in ritual intensification – complete with *abhiṣeka*, *homas*, *maṇḍalas*, *mudrās*, and *mantras* – was justified through the strategy of the *dhāraṇīs*, for these had also included ideas and practices via the rhetoric of “skill in means” as is well known. It was made possible by the changing religious background, with the greater dissemination of ritual expertise, by the changing socio-political circumstances, as I have argued before, and by the changing need of the Buddhists, who were grasping for straws after the fall of the Guptas and the decline of social order in North India.

These observations must be taken as tentative, but I believe that this is the correct path to take: the development of the *dhāraṇī-naya* into true tantric Buddhism (*mantranaya*) occurs through the absorption of *gr̥hya*, sectarian (Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava) and non-Brahmanical rites, synthesized together with the older *dhāraṇī* system of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Buddhists generally would have adopted via observation and oral texts in proximity to their locales, adapting these to their own needs and ideological focus. In our instance, it meant that the previously recognized importance of *abhiṣeka* for the bodhisattva became a physically enacted ritual,

[from the Chinese],” *Buddhist Literature* 2 (2000): 197-233.

45 STRICKMANN “Homa in East Asia,” p. 432, referencing T. 1070; on these *Ekādaśamukha-avalokiteśvara* rituals, see ERIK GRINSTEAD, “The Sūtra of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva,” in *The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition*, ed. HENRIK SØRENSEN (Copenhagen: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1994), 97-125.

46 **Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha* T.1336.612b29, 635b5; STRICKMANN, *Mantras et mandarins*, 141-42; I owe these references to Shinohara, “The All-gathering Maṇḍala.”

one based on a fusion of the sanctification rites of image or site consecration with the imperial rites accorded the overlord (*rājādhirāja*).

Appendix: Hypothetical Sanskrit chapter titles to Atikūṭa's
Dhāraṇīsamgraha T. 901.18 佛說陀羅尼集經 大唐天竺三藏阿地瞿多譯

- I. **Maharddhibala-dhāraṇī-sūtra-Śākyamuny-uṣṇīṣa-samādhi-dhāraṇī-pañāla*
大神力陀羅尼經釋迦佛頂三昧陀羅尼品 [785b10]
- II. **Buddhabhāṣita-mālākarma-dharmalakṣaṇa-pañāla*
佛說作數珠法相品 [802c20]
- III. **Buddhabhāṣita-vajra-samartha-dharmalakṣaṇa-pañāla*
佛說跋折囉功能法相品(唐云金剛杵) [803b24]
- IV. **Avalokiteśvara-bhṛkūṭi-bodhisattva-samādhinaya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
觀世音毘俱知菩薩三昧法印咒品 [829a01]
- V. **Bhṛkūṭi-bodhisattva-māra-vijaya-mudrāmantranaya-pañāla*
毘俱知菩薩降魔印咒法品 [830c10]
- VI. **Bhṛkūṭi-bodhisattva-dūtānaya-mudrā-pañāla*
毘俱知菩薩使者法印品 [831b15]
- VII. **Bhṛkūṭi-bodhisattva-roga-parihāranaya-maṇḍala-pañāla*
毘俱知救病法壇品 [832a17]
- VIII. **Hayagrīva-Avalokiteśvara-bodhisattvanaya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
何耶揭唎觀世音菩薩法印咒品(唐翻馬頭) [833c5]
- IX. **Sarvamahābodhisattva-dharma-samāja-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
諸大菩薩法會印咒品 [838b27]
- X. **Buddhabhāṣita-Vajragarbhārdhībala-samādhi-naya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
佛說金剛藏大威神力三昧法印咒品 [841a05]
- XI. **Vajragarbhāparivāra-naya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
金剛藏眷屬法印咒品 [845b02]
- XII. **Vajrāṃṭakunḍali-bodhasattvaiśvāryarddhibala-mantramudrā-pañāla*
金剛阿蜜哩多軍荼利菩薩自在神力咒印品 [851c11]
- XIII. **Vajragarbhā-kunḍali-bodhisattvaiśvāryarddhibalanaya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
金剛藏軍荼利菩薩自在神力法印咒品 [852b02]
- XIV. **Vajrocchuśma-naya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
金剛烏樞沙摩法印咒品(唐云不淨潔金剛印) [860c05]
- XV. **Ucchuśmavajra-naya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
烏樞沙摩金剛法印咒品 [866c27]
- XVI. **Sarvadevaprabhṛtipūjita-buddhapakṣasamādhisādhana-naya-mudrāmantra-pañāla*
諸天等獻佛助成三昧法印咒品 [877b07]
- XVII. **Buddhabhāṣita-sarvabuddha-mahādhāraṇī-sāmānyasamāja-maṇḍala-mudrā-pañāla*
佛說諸佛大陀羅尼都會道場印品 [885b20]

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From *Mātṛ* to *Yoginī*

Continuity and Transformation in the South Asian Cults of the Mother Goddesses¹

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Maternal imagery features prominently in the identities of South Asian goddesses, even in the presence of potentially conflicting images. Though any number of goddesses may hence be addressed as “mother” (*mātṛ*, *mātā*, *mā*, *ammaṇ*, etc.), this article concerns a category of deity defined specifically by motherhood and named accordingly “the Mothers” or “Mother goddesses” – Sanskrit *mātṛ* or *mātṛkā*. Much like *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs/yakṣinīs*, divinities intimately connected with the natural world, *mātṛs* were popular deities in ancient India whose identities and worship were not initially circumscribed by a single religious tradition, whether Buddhism or the emergent theistic sects of the early common era. However, by the fifth century CE there had coalesced an heptad of Mother goddesses with Brahmanical identities known as the “Seven Mothers” (*saptamātṛ*, *saptamātṛkā*), though they are often joined by an eighth goddess. In this form, *mātṛs* became the focus of a pan-Indian temple cult linked closely to Śiva which attracted considerable elite patronage. Shrines of the Seven Mothers feature in some of the most magnificent temple complexes of the fifth to eighth centuries CE, such as those of Ellora, Aihole, and Elephanta. In addition to their temple cult, the Seven Mothers also became important

1 Much of the material in this essay has been drawn from chapters 2 and 3 of the present author’s doctoral dissertation: “The *Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs” (University of Pennsylvania, 2007). I would hence like to express gratitude to Harunaga Isaacson, my thesis advisor and esteemed mentor; to Michael Meister and Guy Welbon, who, besides providing invaluable feedback on the thesis, shepherded me through graduate school; to Leslie Orr, Tamara Sears, and Paul Younger, who provided excellent suggestions for improving this essay; and to István Keul, for inviting my contribution to this publication.

goddesses within Tantric or “esoteric” Śaivism in early medieval India, and had historically significant roles within Tantric Buddhism as well.

This essay investigates historical transformations in conceptions of the Mother goddesses. The first section outlines the Gupta-era coalescence of the Seven Mothers and their relationship to the multitudinous *mātṛs* venerated in ancient India. In the subsequent section, I analyze a second major transformation: the emergence of the *yoginī* (“female yogi”) or *yogeśvarī* (“female master of yoga”) in Śaivism around the seventh century CE – a reconfiguration of the Mother-goddess typology which, within Tantric Śaivism, increasingly supplants it. After this, I address the roles of *mātṛs* in the development of a cult of *yoginīs* or *dākinīs* within early medieval Tantric Buddhism. This essay places particular emphasis on the roles of *mātṛs* in the tantric traditions, especially in connection with *yoginīs*, for this dimension of their history has been comparatively neglected. The architectural and sculptural evidence for early *mātṛs* and the Seven Mothers has been the subject of several significant studies (JOSHI 1986, MEISTER 1986, MISRA 1989, HARPER 1989, PANNIKAR 1997), while DEHEJIA (1986) has produced a fine survey of the extant *yoginī* temples and statuary. Some of these scholars and a number of others have also analyzed the textual record for *mātṛs*, especially the Sanskrit narrative literature – the *Mahābhārata* and/or *Purāṇas* (e.g. TIWARI 1985, WHITE 2003, MANN 2003, YOKOCHI 2004, SERBAEVA 2006). However, literary evidence for the Mothers as tantric deities has received considerably less scrutiny.² As this essay seeks to illustrate, the examination of early medieval tantric literature, much of which remains unpublished, allows for considerable elaboration of the links between the ancient *mātṛs*, the Brahmanical Seven Mothers, and *yoginīs*.

From “Skanda’s Seizers” (*skandagrahāḥ*) to the Seven Mothers (*saptamātaraḥ*)

Mother goddesses are of considerable antiquity in India and have non-elite, probably non-Āryan roots. However, claims linking them to early terracotta female votive images and even to the Indus Valley civilization (e.g. MISRA 1989, 7) remain speculative. The earliest firm material evidence for

2 Exceptions are DEHEJIA, *Yoginī Cult and Temples: A Tantric Tradition* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1986) and WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric Sex” in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), who draw upon tantric literature available in printed editions, as well as some manuscripts.

female deities resembling what contemporaneous texts call *mātṛs* comes from the Kuṣāṇa era (c. 1-3rd cent. CE). A substantial corpus of Mother-goddess sculpture of this period, on which JOSHI (1986) has written an excellent study, survives from the Mathura region in north-central India. The early textual evidence is also extensive, with the *Mahābhārata* being foremost among period sources.

The Mathura-region Mother goddesses are diverse, comprising small-scale images both anthropomorphic and theriomorphic whose common iconographic features include carrying infants, displaying the gesture of deliverance from danger (*abhayamudrā*), and occurrence in groups of variable size alongside a male guardian figure, such as the youthful, spear-bearing god Skanda (JOSHI 1986, 1-14). In most cases it is difficult to ascertain their individual identities. Typologies of Mother goddesses in the *Mahābhārata* match in important respects to this sculptural evidence. In both cases, as well as in early medical literature, there are strong associations between the Mother goddesses and the deity Skanda, in the context of whose myths the Mothers appear in the *Mahābhārata*. There is, however, a discrepancy in one significant respect: while the *Mahābhārata* links the Mothers almost exclusively with Skanda, the extant statuary preserves an association with Kubera as well, god of wealth and lord of the *yakṣas* (JOSHI 1986, 14). This parallel and possibly more archaic convention illustrates the Mothers' close links to the *yakṣa* and *yakṣī/yakṣiṇī*, popular non-Brahmanical deities connected to the natural world.

Early textual and sculptural representations of *mātṛs* suggest an open-ended deity typology capable of encompassing a wide range of goddesses. Some Mothers appear to have been particularly prominent individually, such as Śaṣṭhī (JOSHI 1986, 11), who in Kuṣāṇa sculpture is depicted alongside "high" deities such as Śiva and Kṛṣṇa, besides Skanda. Hārītī is in fact the goddess most frequently depicted in stone statuary of the period (SINGH 2004, table 3). As is true of the goddess Lakṣmī, and *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs*, there is evidence for fluidity and competition concerning the sectarian identities of Mother goddesses: JOSHI (1986, 15) notes that *mātṛ* sculpture has been recovered from Brahmanical, Jain, and Buddhist architectural contexts. The dynamics of their incorporation by these assimilative traditions are illustrated by narratives of Hārītī's conversion in early Buddhist literature (PERI 1917, 2-43), and by myths of the Mothers' conflict with and assimilation by Skanda in the Brahmanical *Mahābhārata*. There is also architectural evidence suggesting *mātṛs* were worshipped as cult deities in their own temples in this period (SINGH 2004, 390-92).

The *Mahābhārata* accounts of the mythology of *mātṛs* place them in association with Skanda and his retinue of *grahas* or "seizers" (WHITE

2003, 35-63; MANN 2003, 33-43) – a diverse lot, including male and female deities and spirits of every conceivable shape and hue.³ These myths are numerous and historically layered, as illustrated by the complex claims made concerning Skanda's parentage (*Āraṇyakaparvan*, chapters 215-21; *Anuśāśanaparvan* 84, 86; *Śalyaparvan* 43-45). Most directly, he is the child of the Vedic fire god, Agni, seduced by Svāhā. Yet Skanda is also the child of Śiva and Pārvatī, who entered into Agni and Svāhā, respectively, and used them as proxies for producing a son. Skanda is, in addition, reared by the Kṛttikās, the six stars of the Pleiades, while the *Śalyaparvan* adds the river-goddess Gaṅgā to the mix. Alongside much that is probably ancient, such as Skanda's association with the Kṛttikās, these layered myths appear to preserve competing sectarian claims: a legend asserting Skanda's origins from Agni and the wives of the sages, which brings him within the orbit of Vedic tradition; and a Śaiva layer asserting Skanda's parentage from Śiva and Umā. By the time of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* ("The Birth of Kumāra/Skanda"), a work of court poetry probably of the fifth century, the Śaiva identity of Skanda as son of Śiva and Pārvatī would dominate; and in the old *Skandapurāṇa*, a text of the subsequent centuries, the cult of the warrior-child and the Mother goddesses is fully assimilated into Śaivism.

In the *Mahābhārata*, there is no evidence for the emergence of the Brahmanical Seven Mothers, nor of a Mother-goddess cult tantric in character. Descriptions of *graha*-worship suggest a shrine or temple image-worship context (e.g. *Āraṇyakaparvan* 219.43-44), while worship of the associated "high" deities – Rudra, Agni, Umā, and Svāhā – is linked to the desire for progeny, an important theme in later accounts of the Mother cult. There is in general a strong apotropaic dimension, as is particularly evident in *Āraṇyakaparvan* 218 and the early medical literature (MANN 2001, 5-7). Skanda and his subsidiary deities afflict children with disease if not propitiated, and the Mothers are intimately associated with fertility and sickness, life and death.

By the fifth century, a particular heptad of Mother goddesses coalesces with identities mirroring those of a series of major Brahmanical gods – Brahmā, Śiva, Skanda, Viṣṇu, Varāha (or Yama), and Indra. As do their iconic forms, the names of the Mothers mirror those of their male counterparts: Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī (or Yāmī), and

3 A variety of terms are used to speak of the entourage of Skanda, with *gana* ("[member of the] group/entourage") and *graha* ("seizer") being the most inclusive. In *Āraṇyakaparvan* 219.42, for instance, both the Mothers and male retinue of Skanda are included under the category *skandagraha*, "Skanda's seizers."

Aindrī, each name having several variants. Exceptional is the seventh goddess, Cāmuṇḍā, the fierce and skeletal hag who is “leader of the Mothers” (*mātṛnāyikā*) and the counterpart of no male deity. Her identity appears closely linked to that of the warrior goddess Caṇḍī or Caṇḍikā,⁴ one of the principle ciphers for emergent conceptions of the singular Mahādevī, “Great Goddess.” As a set, they become known as the “Seven Mothers” – *saptamātṛ* (plural *saptamātaraḥ*) or *saptamātṛkā*.⁵ It should be emphasized that the Seven Mothers are not “wives” of the gods they mirror, but counterparts; the *Devīmāhātmya*, for instance, describes them as the *śaktis* or “powers” of the gods, marking the entry of tantric Śaiva conceptions of *śakti* into the purāṇic theology of goddesses (*Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna* 88.11-22). While sculpture attests comparatively little variation in the identities of the Seven, textual accounts often substitute the goddess Yāmī, iconic mirror of the death-god Yama, in place of Vārāhī, female counterpart of Viṣṇu’s boar-*avatāra*, Varāha.⁶ By the sixth century, the Seven Mothers came to be depicted conventionally in the company of two male guardian deities: the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa/Vināyaka, and either the martial Vīrabhadra (“Auspicious Hero”) or a figure usually referred to as Viṇādhara (“Bearer of the *Viṇā*-lute”). Scholars have generally referred to both of the latter as forms of Śiva, but Vīrabhadra is in period sources actually a *rudra* or one of Śiva’s prominent *gaṇas* (“followers”),⁷ as indeed is Vināyaka/Gaṇeśa. Though the lute-bearing figure could represent Śiva, one iconographic treatise, the *Mayamata* (36.213), considers this an alternative form of Vīrabhadra, while the *Agniṣpurāna* refers to him as Tumburu

4 Note, for instance, that the *Brahmayāmala* (c. 7-8th century) uses the names Caṇḍikā, Carcikā (or Carcā), and Cāmuṇḍā interchangeably. See HATLEY, “The *Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 376.

5 The expression *saptamātṛ* occurs frequently in purāṇic and tantric texts, and in a number of inscriptions, such as the Navsari plates of Yuvarāja Śrīyāśrayaśilāditya (published in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. IV). In contrast, the collocation *saptamātṛkā* occurs seldom in early Sanskrit sources, though common today.

6 *Mālinīvijayottaratāntra* 3.14 lists a set of eight Mothers that includes Yāmyā, headed by Yogeśī, while *Netratāntra* 19.56, for instance, instead includes Vārāhī among the seven. The *Brahmayāmala* attests both conventions. See HATLEY, “The *Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs,” 33, 376.

7 Note, e.g., that Sadyojyotis (*Mokṣakārikā* 79) refers to the hundred *rudras* as “headed by Vīrabhadra” (*śatarudrāṁś ca vīrabhadrapuraḥsarān* [em; **purastarān* Ed.]). The *Mataṅgapārameśvara*, which refers to him as one of the *lokanāyakas*, “world lords” (*vīrabhadradāyaś caiva brahmāntā lokanāyakāḥ*, 23.26cd), also describes the *gaṇas* as “headed by Vīrabhadra” (*vīrabhadrapuraḥsara*, 23.47b). His role as a *gaṇa*-lord is prominent in the early *Skandapurāna*.

(50.17cd). In many cases, however, Śiva too does join the Mothers, particularly as Naṭeśa, “Lord of Dance” (see MEISTER 1986, charts A & B).

As MEISTER argues (1986, 239, 244-245), this new configuration of Mother goddesses simultaneously asserts Śiva’s dominance over rival deities, such as Viṣṇu, while assimilating and containing popular Mother-goddess veneration. Later purāṇic texts, such as the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna*,⁸ sometimes provide ambiguous sectarian identities to the Seven (or eight) through the addition of *mātṛs* such as Nārasimhī (female counterpart of Viṣṇu’s Man-lion *avatāra*, Nārasimha) or, more typically, Mahālakṣmī. However, early evidence for the heptad intimates a close association with Skanda shifting toward a more decidedly Śaiva orientation, as evidenced by the fifth-century sites of Udayagiri and Badoh-Pathari (HARPER 1989, 75-87).

Though no clear sculptural evidence of a pre-Gupta *mātṛ*-heptad survives,⁹ the number seven does have old associations with Mother goddesses.¹⁰ The *Mahābhārata* (*Āraṇyakaparvan* 217.9) speaks of deities known as “Mothers of the Infant[s]” (*śiśumātṛs*), comprising Kākī, Halimā, Rudrā, Bṛhalī, Āryā, Palālā, and Mitrā, among whom Āryā appears to have been prominent (WHITE 2003, 39-40). It seems possible that the Brahmanical Seven Mothers directly supplant these *śiśumātṛs*, who might have been popular deities in the pre-Gupta period.¹¹ The *Mahābhārata*

8 Given the central position the *Devīmāhātmya* is often assigned in discussions of textual evidence for Mother goddesses, it is important to note Yokochi’s cogent argument that it was not composed as early as has often been assumed; see YOKOCHI, “The Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India. A Study of the Myth Cycle of Kauṣikī-Vindhyavāsini in the *Skandapurāna*” (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Groningen, 2004), 21-23.

9 From the Kuṣāṇa-era Mathura environs survives what appears to be a set of seven Mothers with Skanda; but this unique panel is broken on the right and might hence have contained additional images; see BAUTZE, “A Note on Two Mātṛkā Panels.” In *Investigating Indian Art. Proceedings of a Symposium on the Development of Early Buddhist and Hindu Iconography held at the museum of Indian art Berlin in May 1986*, eds. M. YALDIZ and W. LOBO, 25-30 (Berlin: Museum für Indische Kunst, 1987), 25.

10 See the discussions of HARPER, *Seven Hindu Goddesses of Spiritual Transformation: the Iconography of the Saptamatrikas* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 56; MEISTER, “Regional Variation in Mātṛkā Conventions.” *Artibus Asiae* 47 (1986): 233-62), 240; PANNIKAR, *Saptamatrka Worship and Sculptures: An Iconological Interpretation of Conflicts and Resolutions in the Storied Brahmanical Icons* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 1997), 55-58; WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric Sex” in its South Asian Contexts*, 39; and MANN, “The Early Cult of Skanda in North India: From Demon to Divine Son” (Ph. D. dissertation, McMaster University, 2003), 37-38.

11 Note also the *Śalyaparvan*’s reference to *saptamātṛgaṇāḥ*, probably meaning “the groups of Seven Mothers,” the plural suggesting multiple groups of seven (*saptamātṛgaṇāś caiva samājagmur viśāṃ pate*, 43.29ab). The context is a list of divinities who come to see

also intimates the later connection between Mother goddesses and Brahmanical gods: *Śalyaparvan* 45 presents an account of numerous, diverse Mother goddesses, in the course of which it describes them variously as *yāmyaḥ*, *raudryaḥ*, *saumyāḥ*, *kauberyaḥ*, *vāruṇyaḥ*, *māhendryaḥ*, *āgneyyaḥ*, *vāyavyaḥ*, *kaumāryaḥ*, and *brāhmyaḥ* (vv. 35-36ab). These are abstract nouns in the plural formed from the names of the male guardians of the ten directions (the *dikpālas* or *dikpatīs*): Yama, Rudra, Soma, Kubera, Varuṇa, Mahendra/Indra, Agni, Vāyu, Kumāra/Skanda, and Brahmā.¹² In this *mātṛ* taxonomy we find a direct precedent for the goddesses later sources refer to as *diṁmātṛs* or *digdevīs*, “Mother-goddesses of the Directions.” Though not now well-known, this set of eight or ten *mātṛs* (one for each direction) features in tantric Śaiva ritual and is attested in temple sculpture.¹³ Several of the *diṁmātṛs* also belong to the group of Seven Mothers. In classifying innumerable Mother-goddesses according to Brahmanical gods, the *Śalyaparvan* intimates ancient precedents for both the Seven Mothers themselves and, in Tantric Śaivism, for the organization of groups of *yoginīs* into clans of the Mothers.

In the elite traditions represented in sculpture and inscriptions of the Gupta- and early post-Gupta period, the Seven Mothers come to eclipse the diverse Mothers popular in the Kuṣāṇa era. Royal patronage of the cult of the Mothers finds attestation in Gupta-era inscriptions,¹⁴ copper

Skanda. As HARUNAGA ISAACSON draws to my attention (personal communication, May 2009), in the vulgate *Mahābhārata*, this is printed as two words, *sapta mātṛgaṇāḥ* (“the seven groups of Mothers”); *Śalyaparvan* 44.27).

- 12 Not accepted in the critical edition are, in addition, the epithets *vaiṣṇavyaḥ*, *sauryaḥ*, and *vārāhyaḥ*, in a verse that would follow 45.36ab. This might have been interpolated to harmonize the passage with later conceptions of the Mothers; the absence of Vaiṣṇavī and Vārāhī, in particular, might have been inexplicable to a Gupta-era or later audience familiar with the Seven Mothers (cf. YOKOCHI, “The Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India,” 101).
- 13 On the tantric *diṁmātaraḥ*, see HATLEY “Diṁmātaraḥ,” In *Tāntrikābhīdhānakośa. Dictionnaire des termes techniques de la littérature hindoue tantrique*, eds. DOMINIC GOODALL and MARION RASTELLI. Vol. 3. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, forthcoming). Statuary of the Mother-goddesses of the Directions features, for instance, on the outer walls of Orissan temples from the thirteenth century; see DONALDSON, *Tantra and Śākta Art of Orissa*. (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld 2002), 817-20.
- 14 Inscriptions associate the Udayagiri Śaiva cave complex of the early fifth century with the emperor Candragupta II, a site having multiple sets of the Seven Mothers. Another royal Gupta inscription, that of the mid fifth-century Bihar Stone Pillar erected by Skandagupta, also appears to include a profession of devotion to the Mothers and Skanda. See *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. III, inscription nos. 7, 11, and 49.

plates,¹⁵ and numerous cave shrines and stone temples from the fifth century onward. While the surviving shrines suggest that the heptad had a Śaiva orientation, they were significant deities in their own right as well; indeed, the *circa* mid sixth-century *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira speaks of the temple cult of Mothers alongside major sectarian denominations of the period, including Buddhism, Jainism, and Vaiṣṇavism (*Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 59.19).¹⁶ A number of Cālukya monarchs would link their descent to the ancient Mother goddess Hārītī, claiming also to have enjoyed the protection of Skanda and been “made prosperous by the Seven Mothers, who are the mothers of the seven worlds (*saptalokamātṛ*).”¹⁷ Some of the most magnificent *saptamātṛ* sites include the cave shrines of Elephanta, near Mumbai, and Aihole and Ellora of the western Deccan plateau; these and the other sixth and seventh-century sites have been ably surveyed by HARPER (1989) and PANIKKAR (1997). The Seven Mothers appear to decline in cult status by the ninth century, increasingly relegated to depiction in decorative panels over temple doors (MEISTER 1986), to peripheral shrines in Śaiva temple complexes, as occurs in Tamilnadu (ORR 2005, 30), or, e.g., the *balipīṭhas* of temples in Kerala (JAYASHANKER 1999, 82-86). In this process they also acquire a trans-sectarian identity akin to such deities as the Nine Planets (*navagraha*). In Orissa, however, new temples of the

15 See RAMESH and TEWARI, eds., *A Copper-plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh, Madhya Pradesh*, 1990, 4-6, 21-23 [plate nos. II and XI]. Scholars who have discussed these include YOKOCHI, “The Rise of the Warrior Goddess in Ancient India,” 110; CHATOPADHYAY, “‘Reappearance’ of the Goddess or the Brahmanical Mode of Appropriation: Some Early Epigraphic Evidence Bearing Upon Goddess Cults.” In *In the Company of Gods. Essays in Memory of Günther-Dietz Sontheimer*, ed. ADITYA MALIK et al (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts and Manohar, 2005, 253-72), 257-58; and SANDERSON, “Religion and the State: Initiating the Monarch in Śaivism and the Buddhist Way of Mantras,” Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, forthcoming.

16 While this passage does not specify the Mothers’ identities, elsewhere the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* speaks of constructing the images of Mothers in accordance with the appearances of the deities they are named after (*mātṛgaṇaḥ kartavyaḥ svaṇāmadevānurūpakṛtyacihnaḥ*, 57.56ab). It therefore seems likely that Varāhamihira knows of and refers to the Brahmanical Seven Mothers. His terminology for describing specialists in the cult of Mothers, “knowers of the *maṇḍala*-sequence” (*maṇḍalakramavidāḥ*) or “knowers of the Mother-*maṇḍala*” (*mātṛmaṇḍalavidāḥ*, edition of H. KERN), has been taken by HARPER (*Seven Hindu Goddesses of Spiritual Transformation*, 122) as an indication of a tantric cultic orientation. However, the mere occurrence of the term *maṇḍala* does not warrant this; here it probably means “the group/set [of Mothers].” Note the same terminology in the inscription of the contemporaneous *saptamātaraḥ* shrine at Deogarh, which in its benedictory verse refers to the enshrined deities as a *maṇḍala* of Mothers (*Epigraphia Indica* XXX.15, 125-27).

17 Navsari plates of Yuvarājaśrīyāśrayaśīlāditya, found in the Surat district of modern Gujarat. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. IV.

Mothers are attested through the thirteenth century (DONALDSON 1995, 170).

While the rise of the Seven Mothers has been studied in relation to myth, sectarian dynamics, and iconography, the social and historical contexts remain poorly understood. PANIKKAR (1997, 155-177) advances a rather speculative interpretation in terms of the “subsumptive acculturation” of the “producer classes” and women by an emergent, neo-Brahmanical hegemony. HARPER (2002) instead draws attention to the political role of the cult of Mothers, as entourage of the war-god Skanda, in the legitimation of Gupta imperial conquest. Future attempts at historical contextualization will undoubtedly benefit from recent advances in the study of period literature (e.g. the old *Skandapurāṇa*) and early Tantric Śaivism (see especially the works of ALEXIS SANDERSON).

Despite the success of the Brahmanical heptad, alternative configurations of more ancient *mātṛs* persist into the medieval period and beyond. Several ancient Mother goddesses remained individually significant; examples include Śaṣṭhī, a goddess of childbirth still prominent in Bengal, and Hārītī, a *mātṛ* or *yakṣī* who, enshrined in monasteries, traveled with Buddhism well beyond South Asia (PERI 1917, 45-57). The medical tradition retained the conception of *mātṛs* as potentially dangerous “seizers” (*grahas*; see MANN 2001, 5-7), while the *Rāvaṇakumāratantra* focuses its exorcistic rites upon a group of twelve *mātṛs* that includes Śakunī, an avian Mother goddess of ancient pedigree. Alongside monumental shrines to the Seven Mothers must also have persisted more humble forms of Mother-goddess worship; tantric literature speaks of Mother shrines in isolated places as though, like the crossroads, jungles, and cremation grounds they are mentioned with, they were an integral part of the landscape.¹⁸

From Mātṛ to Yoginī: Mother Goddesses in Tantric Śaivism

The temple cult of the Mothers bears an uncertain relationship to the tantric or “esoteric” forms of Śaivism flourishing in the second half of the first millennium. It appears that the Seven Mothers were among the earlier goddesses worshipped in the tantric traditions, in the context of secret rites for the initiated rather than temple liturgy. Śaiva sources often place

18 *Mātṛ* shrines (*veśman*, etc.) are often mentioned in lists of locales appropriate for the practice of *sādhana*, examples of which include *Brahmayāmala* 14.11cd-13ab and *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 6.2-4.

significance on an octad of Mother goddesses rather than the earlier and more widely attested Brahmanical heptad. The eighth, additional Mother is frequently Mahālakṣmī, but in some contexts the supreme Goddess herself – Bhairavī, consort of Bhairava, in this role also referred to as Yogeśī (a synonym of *yoginī*).¹⁹

The significance of the Mothers in Tantric Śaivism extends beyond chronology, for *mātr̥*-veneration appears to underlie, in part, the medieval cult of the flying, shapeshifting goddesses or female spirits known as *yoginīs*. Representations of *yoginīs* in tantric Śaiva literature are extremely diverse, but some of the most common characteristics of this deity typology include occurrence in groups (sextets, initially, with configurations of sixty-four becoming typical by the tenth century), organization into “clans” (*kula*, *gotra*), theriomorphism and shapeshifting, the ability to fly, association with guarding and/or transmitting tantric teachings, and potency as sources of both grave danger and immense power (HATLEY 2007, 11-17; cf. WHITE 2003, 27). In addition, *yoginīs* often blur the boundaries between human and divine, for through perfection in tantric ritual, it was held that female practitioners could join the ranks of these sky-traveling (*khecari*) goddesses. Originally esoteric deities, by the tenth century *yoginīs* became prominent in the wider Indic religious landscape, as attested by their entry into purāṇic literature and the unique circular, open-air temples enshrining them across the subcontinent (DEHEJIA 1986).

The close connection between the Mother goddesses and emergent conceptions of *yoginīs* is evident in numerous ways. Early Tantric Śaiva treatises on “the characteristics of *yoginīs*” (*yoginīlakṣaṇa*)²⁰ classify these goddesses according to clans (*kula*, *gotra*) that have the Seven or Eight Mothers as matriarchs, clan mothers in whose natures the *yoginīs* partake as *aṃśas*, “portions” or “partial manifestations.” Tantric practitioners too establish kinship with the Mothers, leaving behind their conventional clan and caste identities and entering during initiation into what one might call “initiatory kinship” with the deities.²¹ It is possible that the most funda-

19 For Yogeśī as the name of the eighth Mother, see *Brahmayāmala* 46.32b, *Tantrasadbhāva* 14.155b, *Tantrāloka* 29.52d, and the *Bṛhatkālotara*, on which see SANDERSON, “Religion and the State: Śaiva Officials in the Territory of the Brahmanical Royal Chaplain (with an appendix on the provenance and date of the *Netratantra*).” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 47: 2004, 229-300, 267.

20 *Siddhayogeśvārīmata* 29, *Brahmayāmala* 74, and *Tantrasadbhāva* 16.

21 A *yoginī* of the clan of Brāhmī/Brahmānī is said to be *brahmāṅnyamśā*, “possessing a portion of Brahmānī.” Cf., e.g., *Tantrasadbhāva* 16.253cd. An initiate too is said to be “connected to” or “possess” (*yukta*) an *aṃśa* of a Mother goddess. Cf., e.g., *Brahmayāmala* 74.47cd: *brahmāṅnikulajā devī svāṃśasiddhipradāyikā* (“[She is] a *yoginī* of the clan of

mental initiation maṇḍala of the Śaiva *yoginī* cult comprised Bhairava in a circle of the Eight Mothers. In the *Brahmayāmala*, while deities called the Four Devīs and Four Consorts (Dūtī) form the primary maṇḍala's inner circuit of goddesses, the initiatory clans remain nonetheless those of the Eight Mothers and Bhairava.²² This scenario's historical plausibility is corroborated by TÖRZSÖK (2000, 142-143), who finds evidence in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* for a cult of the Eight Mothers underlying the Trika system. In the light of this emphasis in the early sources on the Seven/Eight Mothers, it is difficult to concur fully with White in viewing the Śaiva *yoginī* cult as "based on the Kushan-age cults of multiple disease-bearing Mother goddesses," as opposed to the Seven Mothers of "Śakta devotionism and high Hindu Tantra" (2003, 59-60, 188; quotation on p. 59). Important continuities are evidenced with both strands of *mātṛ*-veneration, and the gulf between the two is perhaps not so pronounced.

Though connected intimately to the Seven or Eight Mothers, *yoginīs* do indeed demonstrate remarkable continuity with more ancient Mother-goddess conceptions. According to *Mahābhārata*, *Sālyaparvan* 45.29-40, some Mothers have long claws, fangs, or beaks; some are youthful maidens, while others are fleshless or pot-bellied. Having various hues, changing shape at will, and speaking many languages, the Mothers rival celestial

Brahmānī, O Goddess, who bestows *siddhi* upon those [*sādhakas*] of her own [Mother-goddess] *aṁśa*").

- 22 *Brahmayāmala* 4.888-898, especially 890cd-894ab:
raktāyās tu yadā pāto gotrā māheśvarā hitam //890//
karālāyā yadā pāto brahmagotraḥ sa ucyate /
karālāyā yadā pāto vaiṣṇavīgotrako hi saḥ //891//
danturāyā yadā pātaḥ kaumārīgotrasambhavā /
caṇḍākṣyāyā yadā pāto vaivasvatikulodbhavā //892//
bhīmavaktrāprapātena māhendragotra ucyate /
mahocchuṣmāprapāte tu carcikāgotrako hi saḥ //893//
mahābalā yadā pātaḥ pūranīgotra ucyate /
 891b °gotraḥ] corr.; °gotras Cod. 892c caṇḍākṣyāyā] em.; caṇḍākṣyā Cod.

"When the [flower cast into the maṇḍala during initiation] lands on Raktā, the clan of Māheśvarī is enjoined. When it lands upon Karālā, he is said to be of the *brahmā*-clan [i.e. the clan of Brahmānī]. When it lands on Karālī, he is of the clan of Vaiṣṇavī. When it lands on Danturā, she is born of the clan of Kaumārī. When it lands on Caṇḍākṣī, she is born of the clan of Vaivasvatī [i.e. Yāmī]. By landing on Bhīmavaktrā, the clan of the great Indra [i.e. the clan of Indrānī] is enjoined. If it lands on Mahocchuṣmā, he has the clan of Carcikā [i.e. Cāmuṇḍā]. If its fall [indicates] Mahābalā, the clan of She Who Completes [the Mothers] is enjoined [i.e. the clan of Bhairavī]."

Subsequent verses provide a concordance of Mother-goddess clans and the Six Yoginīs of the maṇḍala. The confusion of grammatical gender in this passage is remarkable, and probably to a large degree original.

nymphs (*apsaras*) in beauty, Indra in power, Agni in radiance, and so forth. They dwell in liminal places such as crossroads and cremation grounds – the same environs enjoined for performing the radical rituals of the tantric cult of *yoginīs*. The *yoginīs*' theriomorphism, shapeshifting, multiplicity, extraordinarily variegated appearances, bellicosity, independence, and simultaneous beauty and danger all find precedent in these early Mother goddesses, as does, suggests WHITE (2003, 39, 205), their connection with flight. The continuity is readily visible in sculpture: though *yoginīs* shed the Mothers' maternal associations to a large degree, there are still numerous examples of their representation with infants.²³ While taking on the powerful iconography of tantric deities, the *yoginīs* reflect in visual terms clear continuity with the Kuṣāṇa-era Mother-goddess typology.

Although the genealogy of the *yoginīs* lies most immediately in the Mother goddesses, other ancient feminine deities also figure in their formation. This has been demonstrated in some detail by WHITE (2003, 27-66), who highlights continuities with the *apsaras* ("celestial maiden") and the *yakṣī* or *yakṣiṇī* ("dryad"), in addition to early Mother goddesses and other *grahas* ("seizers"). Other significant sources for conceptions of *yoginīs* include *vidyādhari*s (flying, semi-divine sorceresses), and in particular, Śiva's *gaṇas*: male deities whose theriomorphic or otherwise bizarre forms, multiplicity, variety, and engagement in activities such as warfare are highly suggestive of *yoginīs*. SERBAEVA (2006, 71) also points out that *gaṇas* and *yoginīs* share an important similarity in representing states of being that Śaiva practitioners sought to attain. Another notable continuity concerns the supreme male deity with whom *yoginīs* are associated: much as there is continuity between *yoginīs* and the early *mātr̥s*, some qualities of the early Skanda resurface in Bhairava, the skull-bearing lord of *yoginīs*, who takes on imagery of the ancient Rudra as well. For although a playful, handsome young warrior dominates the later image of Skanda, in the *Mahābhārata* lie clear traces of an ambiguous and potentially dangerous deity, in this respect resembling the *mātr̥s* he heads (MANN 2003).

That Mother goddesses have old connections with tantric ritual and female spirits is evident from the fifth-century inscription of Gaṅgdhār, in western Mālwa district.²⁴ Dated 423/24 or 424/25 CE, this mentions (v. 23, on lines 35-37) the construction of an "extremely terrible tem-

23 See e.g. Dehejia, *Yoginī Cult and Temples: A Tantric Tradition*, 146-147, 159, 161.

24 This inscription was first published by JOHN F. FLEET in *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. III (72-78), and subsequently by SIRCAR, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, 2nd edition (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1965), vol. I, 399-405.

ple of the Mothers” (*mātṛñāṃ... veśmātyugraṃ*) “filled with *dākinīs*” (*dākinīsamprakīrṇam*) – a variety of female spirit prominent in tantric taxonomies of *yoginīs*. The inscription speaks of the Mothers as deities “who make the oceans tumultuous through powerful winds arising from *tantras*” (*tantrodbhūtaprabalāpavanodvarttitāmbhonidhīnām*). This description of *mātṛs* uses imagery suggestive of powerful, “unfettered” tantric goddesses,²⁵ not at all in the image of the protective World Mothers (*lokamātarāḥ*) mentioned in other Gupta-era inscriptions. Of unspecified number and identity, *mātṛs* are here associated with hordes of female spirits (*dākinīs*), a temple cult, and occult spells (*tantra*) and powers, suggesting that some key elements of the cult of *yoginīs* had come together by the early fifth century. Unfortunately, this inscription is exceptional: we have no other firmly dated evidence for a cult of Mother goddesses in the company of female spirits in the fifth century, which makes the inscription difficult to contextualize.

Significant information concerning transformations in conceptions of the Mothers, and their connections with Tantric Śaivism, emerges in the old *Skandapurāna* (c. 6-7th century).²⁶ As YOKOCHI points out (2004, 99-113), this preserves the pre-Gupta conception of countless diverse Mother goddesses alongside the “Hinduized” or Brahmanical Seven Mothers. It also attests a process by which important local goddesses were given Śaiva identities through incorporation as Mothers. On the level of myth, the *Skandapurāna* hence provides a transitional link between the myth-cycles of Skanda and the Mothers in the *Mahābhārata*, and myths of the Seven or Eight Mothers inscribed in later texts, such as the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna*. Furthermore, the *Skandapurāna*’s account of the sacred site of Koṭivaraṣa (chapter 171) provides important early evidence for a Tantric Śaiva cult of the Mothers, in association with a temple, and even names specific works of tantric Śaiva literature (SANDERSON 2001, 6-7). A key passage describes a “mundane” (*laukika*) or non-tantric cult of the Mothers, the rituals associated with which involve pilgrimage, worship of the images of Śiva (as Hetukeśvara) and the Mothers (led by the

25 Borrowing an expression from the title of an article of CHITGOPEKAR, “The Unfettered Yoginis.” In *Invoking Goddesses: Gender Politics in Indian Religion*, ed. NILIMA CHITGOPEKAR (New Delhi: Shakti Books, 2002), 82-111.

26 The “early” or “old” *Skandapurāna* should not be confused with the better-known published text by this name; the latter was in fact somewhat artificially assembled by paṇḍits in the colonial period from various medieval tracts having the *Skandapurāna* as locus of ascription; see ROB ADRIAENSEN, HANS T. BAKKER, and HARUNAGA ISAACSON, *The Skandapurāna, Vol. I. Adhyāyas 1-25. Critically Edited with Prolegomena and English Synopsis* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten), 1998, 3-4, 24-25.

goddess Bahumāmsā, “Very Fleishy”), partaking of the sacred waters, and perhaps animal sacrifice. The aims are of the variety advanced in Śaiva *purānas*: deliverance from harmful spirits, going to heaven, and joining Śiva’s entourage (the *ganas*) after death.²⁷ Subsequent verses describe, however, a tantric cult of the Mothers involving rites taught in “Tantras of the Mother Goddesses” (*mātṛtantras*), with the aim, for men, of obtaining magical powers or *siddhi*. For women, the secret rites promise more: the possibility of becoming powerful and beautiful *yoginīs*. Significantly, the *Skandapurāna* identifies the “Tantras of the Mother Goddesses” with a list of Śaiva *yāmala*s or “Union Tantras;” this list includes the extant *Brahmayāmala*, a fundamental text of the Śaiva *yoginī* cult preserved in Nepalese manuscripts (SANDERSON 2001, 6-7; HATLEY 2007).²⁸ In

27 *Skandapurāna* 171.118-120ab, 123 (Bhaṭṭarāī edition):

*jagato mātaro yūyam mātṛbhūtā bhaviṣyathaḥ ||118||
yusmākaṃ ye bhaviṣyanti bhaktiḥ puruṣapuṃgavāḥ |
striyo vāpi mahābhāgā na tān himsanti himsakāḥ ||119||
mṛtā mama gaṇās cāpi bhaviṣyanty ajarāmarāḥ |
[...]*

*yas tu yusmān mayā sārḍhaṃ vidhivat pūjāyisyati |
sarvāpāpavimuktātmā sa parām gatim āpsyati ||123||*

[Śiva spoke:] “Having become Mother goddesses, you shall be the Mothers of the world. Those who will be devoted to you, whether the best of men or fortunate women, pernicious spirits will not harm; and after death, they shall become my ageless, immortal *ganas*... One who will worship you properly, together with me, shall, free of all sin, attain to the highest heavenly destination.”

28 *Skandapurāna* 171.127-132ab (Bhaṭṭarāī edition):

*ahaṃ brahmā ca viṣṇuś ca ṛṣayaś ca tapodhanāḥ |
mātṛtantrāṇi divyāni mātṛyajñavidhiṃ param ||127||
pūjyāni prakariṣyāmo yajanaṃ yair avāpsyatha |
brāhmaṇ svāyambhuvam caiva kaumāraṃ yāmalaṃ tathā ||128||
sārasvatam sagāndhāram aiśānaṃ nandiyāmalam |
tantrāṇy etāni yusmākaṃ tathānyāni sahasraśah ||129||
bhaviṣyanti narā yaiś tu yusmān yaksyanti bhaktiḥ |
narānāṃ yajamānānāṃ varān yūyam pradāsyatha ||130||
divyāsiddhipradā devyo divyayogā bhaviṣyatha |
yāś ca nāryaḥ sadā yusmān yaksyante sarahasyataḥ ||131||
yogeśvāryo bhaviṣyanti rāmā divyaparākramāḥ |*

“Myself, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and sages rich in penance shall create holy Mother Tantras through which you shall receive the highest worship, the rites of sacrifice to the Mothers (*mātṛyajñavidhi*): the *Brahmayāmala*, *Svāyambhuvayāmala*, *Kumārāyāmala*, *Sārasvatayāmala*, *Gāndhārayāmala*, *Īśānayāmala*, and *Nandiyāmala* – these Tantras of yours, and others too by the thousands, through which men shall worship you with devotion. You shall grant boons to the men worshipping. You shall become goddesses who bestow divine *siddhi*, possessing divine yoga. Those women who always worship you, secretly, shall become *yogeśvarīs*, lovely women of divine valour.”

cultic terms, this narrative hence juxtaposes a tantric cult of the Mothers with their worship in temples, suggesting also that these modes of *mātṛ*-veneration converged in pilgrimage centers such as Koṭivarṣa.

Iconographic evidence from shrines of the Seven Mothers is only in a few cases suggestive of developments in Tantric Śaivism. The Rāmeśvara and Rāvaṇ-kā kāmī cave temples of Ellora, of the mid- or late-sixth centuries, depart from earlier models by the addition of a skeletal divine couple adjacent to the Mothers. The identity of these deities is problematic, but they might be (Mahā)kālā and Kālī (HARPER 1989, 113-14, 116-17). If correct, this identification takes on significance in light of the association between Mahākālā, goddesses, and tantric ritual attested in the early-seventh century works of Bāṇa (HATLEY 2007, 82) and *Brahmayāmala*, chapter 55: the *Mahākālamata*, which describes worship of Mahākālā in a maṇḍala of the Eight Mothers. It seems even more likely that the Vaitāl Deul temple of late eighth-century Orissa (PANIGRAHI 1961, 32-41) is informed by tantric pantheons and iconography. Here we find the Mothers in a cultic context that is clearly *śākta* or goddess-oriented – Cāmuṇḍā, rather than Śīva, presides as supreme deity – in a temple replete with *kāpālīka* iconography. This temple also contains decorative reliefs depicting male Śaiva ascetics bearing skull-staves (*khaṭvāṅga*) and engaging in erotic ritual (DONALDSON 2002, vol. 3, fig. 627), a combination which, along with the temple pantheon, suggests the antinomian, *kāpālīka* ritual milieu of the Śaiva Vidyāpīṭha *tantras* (on which see SANDERSON 1985, 200-202). One roughly contemporaneous *tantra* of this variety, the *Tantrasadbhāva*, does in fact describe ritual centered upon Cāmuṇḍā performed in temples of the Mothers (*mātṛgṛha*), in one case with the aim of encountering *yoginīs*.²⁹

On the interpretation of this passage, see SANDERSON, “History through Textual Criticism in the Study of Śaivism, the Pañcarātra and the Buddhist Yoginītantras.” In *Les sources et le temps. Sources and Time: A Colloquium, Pondicherry, 11-13 January 1997*, ed. FRANÇOIS GRIMAL (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry/École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2001, 1-47), 7.

29 Both of the references identified belong to *Tantrasadbhāva* 21; one has as its context the *vidyā*-mantra and worship of “Red Cāmuṇḍā,” and the other, those of Cāmuṇḍā as Aghoreśī or Caṇḍā Kāpālīnī. In the latter case, the ritual is said to bring about direct encounter with the *yoginīs*. *Tantrasadbhāva* 21.211cd-13ab:

mātṛgṛham praviṣṭvā tu pūjayitvā tu maṇḍalam //211//
japed yogeśvarīm devīm supāṭas tadgatekṣaṇaḥ |
bhramamāṇam ivākāśe tāvat tam nadate gṛham //212 //
āgacchanti tato devyo yoginyo vikṛtānanāḥ |

“After entering a temple of the Mothers and worshipping [their] maṇḍala, one should incant the [*vidyā*-mantra of the] goddess Yogeśvarī, having a good cloth (?), one’s gaze

As the *Tantrasadbhāva* intimates, the scriptural corpus and exegetical literature of Tantric Śaivism provide considerable evidence for study of the Mother goddesses and *yoginīs*, though often difficult to situate chronologically. In some of the most archaic material, goddesses have little cultic importance. Such is the case in the *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā*, which has been identified as one of the earliest surviving texts of Tantric Śaivism; GOODALL and ISAACSON's preliminary assessment would place "the earlier parts of the text between 450-550 ad" (2007, 6). The roles of goddesses appear largely ancillary in the *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā*'s ritual systems, and much of the material concerning Śiva's *śaktis* belongs to the *Guhyasūtra*, a comparatively late stratum of the text.³⁰ There alone (3.25ab) do we find allusion to a different sort of goddess, the fierce Caṇḍikā, whose identity often intersects with Cāmuṇḍā, leader of the Seven Mothers. The *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā* does refer to Mother goddesses, but not as tantric mantra-deities; their sphere is that of public, lay religion (*laukikadharmā*) alone (*Niśvāsamukha* 2.28, 3.33-34ab). The only evidence for their appropriation as tantric deities occurs in the context of cosmology, rather than ritual. Chapter five of the *Guhyasūtra* (5.1-21) lists several varieties of goddess among the lords of a series of seven netherworlds (*pātālas*). In particular, the *kapālamātṛs*, "Skull Mothers," who preside over the fourth netherworld, appear to represent a transformation of the Mothers into Śaiva, tantric goddesses, with mortuary iconography that presages the image of the *yoginī*. Positioned even higher in the series of netherworlds are *yogakanyās*, "yoga maidens" or "daughters of Yoga," deities of the sixth and seventh *pātālas*. Powerful, youthful goddesses, they might have continuity with the deities later referred to as *yogeśvarīs* or *yoginīs*. This connection is drawn much later by a Kashmirian, Kṣemarāja, commenting on a parallel passage (*Svacchandatantra* 10.118).

The record is fragmentary for the tantric Śaiva cults bridging the gap between sources such as the *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā* and later scriptures of the *yoginī* cult, such as the *Brahmayāmala*. These include the cult of the Sisters (*bhaginī*) of Tumburu taught in the *Vāma-* or *Bhaginītantras*, mentioned by Dharmakīrti in the first half of the seventh century and

fixed on that – up until the temple resounds, as though roaming through the sky (?). Then come the goddesses, *yoginīs* of grotesque visage."

The interpretation of 212bcd is uncertain, and particularly so *supāṭṭas* in 212b; a cloth inscribed with a ritual diagram (*yantra*)?

30 Here I follow the working hypothesis on the stratification of the text put forward by GOODALL in a presentation entitled, "The Structure of the *Niśvāsa*-corpus," at the "Workshop on Early Śaivism: the Testimony of the *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā*," held in Pondicherry, January 2007.

represented by the extant *Viṇāśikhātantra* (SANDERSON 2001, 11-12). Dharmakīrti also refers to (apparently lost) “Tantras of the Dākinīs” (*Dākinītantras*)—the deities mentioned in association with *mātṛs* in the Gaṅgdhār inscription. Also pertinent are *Bhūtantras*, a poorly preserved class of tantric literature concerned largely with exorcism and magic pertaining to “spirits” (*bhūta*). Though not a *Bhūtantra*, the *Netratantra* (c. 700-850 CE; SANDERSON 2004, 273-94) provides a window into the exorcistic and apotropaic dimensions of the cult of *yoginīs*, which might have had roots in the *bhūtantras*, as well as in the ancient cult of *mātṛs* as *grahas* of Skanda.³¹

Tantric Śaiva cults of Mother goddesses and *yoginīs* first find detailed exposition in the *Bhairavatantras*, scriptures of the cult of Bhairava and allied goddesses. These are of two primary varieties: *tantras* of the Mantrapīṭha and Vidyāpīṭha, distinguished by whether their pantheons consist predominantly of *mantras* – i.e. male mantra-deities – or *vidyās*: the “lores” which are the female mantra-deities (SANDERSON 1988, 668-671; 2001, 19-20). One of the defining characteristics of the tantric traditions is the ontological identity of empowered sonic formulae and deities. Literature of the Vidyāpīṭha, “Wisdom-Mantra Corpus,” is intrinsically concerned with goddesses, and the Vidyāpīṭha/Mantrapīṭha divide itself appears intended, primarily, for distinguishing *Bhairavatantras* focused upon goddesses from those centered upon forms of Bhairava. An additional distinction arises between Vidyāpīṭha scriptures and those of the Kaula: the “[Tradition] of the [Goddess] Clans.” This distinction is at once significant and problematic: much as the Vidyāpīṭha appears to represent a development from the Mantrapīṭha cult of Bhairava, Kaula systems appear to have developed within and had substantial continuity with the Vidyāpīṭha (SANDERSON 1988, 679-680), complicating neat divisions. And while the earliest attested literature of the Śaiva *yoginī* cult belongs to the Vidyāpīṭha, the greater portion of the extant Śaiva literature concerned with *yoginīs* identifies itself with Kaula lineages (*āmnāya*).

In the *Svacchandatantra*, the primary representative of the Mantrapīṭha (SANDERSON 1988, 670), Mother goddesses have only a marginal presence: although mentioned as prominent attendants of Śiva (1.2cd), they otherwise appear largely in passing, in lists of deities (e.g. 10.214cd-215ab). However, *Svacchandatantra* 10 describes a cosmological sphere (*bhuvana*)

31 Cf., e.g., *Netratantra* 20.50-75; this begins with a list of harmful entities including *bhūtas*, *mātṛs*, and *yoginīs*, and outlines means for their appeasement (*praśamana*). Among many other skills, the practitioner capable of averting the dangers they pose should be versed in the rites of the *bhūtantras* (*bhūtantravidhau*, 61a).

called “The Beauteous” (*sucāru*) in which Śiva (Umāpati) presides over a maṇḍala of the Seven Mothers, described in full iconographic detail and apparently joined by an eighth goddess, Mahālakṣmī (10.1017cd–1030). This seems to be an elaboration upon a brief reference to unnamed *mātṛs* in the *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* (*Gubhyasūtra* 5). The *Svacchandatantra*’s Kashmirian recension (1.31cd–36) provides additional evidence for the incorporation of Mother goddesses: the eight letter-groups (*vargas*) of the Sanskrit alphabet are correlated with the Eight Mother goddesses,³² and the alphabet itself is referred to as the Mātṛkā, “Mother” in the sense of “Alphabetical Matrix.” The Mātṛkā is conceived of as the conjunction of “Matrix Bhairava” (Mātṛkābhairava), who embodies the vowels, and Bhairavī, comprised of the consonants. Similarly, the archaic *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* of the Vidyāpīṭha attests the deity “Alphabet Bhairava” (Śabdarāśibhairava), whose retinue of the Eight Mothers comprises eight groupings of the Sanskrit consonants (16.17, 41–43; see TÖRZSÖK 2000, 142). Such connections between *mātṛs* and the alphabet and the conception of the alphabet as the Mātṛkā/Matrix become commonplace in later Śaiva metaphysics (see e.g. PADOUX 1990, 147–162).

In *tantras* of the Vidyāpīṭha,³³ Mother goddesses recede somewhat to the background, with *yoginīs* and other tantric goddesses emerging as cultic foci. Indeed, the entire edifice of tantric ritual appears oriented within the Vidyāpīṭha toward the aim of power-bestowing “union” or encounter (*melaka*, *melāpa*) with the goddesses, a communion through which the *sādhaka* assumes the powers of Bhairava himself. The significance of *mātṛs* nonetheless remains considerable, for as mentioned, the Seven or Eight Mothers figure as matriarchs of the clans of *yoginīs*. Vidyāpīṭha texts provide elaborate taxonomies of the “characteristics of *yoginīs*” (*yoginīlakṣaṇa*) based upon Mother-goddess clans (*kula*). Note for instance the description of a *yoginī* of the clan of the Mother goddess Brāhmī/Brahmāṇī in *Brahmayāmala* 74.44–46:

32 SANDERSON points out that this reference to the Mothers is absent from the recension of the *Svacchandatantra* preserved in Nepalese manuscripts (personal communication, January 2007).

33 Four Vidyāpīṭha works appear extant: the *Brahmayāmala*, *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, *Tantrasadbhāva*, and *Jayadrathayāmala*, among which the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* has been partially edited by TÖRZSÖK (*Siddhayogeśvarīmata*. Ed. JUDIT TÖRZSÖK. “The Doctrine of Magic Female Spirits.’ A Critical Edition of Selected Chapters of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*(*tantra*) with Annotated Translation and Analysis” [Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1999]), while the present author has edited several chapters of the *Brahmayāmala*; see HATLEY, “The *Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs.”

A woman who has three lines on her forehead touching the hair's part, on top; who is fair-complexioned, having the scent of the *campaka* flower, and ever devoted to celibacy; always fond of the sound of the Veda, imperturbable, speaking the truth; [she has] a staff, water-pot, antelope skin, yoga-cloth, ritual ladles, *darbha* grass, and a sacred thread; and on her house is drawn a lotus. She should be carefully noted as belonging to the clan of [the Mother goddess] Brahmānī, O fair woman.³⁴

Such taxonomies provide guidelines for the *sādhaka* to recognize *yoginīs*, who when propitiated may bestow *siddhi* upon individuals initiated into their own *mātṛ*-clans.³⁵

Another manner by which *mātṛs* retain significance in the Śaiva cult of *yoginīs* is exemplified by chapter thirteen of the *Tantrasadbhāva*, a *tantra* of the Vidyāpīṭha which presents what might be the earliest reference to a pantheon of sixty-four *yoginīs*. This chapter delineates a maṇḍala of sixty-four *bhairavas* distributed in eight lotuses around the central lotus; afterwards (vv. 56-88), it introduces a parallel configuration of sixty-four goddesses called the "Pantheon of Mothers" (*mātṛyāga*). Their names are feminine-gender mirrors of the *bhairavas*, suggesting a secondary status. These sixty-four *yoginīs* form octads in lotuses circling the central Bhairava, grouped into clans headed by the Seven Mothers and the supreme Goddess, Aghorī.

Kaula scriptures continue to attach considerable significance to *yoginīs*, and in some cases *mātṛs* as well. In this literature, notable shifts are evident in the occlusion of mortuary ritual and increasing emphasis upon internalized, yogic conceptions of the presence and manifestation of the goddesses (cf., e.g., *Mālinīvijayottara* 19.18cd-27ab). The *Kubjikāmata*, for instance, teaches a series of bodily *cakras* which are the loci of five groups of female deities: the Goddesses (*devī*), Consorts (*dūtī*), *mātṛs*, *yoginīs*, and Sky-travelers (*khecari*). As HEILIJGERS-SEELEN elaborates (1994, 90-118), the Cakra of the Mothers incorporates the Brahmanical Eight (with Mahālakṣmī, and paired with eight *bhairavas*) as well as another octad

34 *Brahmayāmala* 74.44-46:

tisro rekhā lalāte tu ūrdhvasīmāntam āsṛitāḥ /
gaurī campakagandhī ca brahmacaryaratā sadā //44//
vedaghoṣapriyā nityam akṣobhyā satyavādinī /
daṇḍam kamaṇḍaluñ caiva ajinaṃ yogapaṭṭakam //45//
srućdarbhopavitam tu padmañ ca likhitam gr̥he /
lakṣitavyā prayatnena brahmāṇyaṃśā varānane //46//

For the critical apparatus and notes, see HATLEY, "The *Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs," 329, 406-407.

35 See, e.g., *Brahmayāmala* 74.47cd, quoted in n. 21 above.

called the “Great Mothers” (*mahāmātṛ*), who in turn preside over eight groups of eight (i.e. sixty-four) subordinate *mātṛs*. Links between *yoginīs* and *mātṛs* become increasingly tenuous, however, with new typologies coming to the fore no longer organized according to clans of the Mother goddesses.³⁶

Despite trends toward interiorization in Kaula practice, Kaula conceptions of *yoginīs* appear to inform the monumental temples dedicated to these goddesses beginning, most probably, from the tenth century. It is in the latter literature of the Kaula cult of the goddess Kubjikā that we find the earliest Śaiva textual references to visual representation of sixty-four *yoginīs*, the numerical configuration best attested in temples. In particular, the unpublished fifteenth chapter of the *Ṣaṭsāhasrasambhitā*, as identified by Alexis Sanderson, provides a detailed account of the iconography of sixty-four *yoginīs*, linked to the Eight Mothers. The context concerns private ritual rather than the temple worship.³⁷ Significantly, GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN (2003) has identified three pre-fourteenth-century texts which elaborate the iconography of the same set of *yoginīs*: the *Agnipurāna*, *Mayadīpikā*, and *Pratiṣṭhālakṣaṇasārasamuccaya* (the latter as cited by Hemādri in the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*). These sources, which belong to the comparatively public domain of the *purāṇas*, point toward the growing prominence of *yoginīs* in the religious landscape of medieval India, beyond the narrow confines of the tantric traditions. At least fifteen *yoginī* temples were erected from Orissa to the Madhya Pradesh-Rājasthān border, and as far south as Tamilnadu.³⁸ Though the sculptural record is fragmentary, many of these temples incorporate the Brahmanical Mothers within their

36 Note, for instance, the four- or fivefold series beginning with the *bhūcarī* (“terrestrial *yoginī*”) common in Krama texts (TÖRZSÖK, “Dikcarī.” In *Tāntrikābhīdhānakośa. Dictionnaire des termes techniques de la littérature hindoue tantrique*, vol. 3, eds. DOMINIC GOODALL and MARION RASTELLI [Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, forthcoming]), or the classification of *yoginīs* as *kṣetrajā* (“born in sacred fields,” etc.), *pīṭhajā* (“born in sacred mounds”) and so forth in the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* (HATLEY, “The *Brahmayāmalatantra* and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs,” 159-161).

37 See SERBAEVA, “Yoginīs in Śaiva Purāṇas and Tantras. Their role in transformative experiences in a historical and comparative perspective.” Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Lausanne, 2006, who quotes *Ṣaṭsāhasrasambhitā* 15 from a draft edition of SANDERSON (2006, 75 in “Cited Sanskrit Passages” and 56-61 in Appendix 7.6).

38 The extant temples and loose *yoginī* statuary have been documented in colonial-era archeological reports, and more systematically in studies by THOMSEN, “Kult und Ikonographie der 64 Yoginīs” (Ph.D. dissertation, Free University of Berlin, 1976) and DEHEJIA, *Yoginī Cult and Temples: A Tantric Tradition*. More recently, DONALDSON (*Tantra and Śākta Art of Orissa*. 3 vols. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2002) has studied the two extant temple sites in Orissa.

goddess circles, preserving the connection between *mātṛs* and *yoginīs* evidenced in the textual tradition. In this manner, the Mother goddesses re-emerge from the esoteric tradition into temples in new guises.

From *Mātṛ* to *Vajradākinī*: Mother goddesses in Tantric Buddhism

Though closely linked to Brahmanical deities, the Seven Mothers' significance extended beyond Hindu traditions, much as did that of their ancient *mātṛ* predecessors. An early medieval sculpted set of seven Jain *yakṣīs* appears modeled on the Seven Mothers (CORT 1987, 242-43), while there is substantial evidence for their appropriation in Buddhism. One major sculptural example survives: a cave-shrine of the Buddhist temple complex near Aurangabad (6-7th century) depicts the Mothers in the company of two nondescript seated Buddhas (HATLEY 2007, 68-69). It is principally within Tantric or Esoteric Buddhism – the Mantranaya (“Method of Mantras”) or Vajrayāna (“Adamantine Vehicle”) – that Brahmanical Mother goddesses acquired Buddhist identities. Part of their historical significance within Buddhism lies in their role in the formation of a Buddhist cult of *yoginīs*: the tradition transmitted in the *Yoginītantras* (“Tantras of the Yoginīs”) or *Yoganiruttaratāntras* (“Highest Yoga Tantras”) (TRIBE 2000, 202-205, 213-17) – a tradition modeled in significant ways, SANDERSON (1994) argues, on analogous forms of Tantric Śaivism.

Mother goddesses figure as minor deities in Tantric Buddhism early in the tradition's development, appearing, for instance, in the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhisūtra* (c. 640 CE or somewhat earlier; HODGE 2003, 14-17). In the maṇḍala of the supreme Buddha Mahāvairocana, as delineated in the second chapter, appear an unusual heptad of “wrathful Mothers:” Kālarātri, Raudrī, Brahmī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Cāmuṇḍā, and Kauberī (female counterpart of Kubera) (2.50, 13.89). These form the retinue of Yama, lord of Death and guardian of the southern direction. Elsewhere in the text, Kālarātri and seven unspecified Mothers figure in the entourage of Śākyamuni (4.11). Chapter six links them to mantras for causing illness, bridging the goddesses' roots in the mythology of Skanda's *grahas* with tantric “magical” practices (6.15). Besides Mother goddesses, this text contains several references to *ḍākinīs*. While in the subsequent *Yoginītantras*, *ḍākinīs* would become prominent deities, and the term *ḍākinī* synonymous with *yoginī*, here they are grouped with minor, potentially pernicious beings such as the *rākṣasa*, *yakṣa*, and *piśāca*. In the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhisūtra* we hence find evidence for interest

in some of the divinities prominent in the cult of *yoginīs*, and in particular, a limited appropriation of the Mothers as tantric goddesses.

The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, part of which existed by the middle of the eighth century (MATSUNAGA 1985, 882-895), attests a broader range of female deities and spirits. Its opening chapter, enumerating the diverse beings who assemble to hear the Dharma, lists female divinities that include *pūtanās*, *bhaginīs*, *ḍākinīs*, *rūpinīs*, *yakṣinīs*, and *ākāśamātṛs*, “Sky Mothers.” This list is highly suggestive of the range of female divinities described in literature of the *yoginī* cult. Among these goddesses is a group called the “Great Sky Mothers,” comprising the standard *saptamātaraḥ* augmented by Yāmyā, Vāruṇī, Pūtanā, and others, with retinues of innumerable unnamed *mātṛs* (*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, vol. 1, 20-21). Like the *Mahāvairocanābhīṣambodhisūtra*, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* positions the Seven Mothers in the retinue of Yama among the non-Buddhist deities in the outer layers of the maṇḍala. Some attempt to give them a Buddhist identity is suggested by the addition of “Vajracāmuṇḍi” to their ranks (*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, vol. 2, 510). In general, however, the depiction of the Mothers is more consonant with the ancient cult of Skanda’s countless *grahas*, with whom they are explicitly connected (vol. 1, p. 223). As for *ḍākinīs*, their characterization is entirely that of pernicious, possessing female spirits, against whom one requires mantras for protection; no indications are present of the positive associations and prominence assigned to them in *Yoginītantras*.

Further incorporation of goddesses is evident in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* (hereafter *Tattvasaṃgraha*), the composition of which had apparently commenced by the last quarter of the seventh century (HODGE 2003, 11-12). This text takes the “conversion” of goddesses considerably further, and its range of female deities even more clearly intimates that of the *Yoginītantras*. Here, for instance, we find reference to Mother goddesses classified under the categories *antarikṣacārī* (“aetherial”), *khecarī* (“aerial”), *bhūcarī* (“terrestrial”), and *pātālavāsini* (“denizens of the netherworlds”) – closely related to categories applied in later classifications of *yoginīs*. Along with a host of other erstwhile hostile deities, headed by Śiva, they receive tantric initiation and initiatory names; thus Jātahāriṇī (“Stealer of Newborn”) becomes Vajramekhalā, Māraṇī (“Slayer”) becomes Vajravilayā, Kauberī becomes Vajravikāṭā, and Cāmuṇḍā becomes Vajrakālī, to name one from each respective class (*Tattvasaṃgraha* 6, p. 173). Leaving behind their identities as *grahas* of Skanda or as maternal, Brahmanical goddesses, the Mothers here take on identities as goddesses of the Vajrayāna. The *Tattvasaṃgraha* also contains an episode narrating the conversion and accommodation of *ḍākinīs* (*Tattvasaṃgraha* 6, pp. 180-8), while the *Guhyasamājatantra* (chapter 17, p. 130) attests *vajraḍākinīs*

– transformations of these hostile beings into wielders of the *vajra* sceptre, marking their entry into the Vajrayāna pantheon.

With the emergence of the literature and ritual of the *Yoginītantras* by the ninth century, Mother goddesses recede to the background, supplanted by the wild, transcendent hordes of the sky-traversing *ḍākinīs* or *yoginīs*. In the *Laghucakrasaṃvaratantra*, for instance, the cult deities comprise a fierce *kāpālīka* Buddha, Cakrasaṃvara or Heruka, and a maṇḍala of *ḍākinīs* headed by his consort, Vajravārāhī or Vajrayoginī. This consort-goddess presents a profound instance of the Buddhist incorporation of Mother goddesses, for in her form as Vajravārāhī, she represents a transformation of the sow-faced *mātṛ* Vārāhī into a goddess of the Vajrayāna. She assumes prominence as both consort of Cakrasaṃvara and, unusual among Buddhist goddesses, the central deity of her own maṇḍala (ENGLISH 2002, 43-49).

The maṇḍala presided over by Cakrasaṃvara is comprised principally of goddesses, referred to as *ḍākinīs*, *vajradākinīs*, *dūtīs* (“consorts”), etc.³⁹ Goddesses of the clan of Vajrayoginī/Vajravārāhī, these *ḍākinīs* represent a single class among a broad spectrum of female beings who collectively comprise the “web” or “matrix” (*jāla*) of *ḍākinīs* that pervades the universe. While in the earlier *Yogatantras* deities were organized according to clans (*kula*) of the five Buddhas of the Vajradhātu maṇḍala, the *Laghucakrasaṃvaratantra* and similar systems introduce new, matriarchal deity clans, much as Śaiva *yoginīs* were classified according to clans and subclans of the Seven Mothers. Representations of *ḍākinīs* in sources such as the *Laghucakrasaṃvaratantra* suggest little fundamental distinction with Śaiva conceptions of *yoginīs*, hence being equally rooted in older Indic Mother-goddess traditions.

Mātṛs Past and Present: Continuity and Transformation

Veneration of Mother goddesses has formed a significant strand in South Asian religious history, and, as this essay sought to illustrate, has undergone a number of major transformations over time. Popular in ancient

39 The maṇḍala *ḍākinīs* have male counterparts designated “heroes” (*vīra*), but the latter have only secondary significance. For a discussion of the maṇḍala, see GRAY, *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka). A Study and Annotated Translation*. (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University, 2007), 54-76; see also SANDERSON, “The Śaiva Age — the Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period.” In *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. SHINGO EINOO. (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009, pp. 41-349), 170.

India, *mātṛs* were among the deities both Buddhism and emergent Brahmanical groups sought to accommodate or subsume. In the Gupta era, goddesses of this typology rose to prominence in the Śaiva-oriented configuration known as the Seven Mothers. Worshipped in temples throughout the subcontinent, the Seven Mothers were also crucial to the formation of the tantric goddess cults which became prominent in the latter centuries of the first millennium. Their historical importance to the tantric traditions is tied closely with their gradual transformation into the figure of the *yoginī*. Originally deities of esoteric cults, from the tenth century *yoginīs* became prominent in the wider Indic religious landscape, providing renewed significance to the ancient Mother-goddess typology.

Despite their decline as the focus of a temple cult, and eclipse by the *yoginī* and other goddesses within tantric traditions, Mother goddesses do retain significance in modern South Asia, with the influence of medieval tantric traditions evident in some cases. Veneration of the Seven or Eight Mothers forms a minor component of numerous “high” liturgies, such as the Durgā Pūjā or Durgotsava (RODRIGUES 2003, 200-204), the preparatory rituals associated with orthodox life-cycle rites (*saṃskāra*) (TACHIKAWA *et al.* 2001, 94, 98), Smārta *pūjā* (BÜHNEMANN 1988, 126-128; COURTRIGHT 1985, 42) and maṇḍala practices (BÜHNEMANN 2007, 63-68), and even Smārta fire ritual (BÜHNEMANN 1988, 7). Little attempt has been made to study contemporary regional *mātṛ* traditions, though some evidently possess considerable vitality. In Kerala, the Seven Mothers may feature as the core retinue of the eminent regional goddess Bhadrakālī/Bhagavatī (CALDWELL 1999, 124-126), a tantric pantheon attested in South India as early as the eleventh century (SANDERSON 2007, 277-278). In Tamilnadu, the Seven Mothers or “Seven Virgins” (*kaṇṇimār*) are both common village deities (SHULMAN 1980, 243-267) and enshrined in major temple complexes, even the relatively modern and urban Mundakakkani temple of Mylapore (WAGHORNE, 153). A Tamil village festival of 1993 in which seven young girls became possessed by the Mothers has been documented in film (OLDHAM 1995).

In addition, a number of alternative configurations of seven exist in various regional goddess sets which might be modeled on the Seven Mothers or an even older heptad. In southwestern Bengal, the *sāt bouni* or “Seven Sisters” echo the *saptamātarah* in a decidedly local register, and even have Islamic counterparts in the *sāt bibi* (“Seven Ladies”) (MUKHERJEE, 67-68). ERNDL (1993, 37-38) suggests that the *saptamātarah* may form the model for the Seven Sisters of northwestern India as well, among whom Vaiṣṇavī (Vaiṣṇo Devī) is especially prominent; the lists also usually include Cāmuṇḍā. A group of Seven Sisters associated with disease are venerated in villages near Mysore, for instance (FILLIOZAT 1937, 119-120), while the

sātī āsarā (“Seven Nymphs”), river goddesses of the Maharashtrian folk tradition, represent another potentially dangerous group of seven (FELDBAUS 1995, 118-141). HARPER (1989, 33-45) has compiled references to a number of other village and tribal goddess heptads intimately associated with fertility, renewal, disease, and death – common themes in the ancient, non-tantric Mother goddess tradition.

It is perhaps in Nepal that Mother goddesses retain their closest links with tantric practices as well as their greatest contemporary significance, configured either in a set of eight – the usual seven plus Mahālakṣmī – or as the Nine Durgās (*navadurgā*) with the addition of a variable ninth, supreme goddess. Worshipped in their own temples and shrines throughout the Kathmandu valley,⁴⁰ the Eight Mothers also replace the Brahmanical *dikpālas* (“Guardians of the Directions”) as regents of the sky and of the eight directions (SLUSSER 1982, vol. 1, 322-323, 344-349). In this role, they guard perimeters, such as those of the city of Bhaktāpur. The Dassain festival or Durgā Pūjā has a day dedicated to each of the Eight, the group of whom are collectively embodied and performed by masked dancers on the ninth day (LIDKE 2006, 47). The *ihī* rite of passage for Newari girls provides an example of veneration of an individual Mother goddess: after ceremonial marriage to the *bel*-fruit, the maidens (*kumārī*) are worshipped as embodiments of Kaumārī, the *mātṛ*-counterpart of Kumāra/Skanda (GUTSCHOW and MICHAELS 2008, 153-154). Nepal also attests cases of Mother-goddess veneration in Buddhist contexts (e.g. TACHIKAWA 2004, 33, 37-39). These *mātṛ* traditions deserve closer study, for in addition to their local significance, they attest key themes in the distinctive history of South Asian Mother goddesses. In particular, the manner in which the Nepalese Mothers bridge public worship in temples with esoteric ritual evokes a theme important from as early as the Gupta era, as intimated by the fifth-century Gaṅgdhār inscription and the old *Skandapurāṇa*. Their significance in both Śaivism and Buddhism also evokes a long history of competition over the sectarian identities of Mother goddesses, from the Buddhist conversion of Hārītī to the Islamicized *sāt bibi* of Bengal.

As even this brief vignette of the *mātṛs* and related goddess heptads in modern South Asia suggests, the transformations in Mother-goddess conceptions outlined in this essay, however substantial, have not effaced more archaic conceptions. Rather, various configurations of this goddess typology have continued to exist in distinct regional, sectarian, and

40 Numerous depictions of the Mothers in Nepalese temple sculpture, painting, and line drawings have been published by TACHIKAWA, *Mother-goddesses in Kathmandu* (Delhi: Adroit Publishers, 2004).

sociocultural contexts. One may encounter, for instance, vestiges of both the ancient cult of *mātṛs* as dangerous *grahas* and the medieval tantric cult of *yoginīs*; and one finds veneration of Kuṣāṇa-era *mātṛs* such as Ṣaṣṭhī alongside Brahmanical, folk, and tantric worship of the Seven or Eight Mothers. Moreover, even such historically disparate deities as Kuṣāṇa-era *mātṛs*, medieval *yoginīs*, and the *sātī āsarā* of Maharashtra exhibit conceptual continuities, linked polythetically by shared idioms of visual representation, naming, and multiplicity, as well as a nexus of beliefs and values centered upon the natural world and its feminized powers of sustenance, fecundity, contagion, and mortality.

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Rivers to the Sky

Transformation, Metaphor, and Worldview in Bengali Tantric Traditions

GLEN ALEXANDER HAYES

One of the most prolific and dynamic regions in South Asia for the development of Tantra has been that of “Greater Bengal” in the northeastern part of the subcontinent – comprising approximately modern West Bengal, parts of Orissa, Bangladesh, and Assam. Located on the fringes of traditional Vedic and Aryan culture and religion, Bengal saw the development of many different and distinctive types of Tantra, from popular village-based, tribal versions to learned, Sanskritic traditions of temple cities like Viṣṇupur. Bengal saw not only innovations in Buddhist Vajrayāna schools in Nalanda and Tamralipti, but a wide array of Hindu Tantra in diverse Śaiva, Śākta, and Vaiṣṇava forms. In this paper I will address the conference theme of “transformation and transfer” of Tantra by exploring how distinctive Bengali Tantric metaphors and worldviews changed over the centuries: from the Kṛṣṇa-centered lineages of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās (ca. 17th-19th centuries) to the British Rāj-influenced Kartābhajās (18th-19th centuries). Using my own translations of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā texts and my fieldwork involving the Kartābhajās, as well as the work of Hugh Urban on the Kartābhajās, I will show how Bengali Tantra underwent significant transformations from the 17th through 20th centuries – some of this due to the changing historical context and the presence of colonialism and modernity. These transformations in the traditions of those Hindu Tantrics who sought the final cosmic state of Sahaja – literally, the “together-born” (*saha-ja*) state – are perfect examples of the interaction of context and text in the history of religions. One useful way to focus our survey is to examine important metaphors used in ritual texts, in songs, and by gurus. For example, while earlier Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā texts speak of an inner riverine yogic channel (the *bāṅkānadī*) that the adept must yogically “reverse,” later Kartābhajā texts change this classic image from yogic physiology into a passageway for the “merchant” yogin to travel from his “office” (*kuṭhi*)

to sell his goods in the “bazaar of the world.” Thus, we find a Tantric response to colonialism, and an appropriation of colonial and mercantile imagery, especially that of the marketplace (*bājār*), which supplants the earlier tropes of villages, gardens and fields. However, certain core metaphors and ritual practices are maintained. For the scholar of Tantric Studies, then, Bengal provides us with many excellent examples of transformations and adaptations of Tantric beliefs, practices, and social expressions.

The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās

In the first portion of this essay I would like to examine some key aspects of the yogic physiology (*dehatattva*) of a major teaching lineage of the 17th-19th century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, that claiming as their guru one Siddha Mukunda-deva, who lived in the late 16th century (and certainly after the great hagiography of Caitanya, the Caitanya-caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja was composed, ca. 1575).¹ One of the most distinctive things about the post-Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās (and they do seem to be primarily a post-Caitanya expression of Tantra) is how they created conceptual and ritual blends between, on the one hand, the devotional Vaiṣṇava bhakti and aesthetic traditions of Caitanya and the Six Gosvāmin Theologians and, on the other, the alchemical tantric traditions of the Nāths, Siddhas, and perhaps earlier Buddhist Tantrics. In other words, the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās embraced, but adapted for Tantric usage, the romantic trysts and ritual practices associated with the love-play of the Dark Lord Kṛṣṇa and his consort Rādhā. For Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, an underlying goal was to leave behind one’s worldly form (*rūpa*) and merge with one’s inner identity as the *svarūpa* (“true form”) of Kṛṣṇa (for men) and with Rādhā (for women). The lineages descending from Mukunda-deva, for example, expressed innovative ways of transforming these devotional practices of singing, dancing, and aesthetic enjoyment (*vaidhi-bhakti*) as powerful emotive and erotic enhancements to the higher forms of *ulṭā-sādhana* (“practices of reversal”) using sexual fluids that would be used at advanced stages of *sādhana*. Thus, we find a creative and fascinating “blend” of Tantra and Bhakti. Although we do not have time in this essay

1 See EDWARD C. DIMOCK, JR. and TONY K. STEWART, *Caitanya caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, a Translation and Commentary*. Trans. and ed. by TONY K. STEWART. Harvard Oriental Series 56. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, 1999). On the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, see EDWARD C. DIMOCK, JR., *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

to explore the vital roles that emotions have played in Tantric ritual and cosmophysiology, it is worth noting that the modern cognitive science of religion has shown how the presence of any powerful emotion during a ritual activity helps to heighten and enhance that activity.²

The closest that we have to fairly complete presentations of *sādhana* and *dehatattva* are found in the several texts attributed to Mukunda-deva or to one of his disciples, including the Amṛtaratnāvalī of Mukunda-dāsa (ca. 1650 CE) or the Amṛtarasāvalī of Mathurā-dāsa (ca. 1750 CE). Mukunda-deva seems to have been one of the primary figures in developing the distinctive Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā blending of Bhakti and Tantra that is found to some degree in other texts. This blending required not only a working knowledge of the sophisticated works of the devotional Caitanya movement – especially those of Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja, Rūpa Gosvāmin and Jīva Gosvāmin – but also an initiate’s knowledge of Nāth and Siddha *dehatattva* and *sādhana*s. Throw in the additional “inputs” of alchemy, Sanskrit aesthetics, and the goddess-worship of Śāktism and you can see how complex and transformative these traditions can be.

For the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions of Mukunda-deva, *sādhana* typically starts with the *pravarta-āśrama*, the “beginner’s stage,” which essentially uses techniques from mainstream Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *rāgānugā bhakti sādhana* (Herman 1988), such as singing and dancing as a milkmaid (*gopī*) to Kṛṣṇa (*kīrtana*), and developing an alternative identity and body (*siddha-rūpa*; *mañjari-rūpa*) as a participant in the divine love-play (*līlā*) of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. This may also involve the use of mantras, and other “external” (*bāhya*) ritual forms. This is where the eventual shift and blending of dualistic Bhakti begins, for the Sahajiyās regard the male and female practitioners (*nāyaka* and *nāyikā*) not just as humans worshipping the divine Kṛṣṇa and his consort Rādhā (as orthodox Vaiṣṇavas do), but as in fact embodying in their own physical forms (*rūpa*) the “true form” or “essence” (*svarūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. This is where the Tantric adaptation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is quite clear.

At the second stage, that of the “accomplished one” (*sādhaka*), we find the use of more “interiorized” (*marma*) and “secret” (*guhya*, *rahasya*) practices, including the antinomian ritual sexual intercourse with the spouse “of another” (*parakīyā*), generally called *rati-sādhana* (“practice with a desirable woman”). Here the identity of the man is blended with

2 See for example, a recent discussion of emotions and cognitive science in the National Public Radio series “Radiolab,” at <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/radiolab/episodes/2008/11/14/segments/113310>. Also see, for example DANIEL GARDNER, *The Science of Fear* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

Kṛṣṇa's, and the woman's is blended with Rādhā. It is also where we find a fascinating use of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava religious aesthetics (a form of rasa-theory, using the nuances of "moods" or *bhāvas*), developed in a most intricate manner by the six Gosvāmins of the Bengal school, blended with essentially Nāth and Siddha *sādhanas* and *dehatattvas*. Of note here is the yogic manipulation of sexual fluids (see, e.g. White 1996, 2003a), which are reversed (*ultā*) via urethral suction and other techniques and made to flow "upwards against the current" (*sroter ujāna*) of the yogic River into the celestial realms of the "divine body" (*deva-deha*). In these cases, the sexual fluids clearly serve as constituents for the emergent structures of the divine body. This process then leads to the third and uppermost stage, that of the "perfected one" (*siddha*).

The third stage of *siddha* takes place within the yogic bodies of the practitioners, especially that of the male *nāyaka*, who absorbs the sexual fluids of the female *nāyikā* into his own body, mixing them with his own, and directing them on into the inner Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā realms. There are many interesting gender and power issues at work here, and many complexities regarding the yogic body.³ And thus again we see distinctive and transformative Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā organizing frames, structures and processes, some reflecting the inputs of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Bhakti influences, some the Nāth and Siddha Tantric inputs. Rather than the well-known, but as DAVID GORDON WHITE (2003b) has shown, hardly uniform Śaiva and Śākta *dehatattva* of the six cakras, *sahasradala*, and *kuṇḍalini*, the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā model – very much reflecting the context of deltaic and riverine Bengal – is instead one with typically four lotus ponds or "tanks" (*sarovaras*) connected by the "crooked river" (*bāṅkānadī*), along which flow the yogically-reversed male and female sexual fluids (*rasa* and *rati*). In some texts, this central yogic channel is simply referred to as the "River" (*nadī*). It is worth noting the similarity to the frequent four-fold structure of earlier Buddhist Tantric *dehatattva*, and the use of *baṅka nāla* ("curved duct") in earlier Nāth and Siddha schools.⁴ Once yogically "reversed," the fluids become *vastu*, the basic "stuff" of the cosmos. It is this "material" out of which the divine body, ponds, and river are generated (*nirmāna*). Here it is the *vastu*, the "cosmic stuff," which serves as a sort of anchor

3 On similar notions of "male mystical pregnancy" in Taoist traditions, see KRISTOFER SCHIPPER, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994: 116-123 and 162-163).

4 DAVID GORDON WHITE, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 261, 485-489.

for the structures of the yogic realms. Using this *vastu*, the practitioners essentially generate the inner yogic body and ponds.

Ascent along this River leads up to the Pond of Indestructibility (*akṣaya-sarovara*) and the attainment of Sahaja – the “together-born,” “innate,” “co-eval” cosmic state of unity in which all dualities – human/divine, male/female, manifest/unmanifest – collapse. One thus becomes a *Sahaja-mānuṣa*, an androgynous cosmic being beyond all dualities, even that of of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are thus both merged into the ultimate space of the *Sahaja-mānuṣa*.

In order to give the reader a sense of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā texts, and especially their emphasis upon the centrality of the yogic River (*nadī*) in sādhana, we will consider some previously-unpublished verses from the Amṛtarasāvalī (“The Collection of Immortal Rasa”), a text attributed by the great scholar Sukumar Sen to one Mathurā-dāsa, a later disciple in the lineage of Mukunda-deva.⁵ Although the entire text runs to several hundred couplets, in this passage we see not only the traditional imagery of the “river” (*nadī*) as a place of pilgrimage, asceticism, and travel, but also its transformation by Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās into the central “yogic channel” through which the sexual fluids and consciousness of the adept must travel enroute to Sahaja and the blissful abode called The Place of the Hidden Moon (*guptacandrapur*). This excerpt also employs allegory to describe the attempt by the worldly consciousness (*jīvātmā*), called here “Everyman” (*Sabā*), to sneak along the River in order to “steal” the divine rasa from the inner lotuses. Everyman is accompanied by nine other rasa-thieves, which later commentaries identify as the four organs (*indriya*) of action and the five organs of knowledge. Their “gang” thus totals ten thieves. The Supreme Soul (identified with Kṛṣṇa), called the *paramātmā* and in this passage the “God of Totality” (*sarvadevā*), serves as the guardian of the inner realms, and the allegory details how the unqualified entry into the yogic body by the senses and worldly mind are met with darkness and fear. Only by being initiated by the appropriate gurus can the adept truly advance along the River to the inner Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā regions. Most

5 See DIMOCK, *Place of the Hidden Moon*, p. 144 n. 43. Translations of related texts may be found in GLEN ALEXANDER HAYES, “The Necklace of Immortality: A Seventeenth-Century Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Text,” in DAVID GORDON WHITE, ed. *Tantra in Practice, Princeton Readings in Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 317-325, and “The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Traditions of Medieval Bengal,” in DAVID GORDON WHITE, ed. *Religions of India in Practice, Princeton Readings in Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 333-351. The original Bengali verses from which this author has prepared English translations may be found in MANINDRAMOHAN BASU (BOSE), *Sahajiyā sāhitya* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1932), pp. 169-171.

of the verses are clear enough, although there are some esoteric references to subtle physiology including a “Room” (*ghara*) and the revival of the physical body (*śarīra*).

From the Amṛtarasāvalī of Mathurā-dāsa:

Now, to return to the story of the ten thieves.
Listen, and pay attention, for I'll give an account of this.

While it was still very dark out, they went
[along the River] to enter the lotus pond (*sarovara*).
Except that their leader,
Everyman (*Sabā*), was taken prisoner.

So the other nine thieves made their own way to a house.
Still terrified at losing Everyman, they fled the
house for the realm of the devas.

Day and night they pondered the fate of Everyman.
At this time the Supreme Soul (*paramātmā*
sarvadevā) arrived to see them.

The Great One shouted “Everyman! Everyman!,”
calling out again and again.
The nine men, wearing modest clothing,
went outside to meet Him.

“What is your command, oh Lord?
What do you want us to do [to find Everyman]?”
The Great One said: “We must go into the lotus pond!”

“If that be your command, oh Lord,
that is what we shall do!
We are not able to refuse your inviolable command.”

“Although we are still frightened,
we have one more question.
But asking this question will relieve us of fear.”

The Supreme Soul says: “Why are you still
afraid? There should be no more fear!”
They say: “We have lost our leader, Everyman!”

The Great One says:

“Well, where did you lose him?”

They said: “It all happened in a flash [along the River], and we were left sitting here.”

“Calm yourselves down, and just tell me what happened,” [said the Great One].

“If you become agitated, [even] an artist (*kāru*) cannot revive the body (*śarīra*).”

“Everyman went with all of you to the forest of water-lotuses (*kamala*)”

“As he was intoxicated by the *rasa* of the lotuses, he went on [along the River] by himself.”

Then, at dawn, Everyman called out to us.

“Join with Everyman and let’s go thieving!”

For we are just his followers,
and he is our leader!

Although we all came in order to steal [*rasa*], we [nine] stayed by the banks of the River (*nadī*).

Yet upon entering the lotus pond, there was [sudden] darkness!

When we beheld this great darkness, we were seized with immense fear.

Then we arrived at the Room (*ghara*),
wondering about many things.

“But you were not here, so we had fear in our minds.”

“Therefore we beg for mercy at your feet, oh Great One.”
For three days we hid in that Room.

The Supreme Soul says: “He (Everyman) is the greatest of all warrior chiefs!”

“He moves ever so quickly, just like the wind.”

“Before Whom can even the greatest darkness be destroyed?
Due to his fear of Me, he went to another place.”

“Please bring him to my abode; I will
 soothe him with betal-leaf.”
 “And I tell you to say to him: ‘Have no fear.’”

They say: “Where did he go, and where has he stayed?”
 How are we going to find him, they wondered.

“If you want to remain healthy, you must speak with him.
 Failure to return with him means death
 to you and your families.”

In a state of fear, the nine bowed down at His feet.
 Accepting the command, they went off in search of Everyman.

Roaming through each and every country,
 they could not find Everyman.
 In no place could they find even a trace of Everyman.

They searched in so many realms,
 yet still could not find him.
 United in their quest for Everyman, they
 adopted the guise of ascetics (*tapasvī*).

Since they were unable to return to their homes
 due to the threat of the Supreme Soul,
 they retired deep within the forest, following
 the course of the River.

Living alongside the River, the nine men followed
 the dharma of asceticism (*tapasya*).
 They endured many privations among
 the trees, yet never died.

For the River encircles the fourteen realms of the universe,
 And those who fail to dwell along the banks of the River
 will receive the wrath of the Lord of Death (*Yama*).

In subsequent portions of this complicated text, Everyman and the nine thieves are reunited, introduced to beautiful Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā maidens (*nāyikās*) bathing in the River, and eventually learn the advanced sexual sādhanas of the Mukunda-deva lineage. The River has indeed brought them to the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā skies.

Thus, as expressed in esoteric texts like this, the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās developed a distinctive form of Tantra and yogic physiology by adapting the popular forms of Caitanya Bhakti devotionalism and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava aesthetics – which had become one of the dominant religious paradigms in 16th- through 18th-century Bengal – and blended them with earlier Tantric physiology and *sādhana* based upon the kind of exchange of sexual fluids that David Gordon White has discussed.⁶ And, as White points out in *Kiss of the Yogini*, this use of sexual fluids and “hard core” Tantra was not without controversy or opposition from the larger society. Referring to earlier debates over this, White observes:

it was sexual practice and in particular the ritualized consumption of sexual fluids that gave medieval South Asian Tantra its specificity – in other words, that differentiated Tantra from all other forms of religious practice of the period. This, the “hard core” of South Asian Tantra, first appeared as a coherent ritual system – the Kaula – in about the eighth century in central India; and there have been more recent revivals of the original Kaula impetus, in fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Bengal and Nepal in particular. However, throughout most of South Asia, a marginalization of Kaula practice occurred in elite Brahmin circles, from a very early time onward, which sublimated the “hard core” of Kaula practice into a body of ritual and meditative techniques that did not threaten the purity regulations that have always been the basis for high-caste social constructions of the self.⁷

While White discusses the eventual reinterpretation and “sanitizing” of “hard core” Kaula practices by the twelfth century, this same dynamic was very much at work during the time of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, as some practiced the more “hard core” rituals of *vastu* while others adopted the “safer” practices of the Caitanya movement. Since Bengal was a center of trade, pilgrimage, and travel, it is not surprising that these dynamics of Tantra would occur, or that such diverse forms of both Bhakti and Tantra came together under the guidance of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā gurus. Yet there would be an important transformation of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā tradition, under the influence of the Kartābhajās, literally, “worshippers of the boss-man.” This dynamic esoteric group came of age in the time of the British East India Company and has been most thoroughly studied by Hugh Urban.

6 DAVID GORDON WHITE, *Kiss of the Yogini: “Tantric Sex” in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 219–123 and infra.

7 WHITE, *Kiss of the Yogini*, p. 21.

The Kartābhajās of Colonial Bengal

The arrival of the British colonial empire in the 17th century, and the expansion of the East India Company, had profound and lasting consequences upon Bengal, displacing the Muslim rule and initiating any number of socioeconomic and religious changes. Even relatively small esoteric groups like the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, whose outward social appearance might be that of typical Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, were transformed by these larger forces. One of the results was the fascinating Tantric tradition known as the Kartābhajās, As Hugh Urban has shown in his wonderful study, *The Economics of Ecstasy*,⁸ the Kartābhajās were founded by one Ālucānd (d. 1779), regarded as an incarnation of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava godman Caitanya (himself regarded by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as the dual incarnation of both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā). Urban has shown how the Kartābhajās were “perhaps the most important later branch of the Vaiṣṇava-Sahajiyā tradition.”⁹ However, while the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās remained largely an underground esoteric group (perhaps to this day, according to Ramakanta Chakravarti¹⁰), the Kartābhajās had, “by the mid-nineteenth century, grown into a wealthy, powerful, and quite infamous tradition.”¹¹ The Kartābhajās developed along two basic tracks: some, like the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, remained an underground, esoteric Tantric tradition practicing sexual rituals and other antinomian practices. The majority, however, developed a large following among the poor workers and shopkeepers of Bengal using exoteric traditions with pilgrimages sites, wealthy leadership, and an impressive ownership of revenue and land. Their heyday was in the nineteenth century. Today, Urban observes:

Although many pockets of Kartābhajās still survive throughout Calcutta, rural West Bengal, and Bangladesh, and although one can still find many Kartābhajā subjects such as the Sāhebghanīs, Bhagabāniyās, Gurusatyas, and Āuls, the current status of the tradition is a rather sad reflection of its impressive power and wealth at its height in the nineteenth century. Today, the Kartābhajās are

8 HUGH B. URBAN, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). This fine study is accompanied by a useful collection of translations from the major Kartābhajā texts, the *Bhāver Gītā* “*Songs of Ecstasy*”: *Songs of Ecstasy: Tantric and Devotional Songs from Colonial Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). I am indebted to Hugh for his useful insights into the transformations embraced by the Kartābhajās.

9 URBAN, *Economics of Ecstasy*, p. 5.

10 RAMAKANTA CHAKRAVARTI, *Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal* (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1985)

11 URBAN, *The Economics of Ecstasy*, p. 9.

typically remembered only for their large annual festival held in Ghoshpara at the time of Holi, which now survives largely as a kind of carnival event or popular entertainment (as well as the primary source of income for the current family of the Kartā). Ironically, this once profoundly “esoteric” Sahajiyā cult now survives as a relatively innocuous and “exoteric” devotional movement.¹²

Āulcānd and the other 19th-century Kartās composed a number of esoteric verses, known as the *Bhāver Gīta* (“Songs of Ecstasy”), in which they outlined their own reinterpretation of earlier Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava practices and metaphors. To begin with, they felt that 19th-century Bengal was a time of corruption, and that the “marketplace of love” needed a new incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya to “redistribute” the goods of love and truth to the masses. Rich with colonial and mercantile imagery, the *Bhāver Gīta* verses argue that the place of practice must henceforth be the “secret market” (*gupta hāt*), no longer the esoteric “villages” (*grāma*) and “groves” of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā ritual practice. In other words, although the most advanced Kartābhajās would continue to practice versions of the sexual rituals involving manipulation of fluids, their worldview and expressions reflected the dominant context of mercantile Bengal, and the core metaphor of the world as “marketplace” takes the place of more rural imagery. And while the earlier Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās and Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas had emphasized the need for the “pure love” of *prema*, the Kartābhajās typically refer to love as a “good” or “rice” to be traded in the marketplace. Furthermore, while the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās typically referred to the ideal social group of the *sādhu-saṃgha* (“community of sadhus”) or *rasika-saṃgha* (“community of connoisseurs”), the Kartābhajās called themselves the new “poor company” (*gorib kompānī*).

There are many fascinating aspects of the Kartābhajās that Urban explores in his superb works, but it is their transformation from out of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās that concerns us today. Another adaptation concerns that of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava and Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā notion of the sacred locale of Vṛndāvana – central to the Kṛṣṇa-līlā of the *Bhāgavata Purāna* and major Vaiṣṇava texts. For the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās, the inner yogic realms also contain the “eternal” (*nitya*) Vṛndāvana, a microcosmic sacred space; the Kartābhajās, however, actually located this abode as “new” (*nava*) Vṛndāvana and placed it some 20 miles north of Calcutta in the town of Ghoshpara, the residence of the Kartās and their families, site

12 URBAN, *Economics of Ecstasy*, p. 10.

of major rituals, and place of the sacred Hīmsāgar, a small pond associated with many miracles.¹³

Much as the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas believed that the six Gosvāmin-theologians of the Caitanya movement were incarnations of major milkmaidens (*gopīs*) from the *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* (an idea generally accepted by Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās), the Kartābhajās believed that the 22 disciples of Ālucānd were themselves incarnations of the followers of Caitanya (including some, like Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, claimed as “secret Sahajiyās” by Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās). But it was Dulālcānd, “miraculously born” from the wife of a key disciple, Ramsaran Sarasvati, known as Satī Mā, who is regarded as the true genius of the Kartābhajās, as he organizes the group, amasses great wealth, property, and power, and composes many key *Bhāver Gīta* verses.¹⁴

Whereas the ancient Tantric word *Sahaja* had been used as far back as the 8th century by Buddhist Tantrics to refer to the “innate,” “spontaneous” state of liberation, and by Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās to refer to the “together-born” androgynous state of the Sahaja-mānuṣa, Dulālcānd preferred to gloss it as “easy,” or “natural” and cast it as the easy path for the laboring masses of Calcutta. Urban notes that the older Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions were “especially well suited to this changing social context, and which offered a highly marketable set of spiritual commodities.”¹⁵ The Kartābhajās offered a “Religion of Man,” which was essentially a “popularized Tantra,” “a new transformation within the Sahajiyā tradition which invests many older Tantric ideals with broader social implications in the changing context of colonial Bengal.”¹⁶ While the older Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā schools were never socially active, the Kartābhajās, drawing support from the growing underclass of the Imperial City of Calcutta, quite intentionally cast themselves as leaders of poor shopkeepers and laborers, calling them out to Ghoshpara for miracles and festive melās – and contributions.

In my own fieldwork with Kartābhajās back in 1980, and as supported by Urban’s later research, the *dehatattva* of the Kartābhajās is similar to the *rati-sādhana* of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās in that an “inverse” form of sexual intercourse is claimed, whereby the male, using urethral suction, draws the female sexual fluid (*rajas*) into his penis, and on into his own body. However, they seem not to have used the older Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā

13 In spring of 1980, while conducting fieldwork on the Sahajiyās and the Kartābhajās at Ghoshpara, I was taken to a shrine adjacent to the Hīmsāgar, and told that a mute child had been miraculously cured the previous day. Thanks to a holy woman at the site, she could now speak a few words.

14 URBAN, *Economics of Ecstasy*, pp. 52-59.

15 *Ibid.*, p.60.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

riverine imagery of the series of *sarovaras* or “ponds” within the physical body, relying instead on the better-known system of *cakras* and *kuṇḍalinī*. Like the later and modern Bāuls and Bartamān Panthīs,¹⁷ the Kartābhajās believe that the sexual fluids “move” throughout the body during the month, and that the best time for *sādhana* are the days of menstrual flow. The *Bhāver Gīta*, using vivid imagery, sees this as:

A wondrous Royal Goose, He has plunged into
the waters and floats upon them.
Swinging and swaying, He dallies in union
with his beloved Lady Goose.
And I see the dawn of both the wondrous
full Moon and Sun together!
From time to time He appears upon Her Lotus,
in order to adorn her in splendor.¹⁸

Concluding Remarks

So, what are we to make of these fascinating transformations of Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions that appeared with the arrival of the British Empire and colonial mercantilism in Bengal? We have seen enough to make some basic observations about the durability of core Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā images and metaphors, as well as the role of the historical and mercantile context in reshaping those very metaphors. While most of the older Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā texts connected to the lineage of Mukunda-deva describe the soteriological process as a passage along an interior yogic River (*nadī*) leading to the inner realms of “lotus ponds” (*sarovara*) and “villages” (*grāma*) and upward to the skies of Mount Sumeru and the Pond of Indestructibility, the 19th-century Kartābhajās have changed this process to the journeys of the “merchant of love” on the “seas of desire,” carrying the “goods of love” for sale in the “marketplace of the world.” On the deepest level, the antinomian Tantric rituals kept much of their power and esotericism, but the presence of the British, and the growing power of the new Bengali mercantile elites, the *bhadralok*, led to what Urban has called a “sanitizing” or “deodorizing” of the most transgressive Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā Tantric

17 An excellent recent study of the Bāuls and their modern-day descendents may be found in JEANNE OPENSHAW, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

18 *Bhāver Gīta* 413; II.81; in URBAN, *Economics of Ecstasy*, p. 144.

practices. Or, to use David Gordon White's terminology, we find a divergence between the "hard core" and "soft core" aspects of Tantric ritual practice – a process which has been going on for centuries. As a result, the older Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā traditions were forced underground, where, according to some sources, they may still remain today. To be sure (as Jeanne Openshaw demonstrates in *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal*), the modern Bāul practice of the "four moon" sexual *sādhana* of semen, uterine blood, feces, and urine has kept this ancient ritual practice of powerful transformative substances alive – despite the "sanitizing" and "popularizing" processes of modern India. As an historian of religions, I see this as yet another vivid example of the interplay between text and context, and how very old "rivers to the sky" may well have become transformed into pathways of new forms of sacred commerce.

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Modern Bengali Śākta Tāntrikas

Ethnography, Image, and Stereotype

JUNE MCDANIEL

There are many images and stereotypes of Śākta *tāntrikas* in Indian literature and popular culture. Do modern tantric practitioners fit these stereotypes? In this paper, we shall examine a variety of images of *tāntrikas*, and also cite modern Bengali Śākta tantric practitioners on the ways that they understand their own social and religious roles and the ways that they react to the stereotypes around them. This paper will argue that many popular ideas about *tāntrikas* are not accurate to the lives of *tāntrikas* today. It will also emphasize the importance of anthropology of religion as a major methodology for the field of Tantric Studies. These conclusions are based on two years of fieldwork in West Bengal, primarily around the Kolkata area, and sites like Bakreshwar, Bolpur, and Tarapith.¹ I interviewed about two dozen practicing *tāntrikas* who lived in or near these areas, ranging from wandering *sādhus* and *sādhikās*, to Śākta priests, heads of ashrams and college professors. Some identified themselves as *tāntrikas* in public, others were underground, and were found through networks of informants.

The popular images of Śākta *tāntrikas* in West Bengal are largely negative ones: people who are impure, unwashed and intoxicated. We hear stories of tantric madmen who have no moral rules or inhibitions, who seek malicious rather than religious ends, and who drink blood and kill people for sacrifices to Kālī. These stereotypes are popular among both non-tantric Indians and Western scholars of India. The greatest fears of Hindu mainstream informants cluster around the attraction of the various forms of intoxication that tantra can allow, especially for their children.

1 Earlier fieldwork was from 1983-1984 on a grant from the American Institute for Indian Studies. Later fieldwork was from 1993-1994, on a Fulbright Senior Scholar grant. My thanks go to both of these grant organizations.

The concerns about sex, drugs, alcohol and possible harm are not unlike those of Western parents who are worried about ‘cults.’ At the very least, it is feared that *tāntrikas* will waste their children’s time at the burning grounds, smoking cigarettes and arguing against dharmic religious ideas.

Spending time at cremation grounds smoking and talking is indeed a traditional tantric pastime, and there are *tāntrikas* who enjoy frightening local people. But most *tāntrikas* I have encountered are quite serious, and concerned about negative stereotypes. In West Bengal, most Śākta *tāntrikas* are not flamboyant Aghorīs and Kāpālikas wearing skulls and bones. They are rather teachers, writers, housewives, engineers, and temple priests, and many follow other socially-acceptable professions. Even those practicing in isolation in caves and outside of villages tend to look and act like more traditional *sādhus* than skull-draped villains.

Tāntrikas have been threatened both by Communism and by Westernization, and both of these have rejected the renunciant path generally as laziness, portraying *sādhus* as social parasites and homeless people. Tāntrikas in particular have been described as immoral, unstable, and superstitious. Though they do not agree on many things, capitalists and communists both agree on rejecting *tāntrikas*.

Most Bengali Śākta *tāntrikas* interviewed understand themselves to be following an alternative ethical system, and they are bound by a different set of rules than non-practitioners. This is complicated by the perceived necessity of secrecy, and the isolation which comes where there are few people in whom they may confide. Most feel a necessity to take on the protective coloration of being Vedantins, yogis and *bhaktas*.

Many generalizations about *tāntrikas* in modern literature are based on medieval texts. Such literary sources are not a sufficient way to understand a tradition that continues into modern times. We need modern ethnography and techniques from the anthropology of religion as tools to describe and evaluate the accusations and claims that are common in the field of tantra. Tantra must be understood as a living tradition, as well as a historical and literary one, and one with many complexities.

Some Major Images of Tāntrikas

There are four areas of image that we shall examine. One analyzes *tāntrikas* as *sādhus*: do they have gurus, lineages, and a religious community in which they participate? A second area looks at *tāntrikas* as scholars: are they literate, with brahmanical training, do they have sacred texts which are revered and followed? Indeed, do they follow texts at all? A third area deals with gender and the role of women – do modern female *tāntrikas*

reflect the descriptions and roles found in the tantric texts? The fourth popular image of *tāntrikas* is that of villains – are they evil, sex-crazed, manipulative, and power-mad? Do the Sanskrit dramatic texts show accurate portraits of *tāntrikas*?

In the area of Indian anthropology of religion, there is an ongoing debate about whether *sādhus* and renunciants are as separated from society as the traditions state, and whether affiliation is a more important aspect to study than isolation. Louis Dumont described *sādhus* as isolated, with no companions, as the *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads* describe.² However, modern ethnographies, such as those of Richard Burghart and Sondra Hausner, argue for the importance of lineage and guru as alternative families, arguing that *sādhus* are not isolated, and are rather parts of groups.³ As Hausner notes, “The importance of the relationship a *sādhu* has with his or her guru or gurus cannot be overestimated.”⁴

In West Bengal, some *tāntrikas* are *sādhus*, usually following the Kālī Kula tradition of Śākta tantra, but many are householders. Clearly householders have a social network, though their practices are often underground, and not known to other members of the extended family. Such husbands and/or wives usually do practice on their own, and when they can go to see gurus who have initiated them. There are also householders who have never had gurus, but started practice based on books of tantra they have read (this solitary practice seems to have increased since Nababharat Publishers put out their inexpensive translations of Sanskrit texts into Bengali in the 1970’s and 1980’s). Some have relatives who were *tāntrikas*, and learned informally from them, and many Bengali Śāktas can discuss what they have learned from tantric grandfathers and uncles.

It is quite striking how many *tāntrikas* do not have gurus. A large proportion of *tāntrikas* that I interviewed in West Bengal did not follow the tradition of guru and lineage, but rather had a charismatic and experiential form of initiation. Many have never had a guru, being initiated in dream

2 For instance, in the *Nārada-parivṛājaka Upaniṣad*, 141: “Wearing a single garment or none at all, his thoughts fixed on the One, let him always wander without desire and completely alone.” See PATRICK OLIVELLE, *Samnyāsa Upaniṣads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 177.

3 See RICHARD BURGHART, “Renunciation in the Religious Traditions of South Asia,” *Man*, 1983, 18: 635-653. He argues for the importance of social identity as organized by order, clothing, disciple, and the administration and social order of lineages and sects. In SON-DRA HAUSNER’s *Wandering with Sadhus: Ascetics in the Hindu Himalayas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), she describes the family structures within the *Śaṅkara sampradāyas*, and the importance of the *akḥārā* and the guru in the lives of Hindu *sādhus*.

4 HAUSNER, *Ibid.*, p. 73.

and vision, and others had a guru who they met once, but never saw again. Some did not know the guru's name or his lineage, or even which god or goddess he worshipped, and had no idea if the guru had initiated others. Sometimes they knew the general geographical area from which the guru had come, at other times they said the guru was a wanderer, and they had no idea where he might be. These were practicing Śākta *tāntrikas* who were never formally initiated.

The issue of guru and lineage impacts the second area, tantra and scholarship. Are *tāntrikas* literate? Are they dependent on texts for their knowledge and ritual practice? How important are the texts that Western scholars of tantra study?

The most important text for Bengali *tāntrikas* that I interviewed during fieldwork was the *Kulārṇavatantra*. Many Śākta tantric practitioners interviewed told me that in their opinion the *Kulārṇavatantra* was the most important Śākta tantric text, some said it was the only text that they accepted.⁵ While Śiva does most of the talking in the *Kulārṇavatantra*, and the highest state is often called “Śiva-hood” (*śivatva*), the text is still understood as a Śākta text by many practicing Bengali *tāntrikas*, for Śiva and Śakti are ultimately the same deity, and their separate forms are only a superficial difference. Both deities are to be worshiped together as a unity. However, it is a highly ironic text – it routinely makes rules, and then says not to listen to them. It is especially interesting in the area of textual knowledge, in which it says that the text comes from the heart of *yoginīs*, and should be worshipped (KT 103-104) but also says that the *kula tāntrika* should not follow texts.

More specifically, textual study is stated to be inferior to spiritual insight. The *śāstras* are said to delude people, and do not give real knowledge, though many people are fooled by them and spend their time in arguments. As the tantra states in chapter 1:

87. O Beloved! Many ignorant people fall into the deep well of the six philosophies, but they are controlled by their instincts and cannot attain the highest knowledge.

88. They are drowning in the dreadful ocean of the Vedas and *śāstras*, and they are driven in one direction and then another, by philosophical discussions and debates, which are like terrible waves and crocodiles.

89. (There are) people who have read the Vedas, Āgamas, and Purāṇas, but who do not know the highest truth. All their knowledge is like the cawing of crows, and nothing more.

5 References will come from the *Kulārṇavatantra* (*Mūla, Tīkā o Baṅgānubādsaha*), ed. UPEN-DRAKUMAR DAS (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1383 BS/1976).

90. O Goddess, they turn their backs on truth, and read books day and night, always worrying about what they should be learning, saying this is knowledge or that is knowledge.

91. They know literary style, syntax, and poetry, and ways to make writing attractive, but they are fools, and they are confused and worried...

94. They chant the Vedas and fight among themselves, but they do not know the highest truth, as a cooking ladle does not know the taste of the things in it.

Studying sacred texts does not give the seeker what he needs, which is insight and ecstatic consciousness. The *Kulārṇavatāntra* condemns scholars further in chapter 1:

97. Discussion of ideas cannot destroy the illusions of the world, as talk of a lamp will not get rid of the darkness.

98. A person who studies but does not gain true wisdom is like a blind man looking at his face in a mirror. Only people with experiential wisdom can really understand the *śāstras*.

Such experiential wisdom does not require texts. As the tantra notes in chapter 2:

28. As dream visions give a sleeping person knowledge without any other instruction, so spiritual knowledge (*kulajñāna*) arises without instruction, due to spiritual practice in past lives, and the soul's development.

While the *śāstras* are a useful beginning, they are not necessary, as chapter 2 further states:

78. Even without knowledge of the Vedas and *śāstras*, one who knows the Kula is omniscient, while a scholar of Vedas, *śāstras* and *āgamas*, who is ignorant of the Kula, knows nothing.

79. (O Goddess) only your devotees know the Kula's glory, and others do not, as the chakora-bird knows the taste of moonbeams, but other birds do not.

Still, the *Kulārṇavatāntra* speaks of the importance of the lineage and guru, and chapter 12 focuses on how to behave towards the guru. The disciple should worship the guru until he is pleased, for then he will destroy all sins (KT 12.20). When the guru is satisfied, the gods (such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa, as well as sages and yogis) will give their grace (KT 12.22). The guru and his wife should be looked on as one's own parents, as are the gods and their wives (KT 12.35). Devotion to the guru is the only path to liberation (KT 12.40), and when Śiva is angry the guru can act as the savior, but when the guru is angry, nobody can save (the disciple) (KT 12.49). Thus we see the emphasis within the text upon the importance of the guru. It also speaks of the *Kula dharma* as the highest teaching, the Kula followers

as the best *sādhus*, and in general the importance of the lineage for which this book is written.

Initiation into the Kula lineage is also important. The text notes that there is no liberation without initiation (KT 14.3). Initiation may be by touch, sight, and thought, without ritual as well as by ritual (KT 14.34-35). There are various rules for times of initiation, who is worthy, and what initiation accomplishes. It gives a necessary transformation: “As iron struck by mercury becomes gold, so the soul which is struck by *dikṣā* attains Śivahood (*śivatva*, or becoming one with Śiva) (KT 14.79).

Thus, if we follow the text, the guru and initiation are vital, and the text itself is the guide to liberation. Is this followed? Not always. This violates the rules of the major tantric texts, which demand a guru. It also violates the popular traditions of both of the major Śākta tantric traditions, the Śrī Kula and the Kālī Kula. Yet it curiously also follows the text, which tells practitioners that following texts is unnecessary.

We should also note the problem of literacy in tantra. In many villages, historically it was only the Brahmins (and sometimes other high-caste people) who learned to read. Yet the *Kulārṇavatantra* emphasizes the role of other castes in the tantric *cakra*. For instance, in chapter 8 it notes that people from all castes in the *bhairavī cakra* are considered to be twice-born, and there is no discrimination between castes during the ritual. Whether male or female, *caṇḍāla* or high-born *dvija*, there is no prejudice within the group, for everyone is considered to be like Śiva (KT 8.96-97). As the waters of various streams become one after merging into the Ganges River, so all people within the *cakra* gain the same status. As water is mixed with milk and it becomes like milk, so there is no discrimination between castes in the *cakra* ritual (KT 8.98-99). Indeed, in the midst of the circle, all men become like Śiva, and all women like Kuleśvarī (KT 8.102). Anybody who does discriminate between castes will be devoured by *yoginīs* and cursed by the Devī (KT 8.104). After the *cakra* is finished, the union is over, and people return to their original castes and their separation (KT 8.96).

This emphasis on caste discrimination implies that people from various castes are participating. If we recognize the limited range of literacy at the time that this tantra was written (around the beginning of the second millennium CE),⁶ it seems likely that many participants could not have read it. These would be people learning from a guru, by oral tradition, or in some other fashion than reading.

6 Scholars frequently debate the dates of texts. Here I am following the dates given by FREDERICK SMITH, in his book *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 386.

There are two major types of Śākta tantric practice followed in West Bengal, and I have called these folk and classical tantra.⁷ Folk tantra is charismatic and experiential, and does not require guru or text. Classical tantra is traditional, with a guru, lineage, set of sacred texts and their commentaries, and the necessity of Sanskrit. As in Protestant Christianity, there is a distinction between text-based and popular or charismatic forms of religion. These are not rivals, but are on different ends of the tantric spectrum. Classical tantra has practitioners who are literate, usually in both Sanskrit and Bengali, which has traditionally meant high-caste men. Today, classical *tāntrikas* often take the role of scholars, *paṇḍits* who only study the religion from an academic perspective. Folk tantra usually has illiterate or semi-literate practitioners, called by goddesses in dreams and visions. Some have left villages to follow *sādhus* and learn healing from local tribal *ojhās* and *gunins*; many are low-caste. They may act as traditional *sādhus*, or they may be devotees or non-brahmin priests of various deities. There are some high-caste folk *tāntrikas*, but they are rare, and usually female. Often folk *tāntrikas* make a living as healers, astrologers and gem merchants.

The Kālī Kula form of classical Śākta tantra survives in West Bengal in fragmentary form. It may be found in the practice of some Sanskrit *paṇḍits*, in underground practitioners (who are often professional people otherwise), and in small urban circles who have managed to find a guru with some knowledge of the tradition. But it is largely a lost tradition, due to the dissolution of traditional lineages and the scarcity of modern gurus willing to initiate disciples.

As a result, many practicing Bengali Śākta *tāntrikas* have never been initiated into any recognized lineage. In some cases, tantric fathers or mothers have initiated children, and the term “kula” is understood to mean one’s own family lineage, rather than a guru lineage. However, many householder *tāntrikas* have refused to initiate their children, feeling that this religious affiliation would make life too difficult for their children, and the children would have to deal with prejudice and poverty. As one tantric practitioner father told me, he wanted his son to work in an office, and he refused to initiate him. However, if tantric *sādhanā* was in the son’s blood, he would find a guru on his own. If parents or relatives refuse to initiate, the family’s tantric *kula* may end. Alternatively, some practicing Śākta *tāntrikas* learned about the tradition from their parents and grandparents’ libraries, for sometimes practitioners will have a collection of tattered

⁷ See my book, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapter 2 on tantric and yogic Śāktism.

books and palm-leaf manuscripts hidden in the house, which the children find.

Novice *tāntrikas* try to figure things out for themselves, or go to the local Kālī priest (sometimes Śākta priests may also perform tantric *sādhanā*), or to *sādhus* at the local burning ground, or sometimes even to Vaiṣṇavas or college professors. There is a trial-and-error spirit to many of the modern generation of *tāntrikas*, and some try to incorporate Western scientific and philosophical ideas (for instance, equating Śakti with nature or natural law).

Tantric practitioners that I interviewed in West Bengal entered Śākta tantra in a variety of ways. As examples, S.K. Ray learned from his dead father's library (although both of his parents were practitioners, they would not initiate or teach him). B. Ghosh learned during nights spent smoking and taking drugs with wandering *sādhus* at the local burning ground. T. Goswami learned Śākta tantra from the ghost of his dead grandfather. R. Mukherji was an engineer who met with other practitioners in a tantric study group in South Calcutta, originally learning from a writer acting as a tantric guru. Since the writer's death, he and the group have been listening to the writer's taped lectures and discussing them. P.C. Brahmachari learned about tantric ritual from dreams of Kālī. S. Satyananda learned from a call from the goddess Bhavatārīṇī, pulling him away from Vedanta philosophy. T. Goswami learned the rituals from his grandfather's books. S. Sengupta was a journalist, and learned about tantra from people he interviewed. The samnyāsini Gauri Ma studied tantra from other practitioners at a *śākta pūṭha*. She is head of an ashram that is publically Śaiva. Lakshmi Ma is a holy woman following Śākta bhakti, and learned about tantra from visions of the goddess Tārā that she had as a child. Jayashri Ma was initiated in her teens by an IAS officer. The officer was a family friend and an underground practitioner, who had a circle of tantric disciples, and Jayashri herself has an underground circle of male disciples. None of these people studied with classical *paṇḍits*, and none were willing to express their tantric inclinations publically (because of the Bengali political situation). Indeed, a Kālī priest told me of a politician whom he initiated, who would come at night to do *pūjā* to Kālī in order to get re-elected. By day, the politician was an atheist Communist official.

As for the role of women in tantra, living female *tāntrikas* generally do not fit their official descriptions. According to most tantric texts, women are beautiful, submissive, sensual, and eager to please both partner and guru. If we look again at the *Kulārnavatantra*, it writes about women as most tantras do. The Kula woman is "beautiful, young, serious, a follower of Kulācāra, obedient to rules, without suspicions, devoted, smiling, soft-spoken... pleasing in personality and of good character" (KT

7.46-48). More generally, female Kula *tāntrikas* are described as beautiful, willing young women, with auspicious signs, fragrant, wearing beautiful clothes and full of the joy of youth (*yauvanollāsa*) (KT 9. 40-41). Some texts describe the beauty of their faces, bodies, clothing and ornaments in great detail. The *Kulacūḍāmaṇītantra* talks about their silk clothing, flowers, perfumes, jewels and garlands⁸ and the *Māyātantra* emphasizes the importance of sexual ritual (*lata sādhanā*).⁹

However, the majority of female *tāntrikas* that I found were older women, strong, aggressive, not willing to put up with the problems of men. Some were bald and muscular, others carried tridents or other weapons with which to defend themselves. Most were totally celibate. As I was told, tantra does not mean being a silent partner to a man who does the meditation. Tantra is a set of *bīja mantras*, visualizations, and *sādhanās*, which transcend life and death through identification with the goddess Kālī (who is usually portrayed pictorially in West Bengal as either without a husband, stepping on her husband, or with a husband who is tiny in comparison to her). Some female *tāntrikas* interviewed would fit into the ‘unfit’ category in the *Kulārṇavatāntra*; women who were ugly, old, fearful, or even sleepy. (KT 7.49-51)

Female Bengali *tāntrikas* have lives which are very different from those described in the tantric texts, and were celibate tantric *yoginīs*, *gṛhī sādhikāś* (holy women who had been married but left their husbands and families), tantric wives, professional consorts (where tantra is a way to make a living), and celibate wives and widows who include tantric practices as part of devotion to a goddess.¹⁰ As people age in India, many take vows of celibacy, and live their lives with prayer and minor forms of renunciation. Most female *tāntrikas* interviewed during fieldwork were not only celibate, but insistently so. Several said that tantric meditation involves purity and concentration, and that desire would be a distraction and would cause them to fall.

For Gauri Ma, head of an ashram in Bakreshwar, *tantra sādhanā* revealed a person’s “inner history,” giving the power to “see inside,” to watch the inner life of the spirit. The goal is to gain Śakti, to have her dwell in the heart. As she stated, “It is Śakti who enlightens you, who brings you to the highest states. Śiva is as useless as a corpse, and that is why he

8 See *The Kulacūḍāmaṇītantra and the Vāmakeśvaratantra, with the Jayaratha Commentary*, trans. LOUISE M. FINN (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), pp. 95-96.

9 *Māyā Tantram*, ed. JYOTIRLAL DAS (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1385/1978, 12.4-8). Sanskrit text with Bengali translation.

10 A more extended description of these categories may be found in my book, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, p. 112-113.

is portrayed as one in the iconography.” In Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, the male and female aspects of the person were inwardly united, and there was no necessity for any union between them in the physical world. The *pañcatattva* or forbidden rituals of tantra are symbolic, with wine representing control of the breath, and ritual sex representing the sort of union seen in yogic meditation. No outward practice is necessary for a strong and disciplined *tāntrika*, for tantric rituals are symbolic of inner transformations.¹¹

For Jayashri Ma, female *guru* of a group of male devotees, *tantra sādhanā* is a way of getting a fused identity with Śakti, which lasts over a lifetime. Jayashri was initiated by her tantric guru while they sat on matched sets of human skulls, and with the *mantra* came the direct entrance of the goddess Ādya Śakti into her heart. The *mantras*, *mudrās*, trances and rituals were ways of preparing her body for Śakti’s entrance. Union with Ādya Śakti is the highest state possible, for she is identical with *brahman*, and mother of the universe. Jayashri Ma is a celibate tantric guru, who no longer needs to perform rituals because the goddess has already taken up residence in her heart.¹²

For Archanapuri Ma, *tantra sādhanā* is a devotional practice. Archanapuri is head of an ashram in Jadavpur, and a celibate member of a Ramakrishna lineage. Her guru was originally Vedantin, but later became a devotee of Śakti in the form of Kālī Bhavatārīṇī. He performed tantric meditations and offered blood to Kālī Bhavatārīṇī, and he taught Archanapuri Ma many meditative techniques. Her understanding of tantra is heavily infused with devotion, and she finds celibacy necessary for both service and religious love.¹³ Her ashram consists primarily of male renunciants, though there are groups of widows who study Vedanta and Kālī bhakti, sing *Kālī kīrtan* hymns, and perform social service.

Thus, in terms of sexual availability and submissiveness to male practitioners, many female *tāntrikas* do not fit the textual descriptions. The examples described above all describe celibate female *tāntrikas* who lead groups of male devotees.

As for negative stereotypes, portraying *tāntrikas* as villains and criminals, these largely come from outsiders to tantric traditions. Mainstream Hindu traditions have not taken well to the violation of dharmic action in tantric groups, and Victorian and colonialist writers had all sorts of negative things to say about *tāntrikas*. Throughout nineteenth-century colonialist and Orientalist literature, we find *tāntrikas* described in horrific

11 See Ibid, p. 113.

12 See Ibid, pp. 138-141.

13 These interviews may be found in greater detail in Ibid, pp. 113-114.

terms. But they are not alone, Indian authors have also used *tāntrikas* as villains in plays and stories. Perhaps the most famous is the eighth-century Sanskrit drama *Mālatīmādhava*, in which the heroine is almost sacrificed to the goddess Cāmuṅḍā by Kāpālīka ascetics.

This negative profiling has partly been the *tāntrikas*' own fault. Some *tāntrikas* really do enjoy being weird outsiders, scandalizing the locals with wild behavior and acting outrageously. Others are simply victims of stereotyping. In fieldwork in modern West Bengal, I found five major negative assumptions: 1. Tāntrikas are insane. 2. Tāntrikas are black magicians and hypnotists. 3. Tāntrikas are seducers of women, and sacrifice virgins. 4. Tāntrikas are cannibals. 5. Tāntrikas corrupt the young.

Are these accusations true? I can only answer for the *tāntrikas* that I have met and interviewed (perhaps a dozen in some depth, maybe two dozen superficially). Doubtless some *tāntrikas* are insane, and I encountered one traumatized soul roaming around a burning ground. He looked anxious, and did not speak, just mumbled to himself. But he was the only one that I encountered that I would call insane. One informant spoke of his mad 'Uncle Tāntrika,' who screamed at night and frightened the children. Most *tāntrikas* interviewed acted more or less like other *sādhus*, or were gainfully employed and practicing tantric meditation in their spare time. There may well be tantric *sādhus* who were insane, wanderers who did not fit well into society. The *sādhu* lifestyle gives a freedom to people who do not fit into society's requirements, who in the West would be institutionalized, or living on the street. But I did not encounter them.

Are *tāntrikas* black magicians? Some tantric texts give instructions for the *kṛṣṇa śaṭkarma* rituals, which include mind control and paralysis, but I never met anybody that practiced them. Nor had any sacrificed any virgins (some noted that Kālī does not accept female sacrifice, even in goats). All of the *tāntrikas* interviewed either ignored those rituals, or said that they were only suitable for desperate emergencies. None could think of any actual situations in which such rituals had been used.

Have *tāntrikas* seduced women? I heard a few stories of young women who ran off with tantric *sādhus*, but in these cases they were forced into arranged marriages, betrothed to elderly men that they did not love, and sought a way to escape. Sometimes widows are also said to take up with tantric *sādhus*, especially widows unwelcome in their husband's joint family house. Though the women went willingly, these tantric *sādhus* are indeed violating ascetic tradition, by living like householders.

Are *tāntrikas* cannibals? Occasionally in West Bengal one hears of an Aghorī, or a non-traditional practitioner like Vāmakṣepa, who claims to have eaten some human flesh. However, I never met any who had tried it, and on the whole other *tāntrikas* found it unnecessary and unappealing.

Most *tāntrikas* interviewed felt that it was symbolic of non-attachment to the body, only to be practiced if one suffered from an unusually strong attachment. Nobody personally knew anybody who was practicing this.

There are some tantric extremists, who cause the tantric moderates to be shunned, and these included Aghorīs and Kāpālikas. Members of these sects carry skulls, wear rags from burning grounds, drink wine, and act drunk and disorderly. They inspire both disgust and fascination in the general public, and most people avoid them. For people who have not done much research in the area, they become the norm. It gets assumed that drinking from skulls and wearing rags from the burning grounds is appropriate daily behavior for *tāntrikas*. However, these are rare in West Bengal – no informants knew of any in the area, and I did not encounter any of them. But the responses of fear and avoidance that they generate can carry over to the tantric moderates, who do none of these things,

Are *tāntrikas* bad influences on the youth, luring them into a life of wandering? This has always been an accusation of *sādhus* and yogis – even back into Siddhartha Gautama’s time; the Buddha’s father wanted him kept away from wandering renunciants in case he wanted to join them. If a parent wants a son to work in an office or join government service, clearly anybody who tells him to wander around meditating is a bad influence.

All of these images have resulted in *tāntrikas* being outside of society, as objects of fear and fascination. But we should recognize that there are many kinds of Bengali Śākta *tāntrikas*.

The Results of Tantric Images and Stereotypes

The negative profiling of *tāntrikas* has inspired a host of problems. In modern West Bengal, there is prejudice from both modern communists and the various rationalist movements, which emphasize Western education and scientific materialism. This means that an admitted *tāntrika* cannot be a teacher or a government worker, or even a priest in some areas. The Bengali ‘Science and Rationalists’ Association of India’ (*Bharatīya Vijñān o Yuktibādī Samiti*) has been attacking and challenging *tāntrikas*, as part of their aim: “to eradicate superstition and blind faith” which are a part of religious or spiritual teachings.¹⁴ Their motto “*alaukik naḥ laukik*” (nothing is supernatural) motivates challenges to claims of supernatural power, in healing, curses, predicting death, *vāstu śāstra*, and other areas. Many

14 See their website, www.humanists.net.

folk *tāntrikas* make their living in this way, so they have been targeted by these groups.

Most tantric *sādhus* are poor, without strong ties to institutions, and easy to name as scapegoats for local problems. They are already viewed with suspicion by others – they are perfect victims. They are easily accused of being social parasites, leeches, malingerers who sit around all day doing nothing useful, figures of ignorance and superstition when it comes to communist philosophy and materialism. They have frequently been blamed for West Bengal's poverty.

In criticizing the *sādhus*, we have an interesting truce between Bengali communist philosophy and Western science. The Rationalist Association of India, another group which bases itself on Western science and knowledge, has also been involved in the accusations. However, the interests of the Rationalists are academic rather than political – they think religion is bad science, and want to prove to villagers that their local religious healers are quacks, and that they should depend on Western medicine and scientific understanding instead. I was also told by practicing tantric *sādhus* in many different towns in West Bengal about persecutions from communist groups, and this was echoed by schoolteachers and administrators of certain Bengali public schools. It is an unusual form of persecution, in which the *sādhus* are attacked by children.

According to an elementary school principal and his associates interviewed in Birbhum, there were CPIM (Communist Party of India, Marxist) youth groups, and also Congress Party youth groups at the elementary schools. The children must choose which to join. If the children join the communist youth groups, their activities are determined from outside the school – from representatives in the area who are in charge of the school groups. Sometimes the groups are specifically linked with a 'scientific' world view, and called "anti-superstition clubs" (the English words are used). The organizers tell the children to patrol the areas in each village where *sādhus* traditionally rest – the cave, tree, house, or area of a valley which has been put aside for the use of wandering *sādhus*. When the patrolling children see a *sādhū* come there to rest, they are to throw rocks at him, call him names, pull his hair and clothing, and chase him away. It is their responsibility to make sure that superstition does not come to their village, and children can be very persuasive in showing dislike.

No *sādhū* wishes to fight with children, so the children are generally successful. But if a *sādhū* is persistent, and stays in trance ignoring them, the organizers may then call out the goondas. These are generally large people of violent temperament, only too willing to have the opportunity to beat people for a price. Most tantric *sādhus* with whom I spoke were very frightened of the goondas. Some spoke of fellow *sādhus* who disappeared

permanently after beatings by goondas (they did not specify whether these people were killed or exiled – they were simply gone). I heard such stories from about a dozen Śākta *sādhus* in different areas of West Bengal.

For *tāntrikas* who are not renunciants *sādhus*, but rather gainfully employed, absolute secrecy about religious belief and practice must be maintained – otherwise the adult wing of the persecutions emerges. Working men and women are threatened by people who call their place of business or write letters to their employers, threatening them for hiring politically-unacceptable people, describing in embroidered detail their evil actions and habits, and if necessary, threatening strikes (*bandhs*). Employed *tāntrikas* with whom I spoke swore me to secrecy, because they feared the loss of their jobs. They said that the communist politicians in the area would destroy their reputations, and they would be believed, because the reputation of *tāntrikas* has been so negative in India.

Tāntrikas may be professors, engineers, schoolteachers, housewives, artists, journalists and renunciants. Some are married, some live within large extended families, some live alone or in ashrams or with a few relatives. Some are priests, worshipping the bhakti Kālī by day, and the tantric Kālī by night, some are *sādhus* and *sādhikās*. They are not all criminals and murderers – many are the Bengali middle class, often Brahmins and respected renunciants. Because their practice tends to be largely underground, they are ignored by scholars. Thus, it becomes easy to generalize all *tāntrikas* into skull-wearing madmen.

Why do people become *tāntrikas*? Some follow practices handed down in the family, from parents, but especially from grandparents. Some are bored by ordinary *pūjās*, and are looking for depth. Some have spent time with *sādhus*, smoking bidis down at the burning grounds, learning methods that they believe will give them spiritual insight. Some were initiated by the family *kula-guru*, and practice the worship into which they were initiated. Some began as Vaiṣṇavas or non-denominational Brahmins, and had visions and dreams in which they were called to practiced with *mantra* and *yantra*. Some just bought the ritual handbooks sold down at the *śākta pīthas* and temples, and started practicing on their own to see if the meditations worked.

We should note that the concern of most Westerners studying tantra, whether they were scholars or people doing weekend workshops on tantra, was sexuality. This was not the concern of my informants. Sex was an instinct that kept you from attaining the highest spiritual states, though you could reach some worthwhile intermediate states that way. But ideally, you should conquer the instinct by practicing detachment in the midst of sex. The goal was not to have better sex – to attain the ‘valley orgasm’ so beloved of women’s magazines. The goal was to overcome sexual

distraction in order to gain spiritual insight. In West Bengal, though, the real tantric preoccupation was death. Life was not about pleasure – people were here to seek eternity. Overcoming sexual desire was only the first stage, it was overcoming death by immersion in the rituals and environments of death that was the fascination of Bengali Śākta tantra. Everybody wanted to go practice at the burning grounds – either they had done so, or planned to do it. That was what gained respect for a tantric practitioner. This was really going to encounter Kālī.

Many Western writers emphasize the influence of the colonialists, claiming that modern Hindu writers on tantra avoid writing about tantric sexuality only because of the Victorian repression they have adopted from their schooling. This does not seem to be the case for my female interviewees. They had no objections to discussing sex. They thought men were on the whole rather selfish and lustful, spoiled and indulged by their parents with food and attention, while female children had years of self-denial. This made women more naturally able to meditate, better *tāntrikas* and yogis, while men were still slaves of their own desires and continually trying to justify them. Sexual ritual was a way to break down the power of instinct, by working against desire within desire (phrasing it as both *kāma* and *icchā*). No *tāntrikas*, male or female, cited the British, or even the Muslims – they were interested in the older traditions of yoga and Vedānta. Some wanted perfection – *siddhi lābh karā* – and some wanted *darśan* of Ādya Śakti, but sexuality was not a topic that seemed to bring up anxiety or shame. It was just one of those problems that needed special rituals.

This approach is not Victorian or colonialist – it is ascetic. There is a difference. Sex is not a repressed force ready to blow the lid off anxious people. It is a direction of spirit which is not intense enough. Sex is not transcendent enough to get to the gods, to the state of *śivatva* or *brahma-jñāna* as described in the tantras. Sex could only lead to worlds of pleasure and power. Tantra allows these as a part of the path, because it is open and accepting, and people all have their own methods of exploration. But to face death, one's own mortality, that is where the *mantra* and *yantra* and *mudrā* can call down the goddess, to possess you or lead your soul to union with her. This was the Bengali tantric focus on death and transcendence.

Conclusions: On Tantric Studies as a Developing Field

In the study of tantra, the fears and prejudices sensationalized by media past and present have discouraged ethnography. Tantric practice becomes a sort of Rorschach blot, fitting any model from Indian sex education to zombies returning from the dead.

But if we do make use of ethnography, what can we find out about tantric belief and practice? It may be that in times of royal patronage, when many tantric texts were written, Bengali Śākta *tāntrikas* followed the instructions in tantric texts, and had traditional gurus, initiations, and lineages, and followed a liturgical year of rituals suitable for Śākta, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions. However, as the status and organization of tantric groups disintegrated over time, both the learning and practice have become fragmented. There are no longer set techniques for finding a guru and studying as a disciple. People learn about tantric rituals on their own, from books they can find, or from relatives who practice underground, or from dreams and visions or from wandering *sādhus*. This non-standardized religious education results in a wide variety of understandings of tantric theology. It also results in a lack of social organization, and the sort of solitary practice seen in the West in socially-condemned religions like Wicca.

The combination of inconsistent training and dependence on dreams and spontaneous religious experiences has caused the Bengali Śākta tantric tradition to move in a direction called *aśāstrīya* by several of my informants. By this they mean something similar to modern Western understandings of the term ‘charismatic,’ in which people are ‘called’ to the tradition by deities rather than by classical religious education. Tantric ritual is not learned through the *śāstras*, or even through tantric texts that define themselves as anti-*śāstra*, but rather through experiences that have nothing to do with the *śāstras*, and are dependent on personal relationships between the goddess and the practitioner. This may reflect the prevalence of *bhakti* in West Bengal over the past five hundred years, or it may be due to the lack of access to traditional forms of learning. Indeed, among informants, the ‘ideal *tāntrikas*’ are those who have close personal relationships with the goddess, or who are believed to be inspired by her to write poetry and songs. Tantric magicians may be valued for healing and miracles, but the idealized *tāntrikas* are also *bhaktas*.

Tantra is not monolithic – it involves a wide range of belief systems, rituals and social organizations. A strictly historical view, which focuses on medieval texts, cannot speak for the whole of a modern living religious tradition. And it is a tradition under siege, with gurus who cannot find suitable disciples and who are letting branches of tantric belief and practice die out. We need field research to investigate new trends in the field, and describe variants before they disappear in the face of expanding Westernization.

Without field research we often have stereotyping. This leaves the study of living *tāntrikas* to the vagaries of the New Age movement. I have heard much more about modern *tāntrikas* from New Age healers trying to learn

Ayurveda and tantric ‘secrets,’ and feminist therapists who want to ‘heal sexual wounds’ and promote people having better sex lives, than from academic researchers. These people influence modern tantra, for many *tāntrikas* wish to change with the times. Tāntrikas used to get advanced training from tribal *ojhās* and *gunins*, and tribal deities were viewed as allies rather than rivals of the Hindu deities. Today we have tantric universities, tantric feng shui, tantric shamanism, tantric occultism, tantra as secret information from other planets, and in general tantra which reflects the concerns of visiting foreigners. But academics cannot legitimately condemn New Age writers if they do not know how the traditions have developed into the modern world.

As the study of religion matures, we find many new methodologies to be useful. Are concerns like persecution and job problems a legitimate part of tantric studies? Or should the study of tantra be limited to sacred texts and literature which fits more or less into a set of tantric canons? This is a similar problem to the study of Christianity in the modern world – should it study the Bible and its commentaries, or issues like modern Christian ritual, ethics, and conversion techniques as well? It was this debate that split the major group studying religion in the United States into the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature. It is an ongoing debate whether religion should be primarily a study of theology and history, or whether there is a role for the social sciences in the study of religion. The field of Tantric Studies is on this cusp – and I would argue for Tantra to be studied through the social science approaches of the American Academy of Religions, as well as the textual and philological approaches of the Society for Biblical Literature.

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Transformations in the Textual Tradition of Dhūmāvātī

Changes in the Reception of the Tantric Mahāvidyā-Goddess in Ritual, Function, Iconography, and Mythology

XENIA ZEILER

The Daśamahāvidyās in Textual Representation and Ritual

Dhūmāvātī is closely connected to the conception of the Daśamahāvidyās. This group of ten individual goddesses appears relatively late in the Hindu Tantric pantheon. The exact dating is still subject of debate – the first textual appearance is dated from the late 10th century up to the 15th century, depending on the dating of the sources in question¹. The group's establishment and firm positioning in the Tantric pantheon are generally dated in a period between the 14th and 16th century².

1 According to DAVID KINSLEY, *The Ten Mahāvidyās. Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 1 and 253, fn. 1, the group first appears in the late 10th-century *Kāmakalākhaṇḍa of Mahākālasaṃhitā*, including all members except Dhūmāvātī. Kinsley does not provide any further information on his proposed dating of this source. For the contents, background and problematic dating of the *Mahākālasaṃhitā* see TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 78-80. On the other end of the chronological scale ALEXIS SANDERSON gives a dating based on substantial textual studies and sees the first reliable dating for an appearance of the Daśamahāvidyās in the 15th-century text *Sarvollāsanatantra* (3.10-29); see ALEXIS SANDERSON, "Atharvavedins in Tantric Territory: The Āṅgirasakalpa Texts of the Oriya Paippalādins and their Connection with the Trika and the Kālikula. With Critical Editions of the Parāṅgavidhi, the Parāmantravidhi, and the *Bhadrakālīmantravidhi-prakaraṇa," in *The Atharvaveda and its Paippalādaśākhā. Historical and Philological Papers on a Vedic Tradition*, Geisteskultur Indiens 11, Indologica Halensis (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2007), 236, fn. 89.

2 C. MACKENZIE BROWN dates the group "probably after the 11th century" (C. MACKENZIE BROWN, "The Tantric and Vedāntic Identity of the Great Goddess in the Devī Gītā of the Devī-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa", in *Seeking Mahādevī. Constructing Identities of the Hindu Great Goddess*, ed. TRACY PINTCHMAN, Albany: Albany University Press, 2001, 25).

The ten individual *devīs*, described as predominantly fierce and often even as terrifying, include: 1) goddesses with a considerable significance outside of the group as well as beyond the Tantric context – namely, Kālī, Tripurasundarī (as Śrīvidyā) and Kamalā (as Lakṣmī); 2) goddesses with limited significance beyond the Tantric context – namely, Tārā, Bhuvaneśvarī and (Tripurā-)Bhairavī; and 3) goddesses who almost never appear apart from the group and who almost always stay connected to the Tantric context – namely, Chinnamastā, Dhūmāvati, Bagalāmukhī and Mātāṅgī. It is important to note that, of course, those members who also appear outside the Tantric literature and outside the context of the group still display a unique character as Mahāvīdyā³. The group of the Daśamahāvīdyās appears quite prominently in several Tantric texts, but is seldom referred to in Purāṇic literature. This seems consistent, considering that its individual members in literature and iconography, to a great extent, embody visualisations and identities considered obscure and even subversive in non-Tantric Hinduism. Some of the *devīs* do possess benign, *saumya*, characteristics. However, it is clear that they are fundamentally rooted in a Tantric world of thought and appear largely in Tantric texts. Important sources such as *Lakṣmītantra*, *Mahānirvāṇatantra*, *Rudrayāmala*, *Śaktisaṃgamatantra* or the *Tantrasāra* of Kṣṇāṇḍa Āgamavāgīśa characterize the *devīs* as members of the Daśamahāvīdyās. In their respective mythology and ritual they are often connected with radical attributes, habits and conditions regarded

P. C. BAGCHI sees the process of establishment completed in the *Sammohatantra*, which he dates in the 14th century (P. C. BAGCHI, “Evolution of the Tantras”, in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, vol. IV, ed. HARIDAS BHATTACHARYYA, Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956, 221-222). According to TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, this work is identical with the chapter *Chinnamastākhaṇḍa* of *Śaktisaṃgamatantra*, to be dated in the second half of the 16th century or even in the first half of the 17th century (TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981, 70). RAVI S. SINGH and RANA P. B. SINGH also regard the 14th century as a possible date (RAVI S. SINGH and RANA P. B. SINGH, “Goddesses in Kāśī (Vārāṇasī). Spatial Patterns and Symbolic Orders”, in *Visualizing Space in Banaras. Images, Maps, and the Practice of Representation*, eds. MARTIN GAENZLE and JÖRG GENGNAGEL, *Ethno-Indology* 4, Heidelberg Studies in South Asian Rituals, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006, 57). MARK DYCZKOWSKI places the beginnings of an extensive influence of the group in the 16th century (MARK DYCZKOWSKI, *A Journey in the World of the Tantras*, Varanasi: Indica Books, 2004, 221, fn. 37). Problems of dating the group are also addressed by GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi*, vol. 1, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 42 and SANJUKTA GUPTA, “The Worship of Kālī according to the Toḍala Tantra”, in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. DAVID GORDON WHITE (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 469-470.

3 Which is, of course, a common feature concerning most of the deities figuring in both the Tantric and non-Tantric pantheon.

as polluting outside the Tantric realm. For instance, the goddesses are often related to death, cremation grounds, corpses, skulls, blood or drugs. Most of these relations may be found in the conception of each of the group's goddesses, although with differing degrees of emphasis. In addition, less radical factors also unify all individual goddesses, denoting them as members of the same group and establishing a bond between them. For instance, all *devīs* are strongly associated with *siddhis*, which are powerful magical powers they may pass on to their devotees.

Reasons as to both why the group was formed and why the chosen members were specifically included are not discussed in the sources and cannot be unerringly verified. However, from the Tantric point of view, the combination of exactly these *devīs* with their respective characters and *siddhis* is comprehensible and, taking the Tantric reference system as a base, very reasonable. The aim was most likely to personify important Tantric principles and to arrange a sequence of bestowers of different *siddhis*. This strongly indicates that the group has no organic origin, but that it was arranged as a theoretical conception with a Tantric background.

Supporting this assumption are, for instance, the various efforts to meld or unify the ten different individual goddesses – a typical trend in the Daśamahāvīdyās' textual development. The group and its members have been subject to several attempts at classification in the Tantric texts. Their individual members were classified on the basis of the three *guṇas*⁴, according to the *vāmācāra* respectively *dakṣiṇācāra*⁵, according to a fragmentation of the group in Mahāvīdyās, Vidyās and Siddhivīdyās⁶ and so on. Despite all these and other important factors uniting them all, the images of the individual *devīs* still vary considerably in other details. It is mainly their association with either *saumya* or *ugra* aspects that varies – but, as mentioned before, the latter clearly predominates. Only very seldom are the Mahāvīdyās connected to a Vaiṣṇava background, mainly by simply identifying one Avatāra respectively with one Mahāvīdyā⁷. Such

4 The *Prāṇatoṣiṇītantra* (13. 4), for instance, connects Kālī, Tārā and Bhairavī with *sattva*, Tripurasundarī, Bhuvaneśvarī and Chinnamastā with *rajas* and Dhūmāvātī, Bagalāmukhī, Mātāṅgī and Kamalā with *tamas*.

5 The *Śaktisaṃgamatantra* (*Tārākhaṇḍa* 1.84-90) describes Kālī, Tārā, Tripurasundarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Bagalāmukhī and Mātāṅgī as preferring the left-handed path and Bhuvaneśvarī, Dhūmāvātī and Kamalā as preferring the right-handed path.

6 The *Muṇḍamālātantra* (*paṭala* 11, *Daśamahāvīdyāstotra*) denotes Kālī and Tārā as Mahāvīdyās, Tripurasundarī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā and Dhūmāvātī as Vidyās and Bagalāmukhī, Mātāṅgī and Kamalā as Siddhivīdyās.

7 As NARENDRA NATH BHATTACHARYYA, *History of the Tantric Religion* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 242, has put it, in the period from the 9th to the 12th century, "... Tantric elements began to act more effectively on the major existing religious systems. ...

lists are found, for instance, in the *Toḍalatantra*⁸, *Muṇḍamālatantra*⁹ or *Guhyātigubhyatantra*¹⁰. Typically, the goddesses are connected with Śiva, acting independently as wives and dominating, controlling and at times, even threatening him.

The majority of Tantric sources dealing with the group describe the individual *devīs* and their respective rituals, including essentially the same central subjects. The main component, Tantric ritual, is presented following recurrent formalized structures. Nearly all of these explanations include: *viniyoga*, *nyāsas*, *dhyānamantra(s)*, *kavaca*, *stotra*, *śatanāmastotra*, *sahasranāmastotra* and *hṛdaya*. *Viniyoga* and the different *nyāsas* are part of the practical ritual; they depict the necessary ritual steps in detail. *Dhyānamantras* provide a description of a deity's appearance and attributes in a 'short version' for mental reflection and meditation. *Kavaca*, the different *stotras* and *hṛdaya* present the characteristics (habits, behaviors, likes, dislikes, etc.) as well as the outer appearance of a deity, often in a poetical form. *Stotras* also often support the theology of the goddess in question. In their *stotras* and *hṛdayas*, in particular, the individual Mahāvīdyā-goddesses also often adopt epithets of Mahādevī – mainly those associated with the protecting, maintaining and nourishing qualities¹¹. This covers basically everything necessary for the practical ritual and illustrates the respective goddess' character and outer appearance.

in the philosophical speculations of the Southern Vaiṣṇavas, the doctrine of Śakti was able to find place. Subsequently, it became so influential that a need was felt to bring the ten Avatāras of Viṣṇu into relation with the ten celebrated Tantric Mahāvīdyās."

8 For details on the source see TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 81.

9 For details on the source see DAVID KINSLEY, *The Ten Mahāvīdyās. Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 20.

10 For details on the source see D. C. SIRCAR, *The Śākta Pīṭhas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), 48 and NARENDRA NATH BHATTACHARYYA, *History of the Tantric Religion* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 242.

11 For details concerning this overlapping of the Tantric and the non-Tantric representations of the individual goddesses in different texts as well as for a comprehensive discussion of the Daśamahāvīdyās and their background see XENIA ZEILER, *Die Göttin Dhūmāvātī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011 forthc.).

The Textual Tradition of Dhūmāvātī

Dhūmāvātī's Representation and Ritual in Textual Sources up to the 19th Century

In most medieval Tantric Sanskrit sources, Dhūmāvātī's presentation includes all of the above-mentioned central subjects, and her ritual follows the formalized structures in detail. The goddess is included in nearly all sources dealing with the Daśamahāvidyās¹² and is depicted there as a member of the group and in exactly the same formal way as each other individual Mahāvidyā. As mentioned earlier, she remains restricted to this Tantric context and within it, to be precise, even to her specific Mahāvidyā-background¹³. Unlike the group's other *devīs*, she did not develop an individual textual tradition outside of this limited frame. This restriction concerns all aspects of the goddess' concept – the mythological, iconographical and, of course, the ritual tradition of Dhūmāvātī. The goddess is of no importance in Epic, Purāṇic or in Smārta literature in general, where she is never mentioned apart from the group. Even in the rare event that she is mentioned, she is only noted as a member of the Daśamahāvidyās and is not described further. This restriction of the goddess to a Mahāvidyā-background is undoubtedly standard and typical for her medieval textual tradition and for the period up to the late 19th century. But it is also important to note that, as we will see below, it is almost equally characteristic of the majority of modern and contemporary texts. Up to the present, Dhūmāvātī, in her textual tradition, is displayed mainly and, with only a few exceptions, as a Tantric Mahāvidyā goddess with very little changes in her representation, iconography, function and ritual.

The goddess is first mentioned in the *Śāradātilakatantra* (*paṭala* 24, 10-14), a well-known and influential source repeatedly dated back to the 11th century¹⁴. Current research also puts a more reliable dating back to

12 Only very rarely is she not included in the list of ten. This is the case, for instance, in the *Kāmakalākhaṇḍa of Mahākālasamhitā*.

13 The textual sources surveyed for this article do not include all available unpublished manuscripts on Dhūmāvātī, which are generally hard to determine as such. The published sources and several manuscripts sighted by me present mainly uniform information on the goddess. Up to the 19th century, variations in the textual tradition of the goddess are very seldom and, for the most part, minor in contents. Sources also very briefly mention Dhūmāvātī but not discussing the goddess further, such as the *Kubjikopaniṣat* or the *Virūpākṣapañcāśikā*, are not used for discussion in this article.

14 For the dating of the *Śāradātilakatantra* by Lakṣmaṇa Deśika in the 11th century see

the 12th or even early 13th century up for discussion¹⁵. As such, the first textual appearance of Dhūmāvātī most probably has to be dated even before the formation of the Daśamahāvidyās. At this first sight, this may not seem unusual, considering that several of the Mahāvidyās have individual traditions preceding their incorporation into the group. In the case of Dhūmāvātī, this is nevertheless remarkable because it will remain nearly the only reference to the goddess apart from the group in sources up to the present. The *Śāradātilakatantra* does not mention the Daśamahāvidyās but includes *dhyānamantras* for three of the later individual goddesses – without establishing a link or connection between them. Two *dhyānamantras* are quoted for Tripurābhairavī (*paṭala* 9 and 12), two for Bhuvaneśvarī (*paṭala* 9 and 10) and one for Mātāngī (*paṭala* 12). Dhūmāvātī is not mentioned in such detail with a *dhyānamantra*, though she is referred to in the ritual context of a *yantra* for the restraining of enemies. Already here we find the *bijamantra* of the goddess. And already here, in the very first reference to the goddess, its function and usage are clearly defined. *Śatrunigraha*, the restraining of an enemy, is named as the only purpose of using the *mantra* of Dhūmāvātī. In all later sources, the goddess will remain connected to this special *siddhi* or to one closely associated with it: *śatrunigraha* or *uccāṭana*. Both *siddhis*, “restraining an enemy” respectively “dispelling”, are used to render enemies inoffensive or harmless. So even if in this initial period of her textual development Dhūmāvātī is not yet endowed with an extensive ritual and marked iconography, the short passage of the *Śāradātilakatantra* seems essential for the goddess’ further development. Right from the beginning, she is clearly connected to two major points which remain consistent throughout her textual history.

The later sources present a more detailed visualisation and ritual of Dhūmāvātī. The first source mentioning the goddess in detail is Rāghavabhaṭṭa’s *Padārthādarśa* commentary on the *Śāradātilakatantra*, compiled in 1494. In his commentary on *paṭala* 24, 11-12 of the

ERNEST A. PAYNE, *The Śāktas. An Introductory and Comparative Study* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997), 54-55, TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 135, and GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheons of the Prapañcasāra and the Śāradātilaka*, vol. 2, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2001), 148.

15 For this dating and a discussion of the origin and dating problematic of the source see ALEXIS SANDERSON, “Atharvavedins in Tantric Territory: The Āngirasakalpa Texts of the Oriya Paippalādins and their Connection with the Trika and the Kālikula. With Critical Editions of the Parājapavidhi, the Parāmantravidhi, and the *Bhadrakālīmantravidhi-prakarāṇa,” in *The Atharvaveda and its Paippalādaśākhā. Historical and Philological Papers on a Vedic Tradition*, Geisteskultur Indiens 11, Indologica Halensis (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2007), 230-233.

Śāradātilakatantra Rāghavabhaṭṭa specifies Dhūmāvātī's ritual, character and iconography. The *bījamantra dhūm* and its function *śatrunigraha* are denoted, as well as the *ṛṣi*, meter and deity of the *mantra*¹⁶. In the following description of the goddess, though not formally arranged as a *dhyānamantra*, Rāghavabhaṭṭa states nearly all of the characteristics presented in the later *dhyānamantras*. The goddess is a widow with dirty clothes, dishevelled hair, and teeth full of gaps. She has a rough character and sits on a cart, which shows a crow in the banner. She holds a winnowing fan. The author suggests worshipping her in the wilderness or in the mountains, naked with dishevelled hair at the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month. Following this first depiction, Rāghavabhaṭṭa then cites from a lost work called the *Dhūmāvātikalpa*. Even though we cannot trace this source, this reference is important as it proves an existing developed textual tradition of Dhūmāvātī even before Rāghavabhaṭṭa's *Padārthhādarśa* at the end of the 15th century. As we are unable to date the *Dhūmāvātikalpa*, we naturally do not know how long before a detailed conception and ritual of the goddess evolved. Nevertheless, we can assuredly assume that the detailed conceptual implementation of the goddess including a clear idea of not only her ritual and function, but also of her nature and character, developed, at the latest, by the 15th century. This would conform to the name lists of the Daśamahāvidyās given in several Tantric texts, accounting for the incorporation of Dhūmāvātī into the group from the 14th century on.

The ritual information given by Rāghavabhaṭṭa, with reference to the *Dhūmāvātikalpa*, stays very close to that given before. The *dhyānamantra* differs in only very few aspects. The goddess also has gap teeth and dishevelled hair here. She holds a winnowing fan and is accompanied by a crow. She is once more described as unstable and afflicted by hunger and thirst. All these characteristics will remain as basic information about the goddess in *dhyānamantras* of texts to follow. Differing from these details but not at all conflicting with the general idea about her visualisation, here she similarly wears black clothes and has smoky eyes. But Dhūmāvātī is additionally connected to another goddess, Jyeṣṭhā, with whom she will also at times be associated in the future. Dhūmāvātī here, for the first time,

16 Ṛṣi and meter correspond to the specifications of nearly all following works in the goddess' textual tradition. The *ṛṣi* is Pippalāda, the meter is *nivṛt*, and the deity here is Jyeṣṭhā. Of course, the deity is very often Dhūmāvātī.

is explicitly called Jyeṣṭhā¹⁷. Rāghavabhaṭṭa does not explicitly identify Dhūmāvātī as a Mahāvīdyā, but in citing from the *Dhūmāvātikalpa* he calls her Vidyā twice. This must probably be seen as an indication that she is understood as belonging to the group.

Among the works presenting Dhūmāvātī between the 15th and 19th century, we find one outstanding. The text by far most frequently mentioned in following works speaking about the goddess in late medieval¹⁸ as well as in contemporary¹⁹ compilations, is a chapter of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*²⁰. *Patala* 7 of the work dealing mainly with magical ritual²¹ is reserved for Dhūmāvātī. As usual, her detailed ritual information, which is called *prayoga* here, is given. It corresponds with the ritual data of nearly all following sources on the goddess, which were obviously to a very large extent copied from the *Phetkārīṇītantra*. The *prayoga* names the ṛṣi and meter consistently connected to the goddess²², and here the function of the mantra is *śatrunigraha*. The instructions for *japa* of the mantra again restrict the ritual to the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month and to a deserted place or the cremation ground. But in addition, the most influential *dhyānamantra* of the goddess is first verbalized, the *dhyānamantra* which up to the present dominates in sources and which has also had – and

17 For the very interesting interconnection between Dhūmāvātī and Jyeṣṭhā see XENIA ZEILER, *Die Göttin Dhūmāvātī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011 forthc.).

18 According to GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi*, vol. 1, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 122, fn. 137, for instance, in the *Tantrasāra* of Kṛṣṇānda Āgamavāgīśa (Edition 1985, 293, 22-26), the *Śrīvidyānavatantra* (Edition 1937, 337, 25-28) and the *Śaktisaṃgamatantra* (*Sundarikhaṇḍa* 21.56). Later, important texts including the specific *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra* are the *Mantramahārṇava* of Mādhava Rāya Vaidya or the *Śaktapramoda* of Rāja Devānanda Siṃha Bhādur, both to be dated in the late 19th century.

19 All modern compilations from the 20th and the 21st century that I was able to trace, which deal with the Daśamahāvīdyās and Dhūmāvātī as their member, present, without exception, the *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*.

20 To my knowledge so far no suggestion for a possible dating has been made. A short summary of contents is given by TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 115-116. Based on comparative material for the data concerning Dhūmāvātī, I hold a compilation between the 14th and the 16th century to be presumable. According to GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi*, vol. 1, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities*, (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 4, the 16th or 17th century text *Tantrasāra* of Kṛṣṇānda Āgamavāgīśa cites prevalently from the *Phetkārīṇītantra*. This clearly marks at least the upper border of a possible dating for the *Phetkārīṇītantra*.

21 TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 113, understand the work as “among the most important sources of Tantric magic.”

22 Again Pippalāda and *nivṛt*.

still has – the most important impact on the understanding and reception of Dhūmāvātī in the modern popular as well as academic secondary literature²³ and on modern iconographical depictions²⁴ of the goddess. The *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra* states:

*Vivarna cañcalā duṣṭā dīrgghā ca malināmbarā |
vimuktakuntalā ruṣṣā vidhavā viraladvijā ||
kākadhvajarathārūdhā vilambitapayodharā |
śūrpaḥastātīruṣṣāṅṣā dhūtāhastāvarāṇvitā ||
pṛavṛddhaghonā tu bhṛśaṅkuṭilā kuṭilekṣaṇa |
kṣuṭpīpāsārddhitā nityambhayadā kalahāspadā ||*²⁵

She is pale and fickle, angry, of high stature and wears dirty clothes. Her hair is dishevelled. The widow is rough and has intermittent teeth. She sits on a cart which has a crow in the banner. Her breasts hang down. In the hand she holds a winnowing fan and her eyes look very cruel. She has unsteady hands and her hand shows the gesture of wish-fulfilling. She has a big nose, is exceedingly

- 23 Academic literature, nearly without exception, discusses the goddess as one of ten members of the Daśamahāvidyās. She is usually presented very briefly and according to the characteristics of exactly this *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*. Examples for such a short introduction to Dhūmāvātī may be found in PRANAB BANDYOPADHYAY, *The Goddess of Tantra* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1990), 23, CHINTAHARAN CHAKRAVARTI, *Tantras. Studies on their Religion and Literature* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1963), 87, PUSHPENDRA KUMAR, *Śakti Cult in Ancient India (With Special Reference to the Purāṇic Literature)* (Varanasi: Bhartiya Publishing House, 1974), 158-159, SARBESWAR SATPATHY, *Dasa Mahavidya & Tantra Sastra* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1992), 61-62 and 70, or RAVI S. SINGH and RANA P. B. SINGH, “Goddesses in Kāśī (Vārāṇasī). Spatial Patterns and Symbolic Orders”, in *Visualizing Space in Banaras. Images, Maps, and the Practice of Representation*, eds. MARTIN GAENZLE and JÖRG GENGNAGEL, *Ethno-Indology 4*, Heidelberg Studies in South Asian Rituals (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 59. The only study presenting the goddess with a few more details is DAVID KINSLEY, *The Ten Mahāvidyās. Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 176-192. Even though he does not focus on the textual development of the goddess, he also opens with the *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra* and largely bases his reflections on it.
- 24 See GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi, vol. 1, The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities*, (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 123, who describes and discusses several paintings of Dhūmāvātī from different periods and different regions of South Asia. Depictions of the goddess in every modern compilation I traced without exception as well as most of the paintings of Dhūmāvātī known to me in general depict the goddess according to this *dhyānamantra*. Irrespective of their origin place and date, nearly all depictions of Dhūmāvātī up to the present follow the iconographical characteristics laid out in the *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*.
- 25 *Dhūmāvātī-dhyānamantra, paṭala 7* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*.

deceitful and has crooked eyes. Permanently afflicted by hunger and thirst she arouses horror and has her abode in conflict.²⁶

This *dhyānamantra* then names all characteristics, which are repeatedly presented in the following sources and which consistently identify the goddess Dhūmāvātī. Also, in the rare cases of sources presenting a different formal composition of the *dhyānamantra*, the details of the information laid out here prevail. She is a widow, and she wears dirty or ragged clothes and a winnowing fan. She is depicted sitting on a cart with no animals to pull it attached, and the crow is presiding on her banner or flag. Her hair is dishevelled or unbound and her teeth have partially fallen out. She is rough, deceitful, unsteady and unstable, fierce and terrifying. She has her abode in quarrel, strife and conflict. Her body is emaciated, and she is permanently afflicted by hunger and thirst. These characteristics clearly present the widow goddess as an outsider beyond social bounds and as closely connected to poverty, misfortune and even evil. She is enduringly angry, unsatisfied, resentful, and symbolically lives in quarrel and strife and in ruined and deserted places. In fact, only one single reference to a milder, well-wishing aspect of the goddess' personality is given in this *dhyānamantra*, without commenting on it in any way: the *devī* shows the gesture of wish-fulfilling.

This frequency and intensity of dark and furious characteristics especially puts Dhūmāvātī in a particular and outstanding position even among the individual Mahāvidyā-goddesses, who are, anyhow, mainly frightening and fierce. Unlike, for instance, Kālī or Tārā, who also as Mahāvidyās, are certainly fierce and terrifying in character but who, in the Tantric textual tradition of the Daśamahāvidyās, are basically depicted as much more ambivalent – mainly because they are generally more approachable for the devotee and because they are generally more often connected to mild and, as in the case of Tārā, even explicit benevolent features – Dhūmāvātī remains markedly ferocious nearly *without* showing a second, gentler or kinder side of herself. Even the self-decapitating Chinnamastā, in fact, also has much ambivalence. Beyond the first terrifying impression strikingly expressed in her iconography, she shows kind, compassionate and nourishing qualities as well – for instance, her seemingly most horrifying act, the cutting off of her own head, has quite specific reasons as she wants to nourish her starving associates. Besides Chinnamastā and maybe Bagalāmukhī, Dhūmāvātī as such belongs to the fiercest goddesses of the Daśamahāvidyās, to the ones with the highest *ugra* potential.

26 *Dhūmāvātī-dhyānamantra*, *paṭala* 7 of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*, translated by the author.

From the 16th century on, Dhūmāvātī is more frequently mentioned in textual sources. This is, of course, due to the rise and broadening significance of the Daśamahāvidyās as a group in this period. In 1588, Mahīdhara compiled the *Mantramahodadhi*²⁷, which gained wide popularity in India very quickly. This text, a compilation arranging ritual information on several deities from different Tantric sources, also depicts the Daśamahāvidyās. *Mantra*, *dhyāna*, *yantra* and *prayoga* of Dhūmāvātī are included in the context²⁸, stating exactly the same ritual information as in the textual tradition before – that is as in the *Padārthhādarśa*-commentary on the *Śāradātilakatantra* of Rāghavabhaṭṭa and as in the *Phetkārīṇītantra*. Only the *dhyāna* formulated here has a different formal composition. It never gained the popularity of the one presented in the *Phetkārīṇītantra*, even though it basically describes the same characteristics:

Atyuccāmalināambarākḥhilajanodvegāvahā durmanā |
ruḥṣāksitritayā viśaladaśanā sūryodarī cañcalā ||
prasvedāmbujitā kṣuddhākulatanuḥ kṣṣṇātīruḥṣāprabhā |
*dhyeyā muktakacā sadāpriyakalir dhūmāvātī mantriṇā ||*²⁹

Very tall and dressed in dirty clothes the angry one creates agitated fear among all humans. She is stern through (her) three eyes. She has mighty teeth and a belly (swollen) like the sun³⁰. She is unstable. She is covered with sweat, her body is afflicted with hunger and she is of black, very dark complexion. With this *mantra* one should meditate on Dhūmāvātī, who has dishevelled hair and who always is in favour of conflict.³¹

Another important source describing the goddess in a familiar way is the commentary on the *Prapañcasāratāntra*, *Prapañcasārasāra Saṃgraha* of Gīrvāṇendra Sarasvatī (*Uttarabhāga*, 756-761). Proposed dates for the text range from 1450 to 1530 up to the 17th century³². This compila-

27 For information about the author and the dating see GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi*, vol. 1, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities*, (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 5-8 and 10-13. She also discusses the commentaries, editions and translations of the *Mantramahodadhi* in detail.

28 *Mantramahodadhi*, *tarāṅga* 7, 40-49.

29 *Dhūmāvātī-dhyāna*, *tarāṅga* 7 of the *Mantramahodadhi*.

30 “*Sūyodarī*” probably denotes a large belly. *Sūyodarī* is possibly a corruption of *śūrpodarī*, “having a belly like a winnowing fan.” This reading is to be found in the *Padārthhādarśa* of Rāghavabhaṭṭa and seems more coherent because of Dhūmāvātī’s close connection to the winnowing fan. Also see GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi*, vol. 1, 122, fn. 134.

31 *Dhūmāvātī-dhyāna*, *tarāṅga* 7 of the *Mantramahodadhi*, translated by the author.

32 For details and information about the author see GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheons*

tion gives, in addition to the usual ritual data very briefly presented, a new *dhyānāmantra* for Dhūmāvātī. Here again we have an example of a *dhyānāmantra* repeating the same information as the *Phetkārīnītantra*, but arranging it in a different form. The main characteristics of the goddess are repeated without any divergence. But once again a few additions are also provided – all of them, of course, matching and maintaining the basic visualisation very well. The *dhyānāmantra* of the *Prapañcasārasāra Saṃgraha* states that the goddess has a withered face with a hostile expression on it and that her nose and eyes resemble a crow. Her hair is loosened, and she holds a winnowing fan. Here she is also said to destroy enemies. The two additions laid out here compare to the *dhyānāmantra*-information of the sources before; both concern the iconography of Dhūmāvātī. In addition to her main identification mark, the winnowing fan, she holds a broom and a mace, obviously having four arms.

This of course does not deviate from the general profile ascribed to Dhūmāvātī in the sources from the beginning of her Tantric textual tradition in the 11th or 12th century up to the late 19th century³³. Within this profile, the goddess – in function, ritual and iconography alike – is depicted with only minor, essentially formal variations. Dhūmāvātī is presented as emaciated, worn out, unsteady, hostile, unforgiving and, generally, terrifying.

The transformation of Dhūmāvātī in the late 19th century

The first (and last) remarkable variation in the textual tradition of the goddess occurs at the end of the 19th century. Dhūmāvātī is depicted in two important and still very popular texts. The *Dhūmāvātītantra* chapter of the *Mantramahārṇava* is by far the most considerable work in the history of textual sources speaking about the goddess until the end of the 19th century. Composed presumably between 1871 and 1907³⁴, it contains exceptional, comprehensive information about Dhūmāvātī. It remains

of the Prapañcasāra and the Śāradātīlaka, vol. 2, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2001), 9-10).

33 For complete lists and for a detailed discussion of all texts mentioning Dhūmāvātī from her first naming up to the present, of course also including deviations from the general profile, see XENIA ZEILER, *Die Göttin Dhūmāvātī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011 forthc.).

34 These dates, on the basis of reference dates, have again been proposed by GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi*, vol. 1, *The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities*, (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 3 and 18.

within the tradition of medieval Tantric compilations, which combine and merge data on a certain deity from different sources. It takes material from the two most important sources up to that time: the *Phetkārīṇītantra* and the *Mantramahodadhī*. However, it additionally includes further specifications. Essential and comprehensive parts of the *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava* include several new verse creations in the form of hymns appearing here for the first time. *Stotra*, *kavaca* and *hṛdaya* in the unique extended form found here and *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra* are completely new in the textual tradition of the *devī*. All other sources before were basically restricted to ritual instructions. In fact, only the very short *dhyānamantras* allowed for a more detailed look into the goddess' character and iconography, at least to some extent. Unlike them, the *Mantramahārṇava*, in its verse-compositions, offers detailed information about the representation of Dhūmāvātī.

What makes this caesura in the development of the goddess' textual tradition so noteworthy is surely not the new form of presentation alone. Although this is certainly remarkable, what had much more impact on the reception of Dhūmāvātī from here on, of course, is the information offered in the new verses. *Stotra*, *kavaca*, *hṛdaya*, *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra* of the *Mantramahārṇava* also, on the one hand, naturally discuss the essential information from the goddess' Tantric background. She is praised as a very distinctive fierce Tantric goddess and is endowed with the respective character, function, iconography, mythology and ritual. A major difference from the preceding texts is that in this process all aspects concerning her Tantric terrifying conception, especially her behaviour, likes, dislikes, and attributes, are described in a much more sophisticated manner than ever before. Obviously, the comprehensive verse-compositions held room for such a meticulous exposure. The *stotra* of the *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava* states, for instance:

*Samgrāme hetikṛtāih sarudhiradaśanair yad dhatānām śirobhir mālām
ābaddhvā mūrdhni dhvajavitatabhūjā tvam śmaśāne praviṣṭā ||
dṛṣṭā bhūtaprabhūtaiḥ pṛthutarajaghanābaddhanāgendrakāncī śulāgra-
vyagrahasṭā madhurudhirasadātāmranetrī niśāyām ||
daṁṣṭrāudre mukhe 'smīms tava viśati jagābevi sarva kṣaṇārddhāt
samsārasyāmtakāle nararudhiravaśāsamplave dhūmadhūmre ||
kāli kāpālikī sā śavaśayanaratā yoginī yogamudrā raktā ṛddhiḥ sabhāsthā
maraṇabhayaharā tvam śivā chaṇḍāghaṇṭā ||³⁵*

You entered the cremation ground with upraised banner in the arm, after binding a garland of warriors' heads on your head, which were cut in battle with

35 *Stotra*, *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 7 and 8.

swords and whose teeth are bloodstained. You have been seen at night by many Bhūtas as one who bound the belt of the elephant king around the exceedingly broad hip, holding the pike of a lance in the hand, as one whose eyes are ever red from sweet blood. In your mouth, terrifying with fangs, in which the blood of men and women converge, which is dark as smoke, the whole world enters in half a moment, goddess, at the end of a *saṃsāra* – o Kālī, Kāpālīkī, (you as one) enjoying sitting on corpses, Yoginī, (you as one) in the yoga position, lovely one, Ṛddhi, (you as one) sitting in an assembly, (you as one) taking the fear of death, Śivā, Chandāghaṇṭā.³⁶

Furthermore, the *kavaca* provides clear indications of the goddess' dreadful Tantric visualisation, as is familiar from the preceding sources. It apparently also makes use of phrases from the *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīṇītantra*. For instance, it describes:

Pravṛddharomā tu bhṛśankuṭilā kuṭilekṣaṇā |
ksutpipāsārdhitā devī bhayadā kalahapriyā ||
*sarvāṅgaṃ pātu me devī sarvaśatruvināśinī |*³⁷

She has long body-hairs³⁸, is very angry and has crooked eyes. The goddess afflicted by hunger and thirst is terrifying and loves conflict. May the goddess, who is the destroyer of all enemies, protect all my limbs.³⁹

The *hṛdaya* is of course no exception here. It affirms, for instance:

“ghūrṇā ghūrṇakarā ghorā ghūrṇatākṣī ghanasvanā |
*ghātinī ghātakāṇaṃ yā dhūmāvatiṃ bhajāmi tām ||”*⁴⁰

She sways about, her hands tremble and she is terrifying. Her eyes sway around and she makes thunderous noises. I worship this Dhūmāvati who is the destroyer of destroyers.⁴¹

Besides these, many more references are given in all verses in question, in *stotra*, *kavaca*, *hṛdaya*, *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra* alike: for instance, the goddess chews on bits of bones, she laughs a horrifying laugh, laughs terrifyingly among Pretas, has a smoky form, looks like a rain of smoke, is terrifying like a tumescent compound of clouds, is horrifying

36 *Stotra*, *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 7 and 8, translated by the author.

37 *Kavaca*, *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 8 and 9.

38 That is: she is very hairy.

39 *Kavaca*, *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 8 and 9, translated by the author.

40 *Hṛdaya*, *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 5.

41 *Hṛdaya*, *Dhūmāvātītantra* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 5, translated by the author.

through her roar, is adorned by a flock of Dākinīs, is to be praised by a cohort of Phetkārīs and so on.

On the other hand – and it is precisely this which constitutes the radical transformation in the textual tradition of Dhūmāvati from here on – the goddess in the very same verses is connected to very differing themes. Suddenly, she is also presented as a world-maintaining and well-wishing, at times even benevolent, goddess. Without denying her Tantric, horrifying background, she is moreover described as, in fact, another manifestation of Mahādevī. While Dhūmāvati's Tantric conception and ritual is also presented unaltered and in detail in the *Mantramahārṇava*, she is additionally provided with a new character, mythology, iconography, and new functions. In the presentation, both conceptions go very closely side by side. This is markedly obvious in verses transporting both views, combined in one verse. The *hṛdaya*, for instance, states:

jātā yā yācitā devair asurānāṃ vighātini |
jalpantī babu garjantī bhaje tām dhūmrarūpiṇīm ||⁴²

Requested by the gods she was born as the destroyer of Asuras. I worship this smoke-shaped one, who mutters and roars aloud.⁴³

dhvāntākārāndhakadhvaṃsam muktadhammilladhāriṇīm |
dhūmadhārāprabhāṃ dhīrāṃ bhaje dhūmāvatiṃmahām ||⁴⁴

I worship Dhūmāvati, who destroyed Andhaka, whose form is darkness, who looks like a rain of smoke and whose bun of hair is untied, the wise one.⁴⁵

Here, next to a very clear reference to the mythology of Durgā – to the birth of the *devī*, brought about by the gods in order to provide for the destroying of Asuras – a similarly clear link is drawn to the original, Tantric background of Dhūmāvati, calling her a smoky figure uttering unconventional tones. Next to the identification with Durgā as the destroyer of Andhaka, iconographical characteristics of Dhūmāvati's Tantric visualisation are presented: she has untied hair and is closely connected to smoke. Such direct interconnections of both dispositions and the alternating reference to them, without particularly accentuating one over the other, are especially characteristic of *stotra* and *hṛdaya* of the *Mantramahārṇava*. Both representations of the goddess are generally interwoven without breaks or

42 *Hṛdaya* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 8.

43 *Hṛdaya* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 8, translated by the author.

44 *Hṛdaya* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 17.

45 *Hṛdaya* of the *Mantramahārṇava*, verse 17, translated by the author.

segregations. Thus, the attempts of the *Mantramahārṇava* to incorporate Dhūmāvātī into a non-Tantric frame, into the mythology and theology of the Great Goddess of Hinduism, did prove successful. Nevertheless – and this is essential to the textual development of Dhūmāvātī up to the present and cannot be overemphasized – these attempts obviously did not aim at disguising or, even less, at extinguishing the Tantric representation of the goddess. From the late 19th century on in her textual tradition in general, even if the *devī* is presented in a Mahādevī-context, this is never done without also strongly referring to her Tantric background.

Dhūmāvātī, through her identification with the virtuous Mahādevī-Durgā acting in favour of the universe and of human beings, naturally acquired a completely new and at many times oppositional character compared to her original Tantric representation. This was also surely conserved: Tantric ritual and Tantric character of the goddess were still presented in detail. Nevertheless, a completely new process was initiated in the *Mantramahārṇava*, a process showing the goddess' conception radically transformed. Dhūmāvātī changed, for the first time in her textual history, from a goddess with an exclusively Tantric disposition and a restricted Mahāvidyā-background, to a goddess who, apart from her individual Tantric disposition, coequally possesses a benign nature based on a very clearly transferred Mahādevī-theology. This was, of course, rather predictable. Just as for many other goddesses, it was just a matter of time before Dhūmāvātī would be incorporated into the Mahādevī-theology of Hinduism. Tendencies of what might be called 'saumyisation', pacifying or sweetening, of goddesses interpreted as dangerous and wild as well as general unitizing tendencies in the Smārta goddesses-pantheon – tendencies propagating the identity of all goddesses in the one single dominating form, mainly called Mahādevī or Durgā – are as ancient as the emergence of Durgā-Mahādevī herself and are widely accounted for⁴⁶. Minor *devīs* from Tantric or local backgrounds, with limited pan-Hindu popularity and, similarly for that reason, with limited resistibility to reinterpretation, are often especially liable to such transformations. Therefore, what is rather unexpected and exceptional in the transformation of Dhūmāvātī is, in fact, that this transformation took place so late. The textual tradition of the goddess stayed remarkably stable for a period of approximately seven

46 For one detailed example – the “taming” of the wild goddess in the South Indian Śāṅkara tradition – and for a discussion of the oscillating meanings of the terms *ugra* and *saumya*, see Annette Wilke, “Śāṅkara and the Taming of the Wild Goddesses”, in *Wild Goddesses in India and Nepal, Proceedings of an International Symposium Berne and Zurich, November 1994*, eds. AXEL MICHAELS, CORNELIA VOGELSANGER and ANNETTE WILKE (Bern: Peter Lang), 123-178.

to eight centuries. Only in the very late 19th century we first find unitizing tendencies and, alongside them, 'saumyaisation'.

Reasons for the relatively late introduction of these new aspects of reception into the textual tradition of Dhūmāvātī may only be suggested. But it does seem that certain factors in the original perception of the goddess were coequally advantageous 1), for her long resistance towards 'saumyaisation' and 2), for the fact that especially Dhūmāvātī, more than any other of the Mahāvidyā-goddesses, was able to keep her Tantric origin and with that a certain continuity throughout her textual tradition up to the present. Both points may be explained, at least to a substantial extent, by two distinctions between Dhūmāvātī and the other Mahāvidyās. First, the goddess was restricted to the Mahāvidyā-background throughout her textual history. Up to the 19th century, unlike *all* other Mahāvidyās, she simply had nothing apart from the Tantric Mahāvidyā-background to settle on. This very strong interrelation with the group, which was often perceived as generally rather fierce, may have complicated attempts to pacification. At the same time, this limitation made it also quite impossible to deny her origin in sources after the *Mantramahārṇava*. If the background of the *devī* was to be presented at all, it could, of course, only be Tantric Mahāvidyā. Second, in that Tantric Mahāvidyā-background, Dhūmāvātī even occupied a particularly marked and very fierce position. She was consistently restricted to one single function, to render enemies harmless. This must surely have complicated pacification. In fact, to pacify Dhūmāvātī meant to delete her only function and, thus, to prevent her from effectively acting. With this, not only her fierce aspects would have been questioned, but her existence in general. Her clearly defined sphere of action and its explicit confinement to Tantric ritual are surely very important reasons for the continuity in the textual and, in it, especially ritual tradition of the goddess. Generally, all other Mahāvidyās possess broader and milder representations per se and could and did lose their Tantric affiliations in the process of transformation to a much greater extent than Dhūmāvātī did.

One further important text from the late 19th century depicts Dhūmāvātī in this new, divergent way. The *Śaktapramoda* of Rāja Devānanda Siṃha Bhādur from Muzaffarpur was first published in 1890⁴⁷. This compilation⁴⁸

47 ELISABETH ANNE BENARD, *Chinnamastā. The Aweful Buddhist and Hindu Tantric Goddess* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), 23-24, gives details concerning the importance of the text.

48 See GUDRUN BÜHNEMANN, *The Pantheon of the Mantramahodadhi, vol. 1, The Iconography of Hindu Tantric Deities* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2000), 39-40, and TEUN GOUDRIAAN and SANJUKTA GUPTA, *Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 147.

from different Tantric sources also presents the individual Mahāvidyās in a standardized form. For Dhūmāvātī, as for the other Mahāvidyās, *dhyāna*, *yantroddhāra*, *mantroddhāra*, *pūjāvidhi*, *stotra*, *kavaca*, *hṛdaya*, *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra* are given in this sequence⁴⁹. The *dhyānamantra* was drawn from the *Phetkārīnītantra*, and also the ritual instructions give corresponding information in both texts. But *stotra*, *kavaca*, *hṛdaya*, *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra* are additionally included here. In content and form, they correspond exactly to the hymns of the *Mantramahārṇava*. According to our present knowledge of the dating of both texts, it is most probable that the *Śāktapramoda* drew from the nearly contemporaneous *Mantramahārṇava*, which as a well-known and major work was easily accessible very soon after its redaction⁵⁰. Whichever of both texts is ultimately the first source to present the new material on Dhūmāvātī and, with that, to mark the turning point in the transformation of the textual tradition of the goddess, it may securely be dated in the second half of the 19th century.

Dhūmāvātī's Representation and Ritual in Modern and Contemporary Textual Sources

A number of modern and contemporary compilations recollect data from the late medieval Tantric Sanskrit sources about the Mahāvidyās⁵¹. The information these publications offers is, very often, drawn directly from original sources⁵². In every case, the compilations again include *all* ten individual members of the group. Depending on the extensiveness of each book or booklet, different parts of the Tantric ritual according to the traditional formalized structures are given. The *dhyānamantra* appears

49 *Śāktapramoda* 7, *Dhūmāvātītantra*, pp. 275-300.

50 The *Śāktapramoda*, as is often the case in compilations of the style presented here, did not discuss its sources and did not give references.

51 For instance, see V. N. 'TŪPHĀN' JHĀ, *Daśa Mahāvidyā Siddhi* (Jālandhar: Amit Pocket Books, without year, ca. 2000), YOGĪRĀJ 'BHĀRATI' YAŚPĀL, *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantrasāra* (Haridvār: Raṅdhīr Prakāśan, 1998), YOGĪRĀJ YAŚPĀLJĪ, *Daśa Mahāvidyā* (Jammū: Pustak Sansār, without year, ca. 1996), VIṢṆUDATTA RĀKEŚ, *Daśamahāvidyā-Mimāṃsā* (Haridvār: Kiraṅ Offset Branding Press, 1999), RĀJEŚ DĪKŚIT, *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* (Āgrā: Dip Publications, 1999), K. L. ŚĀRMĀ, *Aslī Prācīn Daśa-Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* (Dillī: Manoj Pocket Books, without year, ca. 2002) and others.

52 In nearly all cases the editors and authors do not specify any Sanskrit sources they draw from. If they do, they generally do not stay restricted to one work, but refer to different sources for each goddess. For Dhūmāvātī, the most often mentioned sources are *Phetkārīnītantra*, *Mantramahārṇava* and *Śāktapramoda*.

always, and a short *stotra* in most cases. *Kavaca* and *śatanāmastotra* or even the full information – which would be *kavaca*, a longer *stotra*, *hṛdaya*, *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra* – are only included in the two most comprehensive works on the Daśamahāvidyās⁵³. Nevertheless and irrespective of their volume, all publications use the same basic standard data. They differ from each other only in their general extensiveness and in their details of the Hindi description, which usually shortly introduces each goddess. These Hindi versions are clearly not exact translations but rather a synopsis of the main features, which are presented in the following Sanskrit text.

Dhūmāvātī, of course, is included in all these compilations. In her case as well, not too many derivations from the original sources or from each other, are to be found in regard to content. Up to the present, the contemporary compilations also identify both the goddess and her ritual as (always) originally and (mostly) basically Tantric. Exactly as her early, medieval Sanskrit sources nearly all contemporary texts present Dhūmāvātī's Tantric ritual, and she is consistently depicted as basically dreadful, inapproachable and horrifying. Nevertheless and not surprisingly, a number of modern works also obviously follow the transformation process initiated in the *Mantramahārṇava* and *Śaktapramoda*. But, very much like both of these, the modern and contemporary textual sources also do not cross a certain limit within their alteration of Dhūmāvātī's original representation: they never exclude or even try to conceal the Tantric background of the goddess. To the contrary, they mostly denote much room for it. They do not question the relevance of the Tantric ritual instructions for the goddess in any way, and with that they very well remain in the traditional line. Additionally, some compilations naturally also present a broader conception of the goddess, trying, in different ways, to blend the Tantric background with another side of Dhūmāvātī.

Typical for all modern compilations on the Daśamahāvidyās and on Dhūmāvātī is the alternating use of Sanskrit and Hindi. This seems logical considering the content of the works. All ritual instructions are, of course, presented unmodified and as such, remain in Sanskrit. Very seldom are actual parts of the ritual instructions translated. Normally, the ritual instructions are followed by very brief comments and remarks in Hindi. In contrast to this practice, the poetical hymns stating characteristics and features of the goddess – *stotra*, *kavaca* and *hṛdaya* as well as

53 In RĀJEŚ DĪKŚIT, *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* (Āgrā: Dīp Publications, 1999) and in K. L. ŚARMĀ, *Aslī Prācīn Daśa-Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* (Dillī: Manoj Pocket Books, without year, ca. 2002).

the *nāmastotras* – in these works compiled for Hindi-speaking readers are, without any exception, left in Sanskrit. They are neither commented on nor even translated anywhere. Generally, the information on the goddess remains very brief. As mentioned before, among the bulk of compilations on the *Daśamahāvīdyās*, there are only two very voluminous works also presenting a complex view of Dhūmāvātī. Apart from these two works, to be presented below, no chapter up to the present on Dhūmāvātī in a source after the late 19th century, that is, after the *Mantramahārṇava* and the *Śāktapramoda*, covers more than five pages. On the one hand, the Dhūmāvātī-chapters in modern compilations do follow the tradition of medieval compilations: they arrange basic data on the goddess, especially on her ritual. On the other hand, the compilations in question here differ from the medieval tradition in a crucial way: the very short presentation leaves no room for comprehensive information, neither on ritual nor on character and representation. The Tantric ritual instruction remains largely incomplete and is as such, of course, invalid – at least for ritual use. In their extremely brief form, such compilations may only give a very rough outline about the most important characteristics of the goddess. Despite all the texts' limitations, a *dhyānamantra* is always included as is an illustration very often. In what follows, a few examples of the modern and contemporary textual representation of Dhūmāvātī shall be highlighted.

The briefest source on the goddess is a one-page chapter in a compilation dated 2001 (v.s. 2058) named *Daśamahāvīdyās*⁵⁴. The work was published by the quite popular publishing house on religious subjects, Gītāpres Gorakhpur. Besides a full-page illustration of Dhūmāvātī, as usual showing her according to the *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkāriṇītantra*, a short description is given in Hindi. The goddess is identified as a widow, and her status is explained by the mythological origin of the goddess from the smoke arising at the self-burning of Satī. Without further explanation, Dhūmāvātī is identified with a number of goddesses connected to misfortune: Nirṛti, Alakṣmī, Vābravī, Tāmasī and Sutarā. A connection to the last three mentioned goddesses is new and unique to this text. The worship of Dhūmāvātī is then recommended in order to dispel misfortune and illness, to gain victory in fights and to madden or kill enemies. Details for an adequate ritual practice or references for further information are not given here at all.

54 No author or editor is mentioned. See *Daśamahāvīdyā* (Gorakhpur: Gītāpres, V.S. 2058 = 2001), 15.

Probably the most well-known source in modern India also holding information on Dhūmāvātī is the *Mantrasāgar*⁵⁵. It was first published in the middle of the 20th century and gained popularity as a compilation presenting various deities, including the Daśamahāvidyās and Dhūmāvātī. The information given is, again, very brief. And, as usual, Dhūmāvātī holds much less room than any other of the individual Mahāvidyās. The chapter *Dhūmāvātī-Sādhana* includes, in the following sequence, *mantra*, *dhyāna*, *yantra*, *jaṭa-homa*, *stava* and *kavaca*. Sanskrit and Hindi alternate. Passages in Sanskrit, namely *dhyāna*, *stava* and *kavaca*, are followed by short passages in Hindi outlining the contents. The passages titled *mantra*, *yantra* and *jaṭa-homa* present a short ritual instruction in Hindi. Most remarkable is surely the *stava*, which appears here for the first time in the textual history of the goddess and which, in fact, is an eight-name-*stotra*. Here Dhūmāvātī is called Bhadrakālī, Mahākālī, Ḍamaruvādyakāriṇī, Sphāritanayanā, Ṭakaṭankitahāsini, Jagatkartrī and Śūrpahastā. The *stava* reads and may be translated to:

Bhadrakālī mahākālī ḍamaruvādyakāriṇī |
sphāritanayanā caiva ṭakaṭankitahāsini ||
dhūmāvātī jagatkartrī śūrpahastā tathaiva ca |
aṣṭanāmātmakam stotram yaḥ paṭhed bhaktisamyutaḥ ||
*tasya sarvārthasiddhiḥ syāt satyaṃ satyaṃ hi pārvatī ||*⁵⁶

Bhadrakālī, Mahākālī, drummer, (you) one having the eyes wide open and (you) one laughing ‘ṭakaṭankita’, Dhūmāvātī, world-creator and (you) one holding a winnowing fan – whichever devotee recites this hymn with eight names, his all wishes will be fulfilled. Pārvatī, this is absolutely true.⁵⁷

This *stava* quite clearly, again, exemplifies the nature of transformation Dhūmāvātī is subject to, also in many of the modern sources. Both contexts of the goddess, her original Tantric and the later added non-Tantric representation go side by side without, obviously, clear marking. This is also true for the *kavaca*. It combines Tantric ritual instruction in the form of an amulet-hymn, designed to protect the devotee and using ritual data like the *bījamantra* of the goddess, with a rather general eulogy of the goddess as a benign figure, using popular names of praise for Mahādevī:

55 *Mantrasāgar*. *Vidhyā mem Bhārat Sone kī Cīriyā*, ed. RAMEŚVAR PRASĀD TRIPĀṬHI “NIRBHAYA”, (Vārāṇasī: Jyotiṣ Prakāśan, 1996), 91-93.

56 *Stava*, *Dhūmāvātī-Sādhana* of the *Mantrasāgar*.

57 *Stava*, *Dhūmāvātī-Sādhana* of the *Mantrasāgar*, translated by the author.

*Dhūmāvātī mukhaṃ pātu dhūṃ dhūṃ svābhāsvaruṇīṃ |
 lalāṭe vijayā pātu mālinī nityasundarī ||
 kalyāṇī hṛdayaṃ pātu hasarīm nābhidesāke |
 sarvāṅgaṃ pātu deveśī niṣkalā bhagamālinī ||
 sūpūṅyaṃ kavacaṃ divyaṃ yaḥ paṭhed bhaktisaṃyutaḥ |
 saubhāgyaṃ atulaṃ prāpya cānte devīpuraṃ yayai ||⁵⁸*

Dhūmāvātī in the form of *dhūṃ dhūṃ svābhā* may protect my face. The victorious one, the one wearing a garland of flowers and the ever beautiful shall protect my forehead. The one full of prosperity shall protect my heart and the syllables *ha*, *sa*, *rī* shall protect my navel. The mistress of the gods, the undivided and bountiful one, the one wearing a garland of flowers shall protect all my limbs. Whichever devotee recites this excellent, divine kavaca will attain unsurpassed prosperity and enters the world of the goddess.⁵⁹

The *Dhūmāvātī-Sādhana* chapter of the *Mantrasāgar* may be seen as a typical example of the presentation of the goddess in modern sources. Like the *Mantramahārṇava* and the *Śāktapramoda* before, it includes quite contradictory information on the goddess – on her ritual and worship, her function(s), her mythology and her iconography. The *dhyānamantra* of Dhūmāvātī included here is her most popular one by far. It is taken from the most influential source depicting the goddess up to the late 19th century, from a source restricted to her Tantric Mahāvidyā-background: the *Phetkārīṇītantra*. This *dhyānamantra* very vividly communicates Dhūmāvātī's inauspicious and terrifying character. The sparse ritual information of the *Mantrasāgar*, of course, is also taken from Tantric sources. But it is important to note that this information is incomplete and, as such, is ineffective as ritual instruction. Besides, concerning details, it is partly incorrect. *Stava* and *kavaca*, in the form presented here, appear for the first time in this source. Both are short hymns and include Tantric and non-Tantric ideas about the goddess' representation. They also try to combine her Tantric origin with a Mahādevī-theology. This is done here by simply identifying Dhūmāvātī with different manifestations of Durgā-Mahādevī. In the *stava*, Dhūmāvātī, without further illustration, is named, for instance, Bhadrakālī and Jagatkartrārā and in the *kavaca*, for instance, Vijayā, Mālinī and Nityasundarī. Subsequently, what sets particularly the *Mantrasāgar* and in general, nearly all contemporary sources, apart from the late 19th century *Mantramahārṇava* and *Śāktapramoda*, is mainly the briefness of information given. This concerns the ritual data, but also all additional information. In connection to that, the mode of presentation

58 *Kavaca*, *Dhūmāvātī-Sādhana* of the *Mantrasāgar*.

59 *Kavaca*, *Dhūmāvātī-Sādhana* of the *Mantrasāgar*, translated by the author.

also changed. To arrange information on the goddess in the formal way of hymns is not new to the *Mantrasāgar*, not even to the *Mantramahārṇava* and *Śāktapramoda*. The *dhyānamantras* of the early medieval sources also arrange essential information on the goddess in a hymnal form. But what is new in many contemporary sources, including the *Mantrasāgar*, is the composition of very short hymns, mostly called *stava*, *stotra*, *nāmastotra* or *kavaca*.

The *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantrasāra* compilation, published in 1998⁶⁰, is another characteristic example of the standardized presentation of Dhūmāvātī in the 20th century which stays very close to the *Mantrasāgar*. The goddess is included here on five pages. Following an illustration and a *yantra*, a short Hindi-text introduces Dhūmāvātī. Then, essential parts of her ritual are presented in Sanskrit: *mantra*, *dhyānamantra*, *stotra* and *kavaca*. No reference for these is given here, but they may be assigned to the respective works: the *dhyānamantra* to the *Phetkārīnītantra* and *stotra* and *kavaca* to the *Mantrasāgar*. The passage called *stotra* here is identical with the *stava* of the *Mantrasāgar*. All information is translated into Hindi.

This listing of modern and contemporary sources testing for the goddess' textual development in the way presented here could be continued. Outstanding among all of these works are solely two texts dealing with the goddess in a much more detailed manner. Only these deliver the complete ritual instruction, and only these take account of the full information of the *Mantramahārṇava* and the *Śāktapramoda*, including the hymns stated there – *stotra*, *kavaca*, *hṛdaya*, *śatanāmastotra* and *sahasranāmastotra*. Obviously, both compilations have much in common. In 1999, a very comprehensive compilation on the Mahāvidyās was published: *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra*⁶¹. In thirty nine pages, the chapter *Dhūmāvātītantra* gives a *yantra*, an illustration (according to the iconography described in the *dhyānamantra* of the *Phetkārīnītantra*) and, of course, the usual ritual data. In subdivisions titled *Dhūmāvātī-Tatva*, *Dhūmāvātī Mantra-Prayoga* and *Śrī Dhūmāvātī Kavaca, Stotra Ādi* the instructions from both *Phetkārīnītantra* and *Mantramahārṇava* are repeated. The sources are not quoted, and very few Hindi specifications are included. The text recapitulates the known information from the major

60 See YOGIRĀJ 'BHĀRATĪ' YAŚPĀL, *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantrasāra* (Haridvār: Raṅdhīr Prakāśan, 1998).

61 See RĀJEŚ DĪKŚĪT, *Daśa Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* (Āgrā: Dīp Publications, 1999). The 1500-pages-work is a collection of compilations, published between 1987 and 1991, on the individual *Mahāvidyā*-goddesses by the compiler and author Rājeś Dīkṣit.

sources on the goddess, leaving it unaltered and nearly uncommented on. In doing so, this compilation clearly exemplifies Dhūmāvātī's reception in contemporary sources.

Basically the same formal arrangement is taken up by the compilation *Aslī Prācīn Daśa-Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra*⁶². It includes nearly the same information as the *Dasa Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra*. Dhūmāvātī is also presented in accordance with the *Phetkārīnītantra* and the *Mantramahārṇava* here. An illustration shows the goddess in the usual iconography, consonant to the *dhyānamantra* to the *Phetkārīnītantra*. Ritual information is given thereafter. The *Aslī Prācīn Daśa-Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* at this differs from other contemporary works in one respect; it gives references for the information stated. In all other aspects, concerning the content as well as the formal presentation, it is concordant with the goddess' reception and presentation after the 19th century. This contemporary compilation also stays within the line of the consistent development in the textual tradition of Dhūmāvātī.

An Outlook: The transformation continues at the temple of Dhūmāvātī in Benares

Even though the focus of this paper clearly lies in the developments of the goddess' textual tradition, I do not wish to conclude it by omitting one additional aspect concerning the transformation of Dhūmāvātī. The transformations in the goddess' representation, of her function, ritual, iconography and mythology, are not concluded in the latest texts. They are not limited to the textual tradition, but are also found in the practical worship of the *devī*. Dhūmāvātī today (and, as far as we know, from around the 18th century on) is worshipped in a fairly large and important temple in Benares⁶³. In the city quarter Dhūpcaṇḍī, a *mohallā* named after its predominant deity, she is regarded as a benign, protective neighbourhood goddess, as the *mohallā devī*. She attracts a very large number of devotees

62 See K. L. ŚARMĀ, *Aslī Prācīn Daśa-Mahāvidyā Tantra Mahāśāstra* (Dillī: Manoj Pocket Books, without year). No reference is given for the date of publishing in the work itself. According to my estimations it was first published 2002.

63 For a detailed discussion of the assumed dates for the temple, for the reception and interpretation of Dhūmāvātī there and for the ritual and textual traditions of the temple in general see XENIA ZEILER, *Die Göttin Dhūmāvātī* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011 forthc.).

here, but is not very significant in other areas of Benares⁶⁴. Even though all *pūjārīs* are aware of her Tantric Mahāvidyā-background and her special characteristics in this context, in her temple, Dhūmāvati is clearly depicted as a benign manifestation of *devī*. Her *mūrti* is presented in a form very typical for *banārasī* goddess temples. For instance, nothing reminds of her most characteristic iconographical feature, of her status as a widow. The image shows all attributes denoting a married goddess: she is dressed with jewellery, flowers and preferably in red colours. The vast majority of devotees visiting her temple today considers the *devī* married, and her original Tantric background is, to a great extent, unknown to them. They rarely know about the Mahāvidyā conception, the goddess' affiliation to it and far less about details from her textual background. Devotees in Dhūmāvati's contemporary temple in Dhūpcaṇḍī clearly understand the goddess as an emanation of Durgā (in rare cases also of Pārvatī) or, more generally, of Mahādevī, and worship her, with very few exceptions, with the blend of local and popular elements common to the city's temples.

There are, of course, several reasons for this radical transformation of the goddess as compared to the representation in all textual sources – as compared to, surely, medieval texts, but even as compared to texts already presenting the deity transformed, to texts from the late 19th century and to very recent texts alike. Even these, as I have argued before, do not fully negate Dhūmāvati's Tantric origin. They present the Tantric characteristics of the goddess *in addition to* identifying her with Mahādevī. In contrast to this rather smooth coexistence of a Tantric and a non-Tantric reception of Dhūmāvati typical of her textual tradition from the late 19th century on, in the reception of the majority of devotees in the temple Dhūpcaṇḍī, their *mohallā devī* lost all Tantric affiliations. Surely all possible reasons for this development and all influences that may have affected the goddess since her textual origin are highly interesting⁶⁵. But one, without a doubt, stands out in particular. It is a quite obvious one and valid not only for

64 One indicator for this is her absence in any of the numerous “classical” *yātrās* connecting the city's deities. Only MATTHEW ATWOOD SHERRING, *Benares. The Sacred City of the Hindus in Ancient & Modern Times*, (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2001), 153, reports of a *Pañcakrośī Yātrā* including her. A “modern” *Daśamahāvidyā Yātrā* including all members of the group in Benares developed very recently, in the year 2000. For details concerning this *yātrā* and for a specification of the terms “classical” versus “modern” in this context see XENIA ZEILER, “The Emergence and Negotiations of contemporary pilgrimages in Banāras. The Dasha Mahāvidyā Yātrā”, in *Sacred Geography of Goddesses in South Asia*, ed. R. P. B. SINGH (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 307-328.

65 They are discussed in detail in XENIA ZEILER, *Die Göttin Dhūmāvati* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011 forthc.).

Dhūmāvātī, but for a large number of goddesses with a high potential of dangerous and fearful characteristics in their original representation – be they from a Tantric background or from a popular Hindu one like several *grāma devīs* especially from South India, namely from Orissa and Tamil Nadu. The survival of the former Tantric Dhūmāvātī and moreover, her rise to the area's most important goddess, could only take place if she underwent a 'saumyisation', pacification or sweetening, of her attitude and character. She had to change in the living, non-textual context, according to the interests and needs of her new devotees, who require quite the opposite of what Dhūmāvātī was in the Tantric context. She had to lose her *ugra* qualities in favour of new imposed *saumya* qualities. Quite surely, only because the goddess was adapted to these changes, we still find her alive in an active religious setting today, in Benares. The transformation of Dhūmāvātī, both in her textual tradition as well as in her development beyond the texts, in her flourishing temple in Benares, most clearly follows general tendencies in Hinduism. The 'saumyisation' of wild goddesses on one side goes hand in hand with restrictions of the individuality of wild and mild goddesses alike or even the loss of the own individuality in favour of the emergence of uniformity, personified in the all-including Mahādevī. Dhūmāvātī, here like many other Tantra or folk religion based goddesses elsewhere, not only invaded the Smārta tradition but is quite firmly integrated into it.

But then again, even in the lived tradition of Dhūmāvātī in her temple in Benares, the reception and, along with it, the transformation of the goddess in the end is not that simple. Beside the devotees, the *pūjārīs* also naturally have a strong impact on the reception of Dhūmāvātī in her temple. They account for the fact that, to a limited extent, the goddess still shows remnants of her Tantric background in the ritual practice in her contemporary temple. Signs of Tantra-based elements are especially apparent in her festival ritual.

As a consequence of the goddess' ongoing transformation an individual hybrid festival culture arose in the temple. Accordingly, the festival rituals of the *banārasī* Dhūmāvātī temple vary considerably. For instance, we find modern, newly emerged festivals with a clear background in local folk Hindu tradition. These festivals stress the benign qualities of Dhūmāvātī and her functions as *mohallā devī*, especially concerning family welfare. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we also find remnants of Dhūmāvātī's Tantric representation in the annual festival cycle. In general, many of the festivals celebrated for the goddess in her temple in Benares contain differing amounts of popular or local festive elements and, at times, also of ritual forms influenced by the Tantric tradition. Additionally, these various traditions are blended in different ways. This interaction and mutual

impact of Tantric and popular influenced local ritual performances characterizes the individual hybrid festival culture in the temple Dhūpcaṇḍī. Very distinctive innovations and negotiations still occur in the contemporary festival culture as well. For instance, the two major ritual changes in the festival structure in the past twenty years, of course initiated by the *pūjārīs*, both concern the Tantric origin of Dhūmāvātī. In 1988, the first official *havana* was arranged by the *pūjārīs* and performed here. *Havanas* had never before been part of the festival culture of the temple and, according to the *pūjārīs*, they were then chosen as new ritual elements for two explicit reasons. First, Dhūmāvātī, according to her Tantric tradition, has her origin in smoke, and she has a general preference for it. This preference and the close attachment of the goddess to smoke are widely attested for in the Tantric textual tradition of the goddess. Second, *havanas* undoubtedly have major importance in the Tantric ritual of Dhūmāvātī. Thus, the selection of *havanas* as new ritual elements in her temple is a clear, intentional and unconcealed reference to the goddess' Tantric background. The second recent major change in the festival ritual also gives particular importance to Dhūmāvātī's Tantric origin. In 2004, the first *Mahāvīdyāhavana* in the temple's history was introduced. In this *havana*, all individual goddesses of the group are worshipped separately, and Dhūmāvātī is herewith acknowledged as a member of the originally Tantric group.

With such religious performances the initiating *pūjārīs* outspokenly refer to Dhūmāvātī's Tantric affiliation, and the incorporation of such rituals directly reflects the ongoing negotiations concerning the identity of the goddess and its transformation in her temple. These negotiations seem not only to continue, but in fact to have reached a climax in recent history. But also in the future, these and other ritual innovations will surely be subject to further alternations and negotiations in the temple Dhūpcaṇḍī in Benares, continually structuring the reception of the goddess in the contemporary setting beyond the textual tradition. The transformation of Dhūmāvātī, in her textual tradition as well as in her temple in Benares, has surely not yet ended. The goddess and her representation – her ritual, functions, iconography and mythology – are currently and will most probably remain subject to future negotiations and changes.

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Reconnecting to What?

Imagined Continuities and Discursive Overlaps at Tantrapīṭhas in Central and Eastern India

ISTVÁN KEUL

Framework

Yoginī temples of Central and Eastern India¹ have been and continue to be the focus of various and multilayered – often overlapping – processes of signification. The actors in such processes of semantic construction and interpretation have different social backgrounds and agendas. This paper deals with contemporary aspects of meaning-constitution/construction and meaning-management at selected Yoginī temples. It is an attempt at shedding light on a contemporary (and ephemeral) constellation of discourses and their interfaces, which are produced by these same actors and conditioned by their encounter with the Yoginī temples. After a brief introduction of the Yoginī temples, the paper focuses on some of the actors involved in the signification processes and on their “readings” of these sites, and also on how they communicate these readings. I will close with some reflections on possible theoretical models for an analysis of these retellings.

¹ This essay is one of the outcomes of a research project on Yoginīs funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). I would like to express my thanks to the DFG for their financial support, and to the Faculty of History and Cultural Studies at the Berlin Freie Universität for accommodating the project.

Imagining Hirapur

I begin with two case studies related to the Yoginī temple in Hirapur (near Bhubaneswar, Orissa).² This temple is a historical monument under the auspices of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Thus it is a museum, with a restored 10th-century³ hypaethral (open to the sky) temple building and more than 70 medieval statues of goddesses and gods, and a permanent ASI-employee who looks after the compound and guides the visitors through the site. However, the Yoginī temple in Hirapur is more than a museal remnant of the past. For the residents of the village the hypaethral structure is a fully operational place of worship, a living temple. As such, it is regularly visited, mainly in the mornings and evenings, by villagers of all ages and of both genders, who come to offer their prayers and ritual services.

To what degree Yoginī temples were in their early history connected exclusively with tantric religiosity remains a matter of debate and is not going to concern us here. Our case studies are concerned with the perspective of the actors, who see the temples as (mostly former, sometimes still living) tantric places of worship. In other words, the issue here is not so much whether or not the Hirapur Yoginī temple had an actual Kaula connection at some time in the past, but rather how it is perceived by the

2 On the Hirapur Yoginī temple see KEDARNATH MAHAPATRA, "A Note on the Hypaethral Temple of sixty-four Yoginīs at Hirapur," *Orissa Historical Research Journal*, II/2 (1953): 23-40; MARGRIT THOMSEN, *Kult und Ikonographie der 64 Yoginīs* (PhD dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 1976); VIDYA DEHEJIA, *Yoginī Cult and Temples. A Tantric Tradition* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1986); HEINRICH VON STIETENCRON, "Yoginī, streghe dell'India medievale?" *Abstracta* 41 (1989): 32-41; THOMAS DONALDSON, *Tantra and Śākta Art of Orissa*, vol. 2 (Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2002), 661-674; ISTVÁN KEUL, "Mahāmāyā und die Yoginīs. Tradition und Transformation in Hirapur," in HILDEGARD PIEGELER, INKEN PROHL and STEFAN RADEMACHER, eds., *Gelebte Religionen. Untersuchungen zur sozialen Gestaltungskraft religiöser Vorstellungen und Praktiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Würzburg: Königshausen&Neumann, 2004), 151-163; HEINRICH VON STIETENCRON, "The sixty-four Yoginīs. A secret cult still unexplored," in CORNELIA MALLEBREIN and HEINRICH VON STIETENCRON, *The Divine Play on Earth. Religious Aesthetics and Ritual in Orissa* (Heidelberg: Synchron Publishers, 2008), 136-145.

3 We have no epigraphical or other textual evidence regarding the exact date of the establishment of the temple, nor is there any reliable information about its early history. Local tradition refers to the 9th-century queen Hira, of the Bhaumakara dynasty, not only as the founder of the temple but also the village's namesake. However, based on art-historical comparisons and on stylistic considerations, the beginning of the 10th century seems to be a more likely date.

people whose diverse observances and perspectives enrich its meaning in the present day. Their perception informs their reflection and communication about the site, resulting in the construction of continuities and – often surprisingly creative - relationalities.



Figure 1: *The Yoginī temple in Hirapur*

The artist

With its unusual design, its artistic and well-preserved images, but also its venerable age and mysterious past, this site attracts a wide range of visitors. Such a temple can incite creative processes, as in the case of Surendranath Jena, one of the important exponents of the dance tradition called Oḍissi.⁴

4 On Oḍissi, its history, and its masters see the more recent works of DINANATH PATHY, *Rethinking Odissi* (New Delhi: Harman Publishing House, 2007); CORNELIA SCHNEPEL, *Odissi: Eine ostindische Tanzform im Kontext der Debatte um regionale Tradition und kulturelle Identität* (Südasienswissenschaftliche Arbeitsblätter 6, 2005, <http://www.suedasien.uni-halle.de/SAWA/Schnepel.pdf>, accessed on 9 September 2009); ILEANA CITARISTI, *The Making of a Guru: Kelucharan Mohapatra, his life and times* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001). See also DHIRENDRANATH PATNAIK, *Odissi Dance* (Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1971); FRÉDÉRIQUE APFFEL-MARGLIN, *Wives of the God-King. The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985); SUNIL KOTHARI,



Figure 2: Inner view of the Hirapur Yoginī temple

Born in Orissa in 1924, Surendranath Jena returned there in the mid-1950s after extensive Kathakali studies in Calcutta. In Cuttack he devoted himself to the study of Oḍissi, becoming involved with the Jayantika, a rather heterogeneous group comprising musicians, actors, and dancers. In the late 1950s the Jayantika were engaged in establishing a structure for Oḍissi based on ancient dance traditions.

Among the most active and influential founding members of the Jayantika, who were instrumental in designing a set of rules that became canonical for Oḍissi, were Kelucharan Mohapatra and Pankaj Charan Das. They contributed decisively to the development of the “new” dance tradition, as performers and teachers, each in his own way: Mohapatra, born in the artist village of Raghurajpur, played the *mardala*-drums and *tablā*, and danced in his youth as a *gotipuā*. Das, on the other hand, originated from a Mahari family, and stood for the mythical connection of Oḍissi and temple ritual. While the styles propagated by these two multi-talented men (both of them combining the roles of dancer, choreographer, and teacher) were fundamentally different, they were

Oḍissi: Indian Classical Dance Art (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1990). On Surendranath Jena and the following summary of Jena’s life and work see ALESSANDRA LOPEZ Y ROYO, *ReConstructing and RePresenting Dance: Exploring the dance/archaeology conjunction* (2007, e-publication/e-book, Metamedia collaboratory, Stanford University; accessed on 8 June 2009).



Figure 3: *Yoginīs* in Hirapur

still within the confines of the Oḍissi-rules they had co-created. Unlike them, Surendranath Jena’s artistic trajectory crossed those boundaries often and early on.

In the 1960s Jena moved to Delhi and continued teaching Oḍissi at the Triveni Kala Sangam. Among his first foreign students was Frédérique Apffel-Marglin, then a student of anthropology working on a project on temple dance. Jena accompanied Apffel-Marglin to Konarak, where he was profoundly impressed by the body postures represented in the *nāṭamaṇḍapa* of the temple complex and decided to translate them into dance sequences. After his return, Jena choreographed a piece inspired by the sculptures of the Konarak temple, *Koṅārak Kānti* (The Beauty of Konarak), a composition that marked a first step towards reformulating his understanding of Oḍissi. It is not clear whether Jena and Apffel-Marglin visited Hirapur as well during that trip, but Jena returned to Orissa several times over the following years, visiting a number of other religious sites as well, among them the Yoginī temple in Hirapur. Surendranath Jena repeatedly referred to the temple in Hirapur (together with the Konarak temple) as the religious architecture that most inspired him. Jena’s later Oḍissi dances are characterized by a strong and dynamic iconicity, a preference for individual performances, and – inspired by Hirapur – the explicit inclusion of moods (*rasa*) that were not part of the canon of “classical” Oḍissi.

By incorporating the modes of expression for anger (*raudra rasa*) and disgust (*bibhatsa rasa*) in his choreographic repertoire, rather than focusing mainly on feminine grace or love (*śṛṅgāra rasa*), Jena significantly altered the image of the feminine that had been presented in the Odissi tradition up to then. Especially this latter innovation was highly controversial and drew criticism from fellow artists who called Jena's work subversive and even transgressive. When asked in interviews about the purportedly "anticlassical" elements in his Odissi, Jena repeatedly referred to the large variety of expressions that can be encountered among the iconographical representations in Hirapur, and which explicitly include images with fierce and wrathful aspects. In fact, Surendranath Jena dedicated one of his later works entirely to the female deities of Hirapur.⁵

The (artist-)scholar

In the year 2005, Jena's eldest daughter, Pratibhā Jena Singh, performed her father's work, *Śaktirūpa Yoginī* ("The Yoginī(s) as *śakti*", or "The *śakti* forms of the Yoginīs"), on the *sūryamaṇḍapa* of the temple in Hirapur. The impulse for the performance came from Alessandra Lopez y Royo, a Senior Lecturer of Visual Culture at Roehampton University.⁶

5 According to the artist, the initial stages in the composition process of *Śaktirūpa Yoginī* (introduced in the next paragraph) were the close reading of Saraḷā Dāsa's text *Caṇḍīpurāṇa*, and repeated visits to the temple in Hirapur, where Jena was deeply impressed by the ancient sculptural depictions of the Yoginīs. In addition to the *Caṇḍīpurāṇa* and the Yoginī sculptures, Jena evoked rituals of worship he had experienced as a child in his native Orissan village. Starting from there, he composed the verses, wrote the music and eventually choreographed a dance in two parts. The first part introduces the female deities of the Yoginī temple, setting the names of Yoginīs from the Oḍiya text by Saraḷā Dāsa in relation to their iconographic representations in the temple at Hirapur. The second part centers on rituals for worshipping village goddesses.

6 One of Alessandra Lopez y Royo's numerous research projects was devoted to the connections between Indian classical dance and the temples of India, which allowed her to collect a wealth of documentary material and make it available to a broader audience. Her DVD titled "Performing Konarak, Performing Hirapur: Documenting the Odissi of Guru Surendranath Jena" contains a documentary and two dance performances: *Śilpacandrikā* and *Śaktirūpa Yoginī*, the piece performed at the Hirapur Yoginī temple. I would like to express my thanks to Alessandra Lopez y Royo for her support in obtaining a copy of the DVD from the SOAS bookshop. The DVD was produced at SOAS, University of London, for the SOASIS DVD series: SOASIS/AHRC Research Centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance Performance, 2007. The documentary can also be downloaded from the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) Performing Arts website.

For some of the persons involved, the performance of Surendranath Jena's iconographically inspired work at the Hirapur temple seems to have carried connotations that went beyond a mere artistic event at a picturesque medieval site. Lopez y Royo repeatedly stressed in her publications that, in her eyes, the dance had an animating effect for the temple:

To witness that performance was an extraordinary experience, which opens up a new understanding of the relationship between dance in India and Indian temples, going beyond stereotypical notions of sculpturesque poses. What we see in the film shows how *through the choreography the site is animated, breathing life into the imagery of the powerful yoginis, reactivating the defunct practices of worship of their ancient cults* [my emphasis, I.K.]. The dance performance, which took place at Hirapur was not an established ritual nor a locally recognized performative tradition; informed by the syncretic vision of the choreographer, Guru Surendranath Jena, it resonated with the local villagers. [...] What comes out of this film is the idea that choreographed movement seems to be vital to imagine the mobile forces that were at work at archaeological sites such as Hirapur, rendered still and turned into an artefact in the present.⁷

The initiator of this event feels strongly that dance performances at sites like Hirapur's Yoginī temple are essential to (re-)imagining the dynamics of the place. Lopez y Royo emphasizes what she calls the "syncretic vision" of the choreographer as the basis of the composition, claiming at the same time to have sensed a certain response, a resonance on the part of the local villagers who attended the performance. She considers the Yoginī temple to be essentially a museal artefact, but during the performance and in its aftermath, the temple seemed transformed to her, at least temporarily; it seemed to her that Surendranath Jena's "transgressive" Oḍissi had breathed life into a long dormant religious site. Thus the dance appeared to revive and reactivate ritual practices that had long ago ceased to exist.

From the perspective of the academic study of religions, Lopez y Royo's (more or less marginal) remarks on the religiously and ritually animating effect of the dance performance have to be explored further, for they have direct implications on the present-day religious life of the inhabitants of Hirapur. To me, it is not entirely clear whether Lopez y Royo has simply failed to take proper notice of the local villagers who regularly worship in this temple,⁸ or whether she regards their religious views and practices

7 The Sakti Rupa Yogini and Hirapur. Performing Konarak, Performing Hirapur, <http://humanitieslab.stanford.edu/51/103>, accessed on 5 November 2009.

8 The material does include video of local devotees worshipping at the site. The commentary in the DVD-documentary introduces the Hirapur temple as "an archaeological site

as something alien to the “genuine”, “ancient cults” attributed to this archaeological site. When experienced mainly through the DVD and the accompanying material, which are not intended to be comprehensive, the site appears oddly unidimensional, a place presently devoid of life, some kind of Sleeping Beauty, where slumbering deities wait to be kissed back to life.

However, this impression is anything but accurate. The performance of Surendranath Jena’s *Śaktirūpa Yoginī*, this iconographically-inspired choreographical moment that (more or less explicitly) claims to reconnect with a bygone era, and to reactivate “defunct practices of worship”, is only one of many religiously significant episodes at a semantically and functionally highly polyvalent site. Such selective attempts at re-establishing continuities, at reviving allegedly original and genuine ritual traditions and practices constitute today the exception at a temple that is already the focus of manifold religious activities.

In addition to the regular visits of numerous villagers performing their daily rituals of worship there, mostly in the early mornings and in the evenings, and the morning visits of schoolchildren on their way to their classes, often praying for divine support for their exams, there are other religious activities at the temple, as well. Two times a year, the site is the venue of an elaborate fire sacrifice sponsored by the temple trust; furthermore, the temple plays an important role in the yearly festival of other temples of the locality: Each year, the *kālīsī* (medium) of another goddess temple in Hirapur leads a procession to the Yoginī temple where he performs rituals of empowerment for the insignia of this goddess. And, finally, we should mention regional tantric specialists who visit the temple once in a while. In addition, during religious festivals and holidays, company excursions to the site from nearby Bhubaneswar are not uncommon, and these usually include a picnic on the spacious temple grounds and savoring consecrated food prepared by the temple priest in the temple kitchen. To sum it up: At present, the Hirapur temple is a site of day-to-day religiosity, but caters also to special needs, attracting tantric ritualists and picnickers, travellers and scholars. It has Vedic rituals (*homa*) performed by Brahmin priests, maintaining at the same time a certain connectedness to a rural religiosity reminiscent of the *grāmadevī* shrines of inner Orissa. Local villagers still tell of the Yoginis drawing their circles around the village, carrying lights to reassure the villagers of their protective presence. But they also

officially not in worship, but still used by the local villagers for their ritual needs.” The first images of the temple include a very short sequence about a local villager, an old woman, praying in front of the entrance. Other short sequences in the second part of the documentary also show local worshippers, as well as one of the priests offering water to the images on the outer side of the temple wall.

tell of them as wild, horse-riding creatures swirling through the streets along with – real or imaginary – horses, ringing in the devastating cyclone in 2001.

With this excursus into the present polyvalence of the site I want to suggest the likelihood that multiple signification processes characterized this temple in earlier times, too.⁹ I would also like to suggest the twofold approach of this essay, characterized by selectivity: In a first step I rehearse various selective approaches by artists, scholars, and devotees, like the ones applied by Surendranath Jena in his work, and by Alessandra Lopez y Royo in her performative “reanimation” of the site. Then, by focusing on their approaches to the Yoginīs of Hirapur, as well as on the following protagonists’ selective approaches to the Yoginīs of Bheraghat, I intend to explore to what extent these perspectives and processes of signification at contemporary Yoginī temples can be synthesized within intertextual theory.

Imagining Bheraghat

The Yoginī temple in Bheraghat¹⁰ is – like the temple in Hirapur – a multifunctional place: historical monument and active place of worship at the same time. In spite of a fair number of regular local devotees, this temple is not as integral a part of daily religious life in the area as is the Hirapur temple, indeed its status seems more that of a curiosity endowed with worship facilities. Many visitors to the area include Bheraghat in their holiday tours because of its scenic beauty. The Duandhar Falls and the gorge of the Narmada called Marble Rocks, the setting of many a dramatic song scene in Bollywood productions, combined with the Yoginī temple on the hill by the river, attract many visitors throughout the year.

9 As Shaman Hatley has recently pointed out, “with the increasing significance of yoginīs in the *purāna* corpus, the yoginī temples in fact appear to mark the entry of these deities into a wider religious domain, beyond the confines of the esoteric tradition – to the point that their ritual maṇḍalas are translated into monumental circular temples.” In: SHAMAN HATLEY, *The Brahmāyāmalatantra and Early Śaiva Cult of Yoginīs* (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 128. I would like to thank Shaman Hatley for providing me a copy of his dissertation.

10 On the Bheraghat Yoginī temple see RAJKUMAR SHARMA, *The Temple of Chaunsat̥ha Yoginī at Bheraghat* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1978); M. THOMSEN, *Kult und Ikonographie der 64 Yoginīs*; V. DEHEJIA, *Yoginī Cult and Temples*; R. D. BANERJI, *The Haihayas of Tripuri and their Monuments* (Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India no. 23, 1931. Reprint, New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1998).

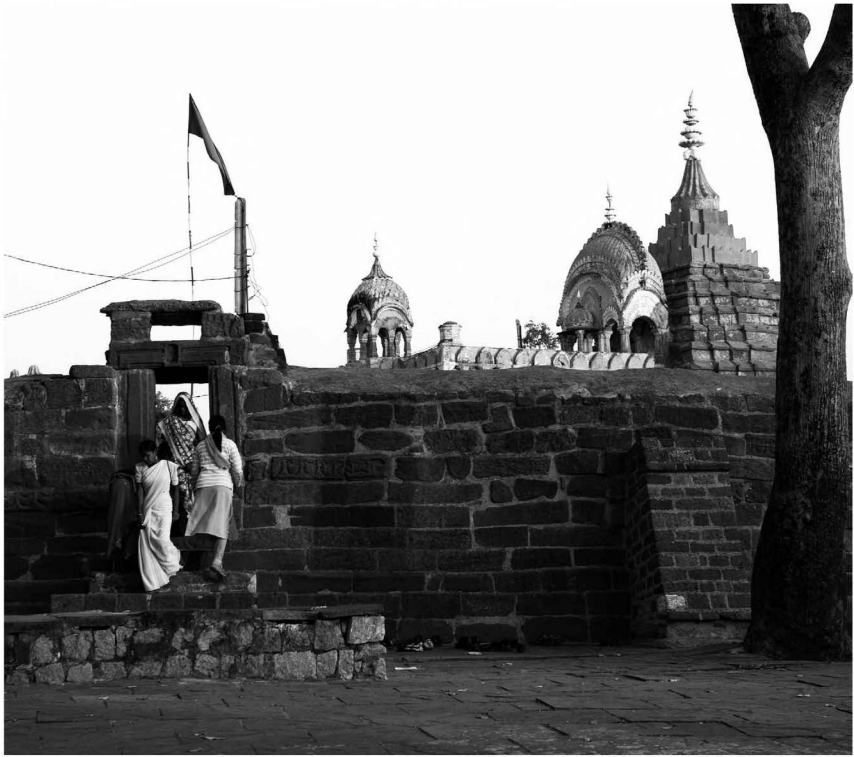


Figure 4: The Yoginī temple in Bheraghat

At present, religious life at the site is centered on the worship of Śiva and Pārvatī (Gaurī-Śaṅkar) whose image is in the sanctum of an edifice that is a somewhat later addition to the 11th-century Yoginī temple. In addition, the present religious significance of the site is enhanced by the increased attention given to the Yoginī figures enshrined in the circular wall of the temple. Although most of the images are substantially damaged and, for this reason (according to authoritative ritual texts), must not be worshipped, in some instances they are the addressees and recipients of prayers and offerings, and become also the focus of signification processes in the course of which past valences of the Bheraghat Yoginīs and their temple are reimagined and integrated into wider – individual or collective – models of meaning-making and interpretation.

The Hyderabad devotees

Our first Bheraghat-case study centers on a family of ten brothers and a sister between the ages of 42 and 71 and their 92 year-old mother, Sajjubai, all of them living in Hyderabad.¹¹ Around the year 1990, during one of her numerous pilgrimages, Sajjubai visited sites along the river Narmada and heard about the Yoginī temple in Bheraghat. Her family had been worshipping the Caumsaṭh Yoginī as their *kuladevī*, their ancestral/family deity, and she had been long nurturing the wish to build a proper place of Yoginī worship. During her journeys to distant places (which took her as far as Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Kanyakumari, and Prayag) she had been constantly searching for a Yoginī temple. In 1994 she returned to Bheraghat, accompanied by two of her sons, and asked the priests of the temple to perform the necessary rituals that would enable the establishment of a shrine dedicated to the Yoginīs in Hyderabad. Guided by one of the priests, the family carried out the first stages of the *translatio dei* on the banks of the Narmada. Accompanied by rhythmic drumming (performed on an improvised instrument, a *thālī*, a flat metal tray), sand was extracted from the river, wrapped in the loose portion of Sajjubai's sari, and consecrated in the Gaurī-Śaṅkar shrine in the Yoginī temple on the hill. After a *pūjā* of the main temple image with flowers and fruit, and a brief *prānapratisthā*-ceremony, in the course of which the sand was ritually infused with divine "life substance", a circumambulation of the compound was performed, with stops in front of each Yoginī. The consecrated sand – now ritually transformed into the equivalent of a full-fledged *mūrti* – was then taken by car to Hyderabad using the most direct route and with no unnecessary stops. After a journey of almost two days, the sand was deposited in a newly erected structure in the courtyard of the house of one of Sajjubai's sons. According to the family members in charge of the construction of the prospective temple, the building was designed according to rules laid down in the *vāstuśāstra*, which also dictated the appropriate corner for the installation of the central "temple image": The sand was carefully positioned into a brick-framed sanctum and covered by a thin layer of cement. No ritual specialist was present during this last stage of the *translatio*, but the family kept vigil all night (*jāgaran*), singing devotional songs, accompanied by musicians. On the day following the deity's arrival, a whole-day *pūjā* was performed, this time with the assis-

11 The material on the Yoginī devotees from Hyderabad stems from the year 2007. I visited the Hyderabad Yoginī temple and some of the family's homes in March 2007, and met with a number of family members in October of the same year in Bheraghat.

tance of a Brahmin priest. Today, the temple is the central place of worship for the extended family. One of Sajjubai's grandsons is in charge of the ritual activities: He worships the Caṃsath Yoginī once daily sometime between 9 and 11 o'clock in the morning, usually taking no longer than 20 minutes. He recites a number of verses (mainly from the *Durgāsaptāṣṭī*), which he learned from one of the Bheraghat priests¹², and performs a *pañcopacārapūjā*. On Tuesdays the temple is decorated and the ritual is somewhat more elaborate, including the offering of alcohol and a coconut. On Dussehra, considered the most important festival in the ritual year of the temple, a goat is sacrificed. On this occasion, handprints on the inner and outer walls of the temple are renewed in fresh blood.

The story of the shrine is well known today in the family. It was told to me independently by family members from three generations: Sajjubai, her sons and one of her grandsons. All emphasized the importance of the Bheraghat temple as the main seat of their *kuladevī* "Caṃsath Yoginī". Since 1995, family members regularly observe Dussehra by traveling to Bheraghat to worship their deity. The elaborate ritual includes a *kumārīpūjā*, during which a number of young girls from the village are worshipped as various forms of the Goddess. The girls are richly rewarded after the ceremony. The most important of the rituals regularly performed by the visitors from Hyderabad, however, is an animal sacrifice. In October 2007, for example, two black goats were ritually offered in front of the image of Caṇḍikā, and then slaughtered outside the temple compound. According to the family tradition, animal sacrifices performed in Hyderabad for the *kuladevī* were much larger several generations ago, when the usual number of sacrificed goats was 64. Interestingly, the family members that I talked to always referred to "Caṃsath Yoginī" in the singular form, and when I explicitly inquired about this, they reiterated that she was actually one goddess. When asked to name some of the 64 Yoginīs, neither Sajjubai nor the younger members of the family hesitated to reply categorically that there are no individual names because Caṃsath Yoginī is one deity. This seemingly "ungrammatical" interpretation can, of course, be easily justified mythologically by reference to the many texts that present a Great Goddess as the source of all goddesses. However, given the recently reestablished direct spatial connection of the family's *kuladevatā* with the temple in Bheraghat, and that temple's numerous stone statues

12 The priests in Bheraghat have become spiritual advisors with whom family members communicate frequently. In the spring of 2007, one of the priests was invited to participate in the marriage ceremony of one of Sajjubai's numerous grandchildren. The priest travelled to Hyderabad and spent ten days there.



Figure 5: Inner view of the Bheraghat Yoginī temple

of Yoginīs, it is hard not to perceive a cognitive dissonance. This apparent predicament is replicated in the shrine erected in 1994 at the family home in Hyderabad, where the central image is a mound of sand covered by a thin layer of cement, worshipped as “the goddess Caṃsaṭh Yoginī”. Immediately behind the mound, pictures on the wall depict the Bheraghat temple (abode to the multiple Yoginīs) and the Gaurī-Śaṅkar image in the sanctum of that temple.

The German couple

My second Bheraghat-related case study focuses on a couple from Germany, who over the last years have frequently travelled to the site and spent a considerable amount of time in the precincts of the Yoginī temple there, praying and meditating. The driving force in the couple’s spiritual search in India was the husband, U.H. (born in 1947), a trained psychologist, astrologer, and counsellor, and a seasoned traveller to the subcontinent.¹³ As a result of their repeated stays in Bheraghat, the couple produced a

¹³ I met the couple in Bheraghat in 2007 and stayed in touch with them over the next years.

DVD, titled “The Enchantresses of Bheraghat”. The 15-minute film was presented at the World Psychedelic Forum in Basel in March 2008. The introduction includes a text with a twofold characterization of the Yoginīs:

Yoginīs are enchantresses, semidivine creatures who in daytime move through the air and at night descend on a hilltop and form a circle, a tantric circle. Yoginīs are elemental emotional forces and represent unusual states of consciousness, independent from rational thought (*vom Denken unabhängige Bewußtseinszustände*). Hewn in stone to last for eternity, the Yoginīs stand atop a hill in a temple open to the sky. A ritual is needed for their worship and awakening, so that they can effect spiritual aid.

The film begins with a brief presentation of the surrounding landscape, showing the river and the village. Then the camera ascends the steps to the temple and enters into the circular compound. It focuses on the edifice at the centre of the site (the shrine of Gaurī-Śaṅkar), and then shows some of the Yoginīs in a few still shots, ending with the Yoginī Kāmadā (and the well-known depiction of a scene of *yoni*-worship beneath her). All this is accompanied by *sāraṅgī* and *tablā* music, and is followed by dark scenes, lit only dimly by a few oil lamps, which show Ms. H. performing an *ārti*-ceremony in front of the Gaurī-Śaṅkar image. During this sequence, the atmosphere suddenly changes, and both the visual and the acoustic elements that were until then linear and rather narrative, become multilayered and somewhat dissonant. We hear sounds of a storm or strong winds, and the face of a Yoginī blends into the picture. The rest of the film (roughly the second half) consists mainly of such auditory and visual blendings.

In addition to the film, U.H. intends to publish a book about his and his wife’s encounter with the Yoginī temple in Bheraghat. The author graciously allowed me to read parts of the manuscript. The work is going to have chapters on the history, architecture, and iconography of the temple (all based on the available indological scholarship), as well as a section dealing with the couple’s personal experiences. In the introduction that H. has drafted for this part, he writes: “Personal experiences constitute for us an important aspect, and we believe that they enabled us to connect with certain elements of the old cult.” And later he adds:

Our first encounter with the Yoginī images in this temple produced a deep and lasting impression. When we stepped inside, it was instantly clear that the temple had a tantric background. I recognized this on the basis of the Padmas, the stylized vulva-like ornaments, that are all over the place. [...] My wife and I knew that we had found “our” temple. [...] I remember well our first walk around the place, along the Yoginī statues. It was as if I was sensing vibrations, and much of that was of an erotic nature. But the strongest feeling was more



Figure 6: The Yoginī Sarvatomukhī in the Bheraghat temple

encompassing: It was about being there, about having arrived (*ein Gefühl des Angekommenseins*).

In October 2009, H. wrote that he and his wife were eagerly awaiting a number of parcels from India with a very valuable content. During their most recent visit to Bheraghat (autumn 2008), they had ordered copies of three Yoginī statues, (namely Phaṇendrī, Sarvatomukhī and Kāmadā) from a local sculptor. Together with statues of Śiva and Pārvatī, as well as of two *dvārapālas* (all four modeled after statues from the Vaitāl Deul in Bhubaneswar) and Gaṇeśa, the Yoginīs would become the core of the couple's private Yoginī sanctuary in a pavillon in their garden.

Theoretical reflections

How can all these more or less experiential processes of imagining, constructing, and experimenting with continuities at Yoginī temples be adequately integrated theoretically? The case studies discussed here, even if documented rather randomly, might show the way for further, more extensive research in this direction. At this preliminary stage, intertextual theory seems to be one useful frame of reference for exploring the meaning-constructions and -projections presented here. This approach involves looking at each of the individual readings and interpretations as texts that are semiotically and semantically conditioned by a network of other texts, signs, sign systems. The thrust of this approach implies two – sometimes overlapping – lines of inquiry: What is the intertext of these texts? And: Which social situations, which discourses inform the signification processes expressed in these texts?

G rard Genette and Michael Riffaterre employ intertextual theory to argue for critical certainty, or rather for the possibility of saying definite things about literary texts.¹⁴ I would adapt their models in trying to order these texts/constructed meanings into a to some extent coherent system and place them into certain discourses. As far as intertextual relationships are concerned, I would propose to consider the Yoginī temples as the “inter-texts” (or, to use Genette’s expression: the hypotexts)¹⁵ for

14 G RARD GENETTE, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) (French orig.: *Palimpsestes, La litt rature au second degr *, Paris:  ditions du Seuil, 1982); MICHAEL RIFFATERRE, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); MICHAEL RIFFATERRE, *Text Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

15 G. GENETTE, *Palimpsests*, 5.

the individual interpretations/significations presented above. A hypotext or intertext is a text that can be definitively located as a major source of signification for a text. Thus the individual narratives presented in the case studies become texts in the second degree, texts derived from a pre-existing text. Riffaterre, one of the theoreticians of reader-response criticism, argued that the actual meaning of a text can be emulated by the reaction of the reader. Initially developed in the context of literary theory, Riffaterre's model of structural stylistics can be used to single out those features of our primary texts (the temples) that seem to be particularly relevant for their "readers". This approach, however, would have to be slightly modified for our purposes, as Riffaterre constructs for himself an ideal "super-reader", instead of taking into account the reactions of real recipients of the texts. At the same time, the emphasis would have to shift from focusing exclusively on structurally inherent meaning(s) of the primary text and its stylistic patterns,¹⁶ to a closer analysis of the individual reactions of the different readers/interpreters, conditioned to a large extent by the respective discourses in which they participate.

Surendranath Jena's is – obviously – the artistic discourse: In the 1960s and 1970s he revisited some of the sites of his native region and received in the Hirapur temple a creative stimulus that remodeled his understanding of his art. In Jena's case, the artistic is interwoven with the religious and ritualistic. As a devotee of the Goddess, and a participant in daily worship of village deities in his childhood and youth he attributed much of his inspiration to a divine source. Alessandra Lopez y Royo has made (significant) contributions to the academic discourse on art and performance, which situates her in the immediate proximity of the artistic sphere. Her interests are manifold and transdisciplinary. In her project on the transgressive Oḍissi of Jena, she initiated and documented a performance of Jena's *Śaktirūpa Yoginī* at the temple in Hirapur. By doing this, she has on her part transgressed to some extent the boundaries imposed by her academic discipline, becoming an agent in one of her own objects of study, namely the construction of heritage. Sajjubai from Hyderabad participates in an emic-ritualistic discourse characterized by Śākta religiosity: The Yoginīs are the emanations of the Goddess, and the Bheraghat temple is seen as her and Śiva's original, powerful abode. There, Sajjubai had the divine essence instilled in Narmada sand and transported to her home in Hyderabad, where daily rituals and occasional blood sacrifices are offered to the Caṃsaṣṭh Yoginī. Once yearly the family re-affirms/renews the re-established connection by travelling to Bheraghat during Dussehra and performing an elaborate ritual there. U.H. is involved in the etic-esoteric discourse. He is a seasoned traveler to India, where he studied Sanskrit and various philosophical and religious traditions and texts. He is professionally engaged in

16 M. RIFFATERRE, *Text Production*, 2f.

counselling and astrology, and participates actively in the New Age movement. Psychological processes, mystical transformation, tantric sexuality are among his fields of interest.

An in-depth analysis of recurrent semantic elements in the narratives of our protagonists will reveal whether it is advisable to pursue Riffaterre's model further, a model that postulates the existence of structural patterns inherent in a primary text, Genette's hypotext. After this first evaluation however, the temples seem to represent to a large degree semantically rather floating entities, "hypaethral categories" able to accommodate many meanings and to facilitate many different readings, decisively informed by different discourses.

The medieval Yoginī temples attract visitors from various domains and with various backgrounds, and become the starting points for signification processes that generate texts.¹⁷ In addition to exploring the relation between these texts and the hypotext "Yoginī temple", we could also look at the interrelations among all these texts, or their relation to other

17 I intend to discuss a number of other Yoginī-related texts and approaches in a future larger publication. Among them, the work of Stella Dupuis, a Swiss novelist born in Panama, who has recently published a thematic guide titled *The Yoginī Temples of India: In the pursuit of a mystery* (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2008), in the foreword of which she offers a description of her experiences in the Hirapur Yoginī temple: "After contemplating one of the figures of the Yoginīs, my eyes closed and my body folded into a sitting position. [...] Silence filled the stone shell of the temple beneath the open sky. Distantly, more and more distantly, the world continued to turn while my soul expanded in the primordial waters of devotion. [...] Something special had happened to me in that place. I felt a perfect alertness of the senses. My mind was sharper than ever I remember." (S. DUPUIS, *Yoginī Temples*, 10.) In the preface of the guide, Dupuis announces the publication of two other books, that will "help the reader familiarize himself with the enigmatic themes related to the religion of the Yoginīs and their temples", namely "the translation of the original manuscript of the *Mahākaulajñānanirṇaya*, written on palm leaves in a coded language" and a novel, "In the Belly of the Fish", "a voyage to an encounter with the fascinating world of Matsyendranātha, who broke away from the ideas of established religions." (S. DUPUIS, *Yoginī Temples*, 18.) I met Stella Dupuis in January 2009 at the Bheraghat Yoginī temple and interviewed her travel companion, an US-educated, Delhi-based cosmetician with intense affinities for the Yoginīs. Other approaches that make interesting case studies for an intertextual analysis include a number of academic works: ELINOR W. GADON, "Probing the Mysteries of the Hirapur Yoginīs," *ReVision* 25/1 (2002): 33-41 (perspectives: feminism, Goddess theology); NILIMA CHITGOPEKAR, "The Unfettered Yoginīs," in NILIMA CHITGOPEKAR, ed., *Invoking Goddesses: Gender Politics in Indian Religion* (New Delhi: Shakti Books, 2002), 82-111 (gender); H. VON STIENCRON, "Yoginī, streghe dell'India medievale?" (Yoginī temples and astronomy); MARGRIT THOMSEN, "Numerical Symbolism and Orientation in Some Temples of the 64 Yoginīs," *Art and Archaeology Research Papers* (March 1980), 53-56.

hypotexts, like the secondary scholarly literature on tantra and Hirapur, extensively read by Lopez y Royo, the H. family, or partly and selectively even by the priests and some of the local informants at the temples. Along the lines of Harold Bloom's theory of influence,¹⁸ we could look at the respective individual receptions of texts by our protagonists as "simultaneously unconscious and deliberate misreadings", or "personal and partial adaptations".¹⁹ I am not sure yet how far Bloom's "map of misreading" can be followed here, given the fact that – while emphasizing the productive and constructivist moment of "reading" (in our case: of "reading" the temples) – his theory restricts the behaviours of individual authors to the realm of the individual psyche, neglecting other components like the social and the discursive.²⁰

At this still very preliminary stage of enquiry many questions remain. Exploring, for instance, the priests' positions (at both temples) in this ramified intertextual network might be revealing. Their role as enablers or even catalysts for meaning-making processes, as meaning-managers and as active architects of present-day models of signification has yet to be examined closer. But this is only one of the many stones still missing from the mosaic of my own model and reading.

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The Absent Mother and Bodied Speech

Psychology and Gender in late Medieval Tantra

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‘Do crossword puzzles.’
(Advice to a young psychoanalyst)
Jacques Lacan, 1977¹

This paper examines the possibilities for understanding the symbolic elements of Tantra as a psychological hermeneutic. I suggest here that we can find in some versions of Tantra a structural model that encodes a very sophisticated psychological framework. Specifically, I argue that we find in one late medieval presentation of Tantra, the 15th - 18th century *Byḥannīlatantra*² from the northeastern part of India, a prescient anticipation of psychoanalytic analyses of gender, which offers a surprising parallel to a contemporary psychoanalytic model presented by the Freudian thinker Jacques Lacan. Of course, I am not the first to point out that Tantra offers some striking parallels with psychoanalysis. Jeff Kripal has suggested this as well, arguing especially for a functional comparison between the transformative and therapeutic elements of both.³

Here I will address the representation of gender in these two parallel psychological paradigms, noting especially the differences we see. That is, even as this late 15th-18th century Tantric model from the *Byḥannīlatantra* offers insightful comparisons to Lacan’s Freudian model, it also diverges

1 JACQUES LACAN, *Ecrits*, trans. ALAN SHERIDAN (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 56.

2 For a comprehensive analysis of the *Byḥannīlatantra* see “Appendix 1” and “Appendix 2” in LORILIAI BIERNACKI, *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex and Speech in Tantra* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 149-221.

3 JEFFREY KRIPAL, “Shashibhushan Dasgupta’s Lotus: Realizing the Sublime in Contemporary Tantric Studies,” in *Breaking Boundaries With the Goddess: New Directions in the Study of Śāktism: Essays in Honor of Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya*, eds. CYNTHIA ANN HUMES and RACHEL FELL McDERMOTT (New Delhi: Manohar, 2009).

from a 20th-century Freudian model in its understanding of the relation the feminine bears to language. Lacan's psychoanalytic revisions to Freud have been extremely influential for the 20th century, particularly in post-structural analyses of the self and gender. What has probably had the most significant impact on current theory has been his reformulation of Freud's basic developmental insights within a linguistic model. For this reason, an exploration of the points of contact that Tantra shares on the issue of language and gender may offer much to our contemporary understanding of the idea of the self.

In Lacan's linguistic interpretation, Freud's oedipal phase becomes correlated with the entrance of the child into language, into what Lacan calls the "symbolic" register, out of the earlier phase of the "imaginary." For Lacan, this developmental shift into language as the register of the symbolic necessarily excludes the feminine from the realm of language, exemplified in Lacan's infamous and inflammatory "the woman does not exist."⁴

In contrast, while this Tantric understanding of the relationship of the feminine to language also presupposes some of the same essentialist structural relations between logocentrism and the feminine, this late medieval Tantric model instead proposes two types of language. On the one hand, one finds a notion of ordinary semantically driven language – which would correspond to the symbolic register that Lacan understands. On the other, however, this Tantric model sees another type of language as well and this other type of language, rather than excluding the feminine, instead embodies it. This other type of language is the magical language of the *mantra* and the *vidyā*.

The analysis for both models, a Lacanian model and this late medieval Tantric model, pivots around the body – especially the feminine body – and the problem of desire. The feminine and the feminine as body exemplify a space outside of a normative logocentric view that generates a binary of spirit and body and its corollary, word and flesh. Roughly speaking, desire arises out of the gap between these two. What the magical speech of the

4 First formulated in his 1970-1971 Seminar, Lacan later reformulates this "la femme n'existe pas" into "il n'y a pas La femme" in his 1972-73 Seminar in Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire. Livre XX. Encore*, 1972-73, ed. JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 68; also in English, JACQUES LACAN, *Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER, Book XX, *Encore 1972-1973*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 7. This reformulation, with its capitalization of the article "la" emphasizes the idea of the universalization of woman as a concept. That is, the woman does not exist because there is no generalized notion of woman that can enter into the linguistic register as a universal concept.

mantra and the *vidyā* points out for us is a tangible “fleshing” out of the word. That is, in a palpable and literal way it shifts the ground of language to incorporate into language a corporeal presence. In its corporeality, I suggest that the Tantric *vidyā* insinuates a breach at the heart of the binary which constitutes the word and its meaning because it fuses these two, leaving us with a word which is like a physical body, rather than a sign.

I will also argue in this paper that this Tantric map of woman and language offers a way out of Lacan’s formulation of the woman as “not-whole.”⁵ Lacan’s formulation links woman as that which cannot be generalized to language, and particularly to language as the replacement for the absent mother that the child desires. Our Tantric model also presents the problem of the absent mother and offers instead a different solution to the desire for the absent mother. With this, I suggest that this Tantric model short-circuits the oedipal scheme that Lacan offers. Thus it is possible to use the psychological insights that Tantra offers to refine our own contemporary psychological models and to think more deeply about different possibilities for understanding gender.

In what follows below I first frame this analysis with attention to the problem of the feminine in psychoanalysis. Following this I present a myth from the *Brhannīlatantra* that figures language as feminine in the persona of the Goddess of Speech. After this, I analyze this myth in terms of the significance of a “feminine” language with regard to Lacan’s conceptualizations of language and its relationship to the feminine. With this I also explore a parallel thematic component, the idea of the absent mother, in both Lacan and the *Brhannīlatantra*’s myth and its relationship to Lacan’s formulation of the oedipal phase as a child’s entry into language. Finally I look at the implicit coding of the Blue Goddess of Speech as Māyā, the Goddess of illusion. This last motif also offers a striking image which both recalls and diverges from Lacan’s notion of the woman as “not-whole.”

Why woman?

It is not surprising that an examination of psychoanalysis and language inevitably leads us to the feminine. Historically, the issue of woman as a concept was a problem that preoccupied the psychoanalytic movement throughout the 1930’s and 40’s. It is imbricated from the outset in a psychoanalytic construction of identity and Lacan’s linguistic revitalization of

5 JACQUES LACAN, *Le Séminaire. Livre XX. Encore*, 1972-73, ed. JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 13.

Freud would return to the problem repeatedly. In this sense De Certeau's remarks that the return to Freud is just as much a return of Freud – the Freudian text itself as that which is repressed (CERTEAU 2000, 58) – is applicable to the question of woman as well. Woman as that which is crossed out in Lacan's linguistic renovations of Freud keeps returning. Lacan, of course, is aware of this and implicitly suggests it when he strikes over the word "Woman", and yet keeps it in the text.

What this suggests for us is that the problem of woman is intimately intertwined with the core thesis of psychoanalysis: the theory of repression. That is, woman as barred from language, her exclusion from the universal, suggests an operative repression. Repression is, after all, barring certain elements from speech, precisely so that they return as bodily symptom, which is what happens, specifically in Lacan's suggestion that the woman is barred from language and with this the reinstatement of woman on the level of desire in Lacan's notion of *jouissance* in his formulation of the woman as displacement of the phallus.⁶

What the Tantric lens of the circa 17th century *Bṛhannīlatantra* offers is a way of reading this barring of woman from language outside of and beyond a script of male mastery and desire. This story of the Blue Goddess of Speech literalizes the word as bodied feminine speech. Further, through playing with the absence and presence of the Blue Goddess of Speech as absent mother the story makes apparent the links between the absence and presence of the woman and the function of language to figure this absence.

The Feminine Word⁷

In the story the Gods are waging a war with the demons and the demons are winning. The Gods seek out the help of the great Gods Viṣṇu and Śiva. Both Viṣṇu and Śiva explain that they cannot help the Gods in this war and that they should instead seek out the Blue Goddess of Speech. When they meet the Goddess she agrees to help them and she consoles them, saying,

'You go; where the demons are, I will come there. In every way [I will] be near the Gods.' Having said this, that Great Goddess Savior who moves about

6 JACQUES LACAN, *Le Séminaire. Livre XX. Encore*, 1972-73, ed. JACQUES-ALAIN MILLER (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 72-74, 81.

7 This story is also presented in my *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex and Speech in Tantra* (Oxford, 2007), 117-120, there without the analysis of the theme of the absent mother in conjunction with Lacan's formulations of gender.

freely, just as she likes, according to her own desire, the supreme Goddess who bears the form of illusion vanished.⁸

This Goddess consoles the Gods, and then simply and suddenly disappears. They then return to their exiled stronghold in the hills where they must wait for five years. So the story continues, “the Gods who were born from the light went there for five years. Dead, as it were, their kingdom lost, weak with suffering, they [stayed] in the hills,”⁹ distressed without their kingdom.

The Blue Goddess of Speech promises to help them, yet she appears to be not entirely predictable. Even though she promises to be present near them, this Goddess who is also called, “She who deludes the whole universe,”¹⁰ does not appear to make good on her promise, but instead is absent for a lengthy five years, while the Gods experience the distress of their lost kingdom. The Gods do not actually experience her presence until later in the story when she appears visibly (*pratyakṣa*), suddenly, *ex nihilo*.

Meanwhile, in the hills the gods do the prescribed worship, offering to the Blue Goddess of Speech a conventional prescribed list of substances.

O, Goddess, [they offered] a seat, a welcome, water for washing her feet, the ritual water offering, and water for sipping, a milk and honey bath, and for sipping, clothes, and ornaments, scented flowers, incense and a lamp, food, and they bowed. With sixteen different substances [they worshipped] the Blue Goddess of Speech. Having worshipped her and having given the animal sacrifice to the Goddess [or the wild jackal] with various auspicious substances, o ruler of Gods, the group of the best among the Gods did recitation of the magical formula. Having first said the great magical formula, o Goddess, having done 100,000 repetitions of the magical formula, with this they offered clarified butter with lotus flowers pleasing to the mind. They did a fire ceremony with sesame seeds mixed with sugar also. In this way having offered a fire ceremony, o great Goddess, they did one tenth that number [of offerings] again as offerings with sprinkling [milk]. They did one tenth that number of offerings with everything as a water offering, o Goddess. And, when that was finished they worshipped the Goddess at midnight. And after that, having

8 *Bṛhannīlatantra*, ed. MADHUSUDHANA KAUL, in Sanskrit (Delhi: Butala and Co. Publishers, 1984), 12: 57b-59a: *gacchata yatra te 'surāḥ || aham tatra gamiṣyāmi sarvathā saṃmūdhau surāḥ | ityuktvā sā mahādevī tāriṇī kāmacāriṇī || antarhitā mahāmāyā māyārūpavatī ca sā |* Subsequent references to the *Bṛhannīlatantra* will be abbreviated at BT.

9 BT 12:67: *pañcavarṣaṃ gataṃ tatra devānāṃ divyajānmanām | bhraṣṭarājyāḥ parātārikā martyā iva nagopari ||*

10 *sṛstasarvavimohinī*

given an animal sacrifice to that great Goddess, they had divine food. In this way they completed this pleasing karma.¹¹

With all of this repetition of the magical formula and ritual extravagance, she still does not show up. Finally then, after all this is concluded, the Gods remember her, and only then, when they finally *remember* her, does she suddenly appear.

Then, o Goddess, when the Gods remembered that Goddess, that Great Goddess with the Blue form and a big belly, that Goddess became pleased, and she appeared visibly in front of the Gods. “What can I do for you? Where shall I go, o Gods; tell me why you have called me?”¹²

Her appearance at this time does not reference her earlier promise. Rather she appears, if not absentminded, then with an idea that this call to her by the Gods represents some new desire of theirs. Further she displays a kind of unpredictability. By her behavior she plays with the ideas of presence and absence, suddenly disappearing, and suddenly reappearing. “Moving about according to her own desire” (*kāmacāriṇī*), her entrances and exits are not predictable.

When she does appear the Gods seem stunned, perhaps because they were not expecting her to appear. She offers them a boon, and this is when they should ask for her help in the battle with the demons, yet they can only say,

‘Be pleased, o Ruler (fem.).’

The Gods do not ask for what they need and in response this Blue Goddess proliferates out of her body a host of other Goddesses, the twelve *Vidyās*, who are both Goddesses and *mantras* – powerful magical words.

11 BT 12.69-12.75: *āsanam svāgataṁ pādyam arghyam ācamaṇīyakam | madhuparkāc amasṇānavasanābharaṇāni ca | gandhapuṣpe dhūpadīpau naivedyaṁ vandanaṁ śive | śoḍaśair upacāraiś ca devīm nīlasarasvatīm || pūjayitvā balim dattvā śivāyai vividhaiḥ śubhaiḥ | japaṁ cakāra deveśi devavṛndaḥ surottamaḥ || mahāmantraṁ pūrvamuktaṁ lakṣaṁ japtvā mahēsvari | ayutaṁ cājuhodayaiḥ padmapuṣpāiraṇorāmaḥ || homaṁ cakrustilayuktaiḥ śarkarāsahitair api | evaṁ hutvā mahādevi daśāṁśenābhiṣecanam || daśāṁśaistarpanaṁ devi kṛtaṁ sarvairmahēsvari | samāpte ca tato devīm pūjayitvā mahāniśi | balim dattvā mahādevyai surābhārāḥ surāstathā | evaṁ niyamamānena kṛtaṁ karma manoramam ||*

12 BT 12.76-12.77: *tato bhagavatī devī devaiḥsmṛtā mahēsvari | santuṣṭā sā mahādevī nīlarūpā mahodarī | devāgre paramēśāni pratyaḥśatvamupāgatā | kim karomi kva gaicchāmi bruta devāḥ samāhave ||*

Then the Goddess with the blue form, who delights the mind, seeing the Gods collected there, that Goddess Savior, who fulfills all desires, created out of her own body twelve supreme Vidyās, feminine magical Words. [These were] Kālī, Great Goddess, Great Magical-Feminine Speech, and also Sixteen-Year-Old and Ruler of Worlds, Frightening Goddess, She-Whose-Head-is-Chopped-off, Smoky Goddess, Crane and Elephant-Tribe-Mother, Lotus and She-Who-is-of-the-Self.¹³ These Vidyās, O great Goddess are famous as the Magical Feminine Speech which gives yogic powers. These great Goddesses arose from the body of the Goddess of Speech. And other Mothers were born from her, o beautiful one. [Then] in supreme joy, all these Goddesses danced on the tips of her toes.”¹⁴

The Goddess of Speech herself, who is here also called *Tārīnī*, the savior, sums up the situation and then produces out of her own body, bodied language – twelve Words, which are simultaneously bodied Goddesses. They are not just Goddesses; they are Words. Not just words, they are the bodying of sound into female forms. These Goddess-Words will help the Gods win their war with the demons. The Gods will access their magical powers by reciting their names over and over again. In this way, the *mantra* and the *vidyā* do not operate semantically, by conveying meaning. Rather, each recitation of the *vidyā* brings forth a kind of numinous power that effects events in the world, in this case, influencing the outcome of the war. In practice, a Tantric practitioner mutters softly over and over the *vidyā*, these secret formulas several syllables long with a *jaṣamālā*, an Indian rosary in hand, to help count the number of repetitions. This potent magical speech, enables the practitioner to acquire powers, the power to fly, or a body impervious to pain, or to kill an enemy. In other words, this potent language helps to make manifest one’s wishes in the world.

Linguistically, the *vidyā* presents a use of language that tends to disrupt the normative order of language as logocentric, as semantically driven communication.¹⁵ The *vidyā* here, with its feminine gender and its anthropomorphic form as Goddess is an explicitly feminine form of magical

13 Kamalātmikā is probably one name, but in order to get twelve one of the names has to split and this is the best choice. We could also just only have eleven names here.

14 BT 12.78- 12.83: *prasannā bhava ceśvari | tato bhagavatī devī nīlarūpā manoramā || dṛṣtvā surasamūhān sā tāriṇī sarvakāmadā | svadehataḥ parāḥ sṛṣṭā vidyā dvādaśa iritāḥ || kālī caiva mahādevī mahāvidyā tathaiva ca | ṣoḍaśī bhuvaneśānī bhairavī cchinnamastakā || dhūmāvati ca bagalā mātaṅgī kamalātmikā | etā vidyā mahādevī siddhividyaḥ prakīrtitāḥ | mahādevyaḥ sarasvatyaḥ dehodbhūtā varānane | anyāśca mātaraśasyā dehājjātā varānane || sarvā devyaḥ parānande nṛtyanti caraṇāntike |*

15 ANDRÉ PADOUX, as well, notes for the Tantric *mantra* more generally its non-logocentric character, its fundamental dissimilarity from the Western notion of the word as *logos* in ANDRÉ PADOUX, *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*, trans. JACQUES GONTIER (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), xiii.

speech. However, as I have argued elsewhere¹⁶ and as both Bagchi and Padoux point out, the more general term for magical speech, the *mantra*, also is associated with the feminine and with non-semantic speech.¹⁷

This feminine anthropomorphized speech fuses the notion of sign and its referent, giving us a word which is presence rather than the sign of absence. The significance of this will become important later, when we discuss this idea in light of Lacan's interpretations of Freud's famous study of the "*fort! da!*" of his nephew. For now we may point out that as words they do not point to a being beyond themselves, where the word itself is the mere sign, an absence of the real presence behind the word. These words are magical speech, an alternative form of language which is body and presence more than meaning. The *vidyā* presents a deliberate excess, a stammer which jams the system of semantic communication. Literally actually, the use of the *vidyā* enacts a stammer in the semantic order. As we saw above, one repeats it over and over, 100,000 times, far beyond a point where meaning could have been conveyed. And after the Goddesses are born from the body of the Blue Goddess of Speech, the text tells us, with a barely circumspect glee, that these Words which are simultaneously Goddesses, exuberantly dance on the tips of the Goddess' feet.¹⁸

The text's use of the very explicit "out of her own body" (*svadehataḥ*), and "arising from her body," (*dehodbhūtā*) and "born from her body" (*dehājjātā*) emphasize that these feminine Words are emitted out of her body, not formed and spoken by her mouth. This is a language which is not so much spoken as it is simply born, spontaneously, as whole beings. The image is more as a woman gives birth to a child than as the way one speaks language.

They arise out of her body as substance, as a materiality of thought. They are not bound by the usual temporal structure of language which ordains a successive concatenation of words, each following on the heels of what went before. The feminine Word is non-linear and ruptures the *a priori* tempo that places words in time. No wonder the Gods in the tale are spellbound.¹⁹ Because this Goddess of Speech does not move through

16 LORILIAI BIERNACKI, *Renowned Goddess of Desire*, 114-116.

17 P. C. BAGCHI, *Studies on the Tantras* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission, 1989), 48; ANDRÉ PADOUX, *Vāc: The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*, trans. JACQUES GONTIER (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), x-xi.

18 BT 12.83a: *sarvā devyāḥ parānande nṛtyanti caraṇāntike* | There is clearly a reference here to the ten Goddesses who also are called the *Mahāvīdyā*, and many of the names that the BT gives are referenced in other lists.

19 This English word is perhaps curiously illustrative of the point I am making here. It suggests a mental stopping, a pause or rupture in the ordinary flow of time. One is

time as language normally does, but instead is presence, referenced as the visual image of the dancing Goddess-Words, so in her presence the Gods also find it hard to speak. Her production of a language which is not sign, which is presence more than meaning, defies even time. It is a language without referent, the bodied representatives of a language which has lost its semantic bearings.

In the West the dominant paradigm has been a binary which asserts the priority of transcendent meaning over the physical sign of the word – along with the host of binaries that align with this, such as spirit/matter, male/female.²⁰ And even Lacan as well is working in the shadows of – and against this dominant paradigm. When Lacan tells a bright eyed young analyst, “Do crossword puzzles,” he hints toward recovering an encounter of language as corporeal, bodied. One disassembles, or perhaps, dismembers, words in the crossword. After all, a crossword puzzle exacts just this vivisection. It chops language up into so many meaningless fragments, arranged in relation to other words not in terms of syntax or an underlying and unifying thought, but according to the corporeal form of letters that makes a word. Where the physical form of the word coincides with another word, there words conjoin in the crossword puzzle. That is, the puzzle disrupts the way that words usually function. It divorces the word from its place as sign, and sees it instead as a visual body. Lost in the array of words criss-crossing vertically and horizontally on the crossword page, meaning as an idea or thought conveyed by words is no longer remembered.

With the crossword, Lacan exposes the fiction that the word is merely an abstract sign pointing elsewhere to the “real thing” behind it. Likewise, when he proposes chopping language up, he implicates language as

“spellbound” and the mind stops, and so consequently time seems to stop, or does stop psychologically. Interestingly, its origin refers to magic, the use of a “spell” to bind someone, that is, the use of a language which is not semantically oriented.

20 Similarly, in India also the predominant view has tended to stress meaning over form, and with this, spirit over matter. However, it is certainly more difficult to talk about dominant paradigms given a tendency throughout India’s history for a variety of competing schools. Further the word as a physical form or sign has probably also been more important in Hinduism than in the West. Nevertheless, the pervasive effects of Sāṃkhya through numerous philosophical schools, which, though they differ in many respects, still tend to incorporate the dualism of body and spirit, referenced most archetypally in the dual notion of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Advaita Vedānta, most obviously draws upon this dualism, however one can find it throughout any number of bhakti traditions as well and in many forms of Tantra also. The Tantric texts used here assume this dualist structure, but differ from a more normative philosophical position by attempting to undo the hierarchy implied.

a substance, depriving the word of its abstract and transcendent ontic status – as a sign bearing meaning. With the loss of the fiction of the word as transparent sign, language as the order of logocentricity starts to totter.

Presumably Lacan pays attention to the crossword because he wants to connect it to other forms of non-logocentric language, especially the dream and the neurotic symptom. Referencing an instance of the word, apart from the dream or the symptom, which also undermines an order of language as logocentric, will, one supposes, help the fledgling analyst to understand what it means to ferret out how a non-logocentric language works. That is, presumably, somehow the unsemantic “bodied” word of the crossword can help the young analyst to effectively understand the similarly unsemantic “bodied” language of the symptom or the unsemantic language of the dream.

Now, like Lacan’s crossword, the ritual use of the Tantric *mantra* and its feminine form as *vidyā* dissect the word. Particularly in the Tantric practice of inserting the *mantra* or *vidyā*, onto the human body called *nyāsa*, where the practitioner ritually inserts the individual letters of the *vidyā* onto the different parts of the body – the heart, the top of the head, the shoulders, the hands, and so on – the *vidyā* as word is dissected like the words in the crossword puzzle. The dissected Word functions visually, like a human crossword on the body, its chopped up letters, called “seeds” (*bīja*) ritually placed all over the limbs of the practitioner.²¹

On the other hand, unlike the crossword, the use of the *mantra* and *vidyā* is also one which includes a purposeful efficacy. The crossword mostly provides a distracting entertainment, whereas the *vidyā* as human crossword placed on the body has a specific magical function, which is designed to effect change in the world outside the practitioner, to win someone’s love, to influence a powerful person, a king or a minister, or to kill one’s enemy. It is language which is performative in a way that the crossword is not – but in a way that the symptom is – or at least that the symptom could be construed to be performative and effective in the eyes of the person performing it.

Lacan himself suggests a link between the symptom and the “magical” performative speech of the *mantra* (LACAN 1977, 69). The special non-logocentric speech of the “spell” is for him intimately, perhaps even definitionally, linked to the symptom. Moreover, curiously, he expressly

21 Some examples of *nyāsa* in the BT occur at 6.114, 6.120, 7.265ff, 8.196, 9.3, 9.10, 14.30, 14.52; however, the practice of *nyāsa* is ubiquitous in Tantric practice. The individual syllables are called the “seed” form (*bīja*) and represent powerful deities (mostly feminine) in the form of sound.

locates it within the “magical” speech of Asian cultures, in an interesting exoticization of the oriental “other,” referencing explicitly the Egyptian hieroglyphic and the Indian notion of *Māyā* (LACAN 1977, 69-70).

In this case, however, Lacan does not make a connection with woman or the feminine, even though it has been well-documented, on the one hand, for instance by Krishnaswamy (KRISHNASWAMY 1998), that the Western construction of the “oriental” functions also along lines of gender. Further, on the other hand, *Māyā* is explicitly always construed as feminine. Thus, unlike the *Bṛhannīlatantra*’s myth, which explicitly adds the element of woman to the notion of magical speech, Lacan does not understand magical speech as feminine speech. Is this because in Lacan’s formulation, a notion of feminine speech is an oxymoron, an impossibility? Woman, by her very nature, as Lacan tells us, is excluded from the domain of language. She is the “not-whole”; she is excluded from the order of the universal, which is the very structure upon which language rests.²² Lacan’s infamous statement that “the Woman does not exist” hinges upon this understanding that Woman is outside the boundaries of the universal.²³

Thus, both models structure language as intimately connected with the idea of the feminine and both models understand magical language in opposition to ordinary semantically driven language. However, Lacan’s model places the idea of woman, as other, outside of language, and in this sense, ironically misses the intimate historical connections between magical language and the feminine – even as Lacan explicitly notes the connections between the symptom and the idea of *Māyā*. As I noted above, apart from the explicit feminine gender of *Māyā*, the magical language of the

22 Of course, for Lacan and my argument here, the argument is not about individual women speaking, or having a voice, but one structured around the category of Woman as it operates within the binary of gender. In this sense, because Lacan is explicitly operating on the level of the symbolic, that is, understanding Woman as a symbolic and linguistic category, rather than individual humans who happened to be gendered female, it is not the case that one could defend his construction of Woman as not existing as insight which does not rely upon stereotype, but overcomes stereotypes of women by focusing on particular and precise instances of individual women.

23 I address this element of feminine speech as “magical” speech and as linked with the symptom and the psychotic elsewhere, in *Renowned Goddess of Desire*, 121-124. We should note that the impossibility of woman’s speech for Lacan references directly to what Judith Butler notes as “impossible speech”: speech which is outside the “norms that govern the kind of speech that will be legible as the speech of a subject,” in JUDITH BUTLER, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge 1997), 133. This is the ranting of the psychotic, in BUTLER, *Excitable*, 133. In a round about way Butler helps us to realize that Lacan’s notion of the impossibility of woman’s speech excludes the woman from subjectivity.

mantra has also been historically understood as feminine.²⁴ It is hard not to read Lacan's oversight as a type of operative repression with respect to the role of the feminine in magical language.

In contrast to Lacan, the story in the *Bṛhannīlatantra* reconfigures the notion of language to include woman and the idea of a feminine speech as a special kind of particularly potent performative speech. Additionally, the *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s story presents a parallel to Lacan's formulation of woman as outside of logocentric language, specifically (presciently?) incorporating elements that we recognize in Lacan's formulation. The *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s story, however, comes to a different conclusion than Lacan's version. In the *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s story the motif of the Blue Goddess's unpredictable absence and presence both resembles and undercuts a Lacanian notion of the absent mother, a theme which, through a logical association of ideas, Lacan links to the exclusion of woman from language.²⁵ One profitable insight that arises from an examination of the *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s story of the feminine Word is that it affords a different outcome to Lacan's version: the *Bṛhannīlatantra* reconfigures language to suggest not that the Woman is outside of language, but rather, as the Goddess of Speech, she is the very source of language.

The Absent Mother

At this point I will explicitly address the theme of the absent mother. The myth in the *Bṛhannīlatantra* plays with the notion of absence and presence, especially where the unpredictable Blue Goddess of Speech, here a savior and mother figure,²⁶ visibly appears and disappears suddenly. So we see her at *Bṛhannīlatantra* 12.11, appearing suddenly, visibly (*pratyakṣa*), to a devotee, again at 12.48 she suddenly appears visibly (*pratyakṣa*), to the group of Gods when they first pray to her in our story to tell her about the harassing demons and then again at 12.59 when she suddenly disappears (*antarhitā*). This Blue Goddess of Speech – she who has a sovereign power over language – tends to punctuate this myth especially with her sudden appearances and disappearances. As if to implicate a connection between her power over the word and her power over presence and absence, she dramatically accentuates this element, appearing and disappearing sud-

24 See above, footnote 17.

25 One important middle term in this chain of ideas, which we discuss below, is Lacan's notion that the "word is a presence made of absence" (LACAN 1977:65).

26 The text also calls her Tārīnī, literally "savioress".

denly. The marvel for the gods is undoubtedly at least partially precisely that she appears suddenly, visibly (*pratyakṣa*) out of thin air. This stands in contrast to the more normal mundane appearances of the highest Gods Śiva and Viṣṇu whom the Gods also seek out for help. There is nothing sudden or remarkable about their entrances and exits. One goes to where they reside and there they are.

With the Blue Goddess of Speech it is otherwise. On the one hand this suggests her mastery in the situation. She has the power to appear or disappear at will; not subject to the will or desire of the Gods who wish to gaze on her. On the other hand, it references an association of presence and absence with the power of language. It is not an accident, I suggest, that it is precisely because she is the Goddess of Speech that she exhibits this proclivity for a disappearing act.

Along these lines, one might read her sudden disappearances as a bodily, physically enacted critique of the fictive power of the word to make a presence out of absence. Lacan dwells on this power of the word, its capacity to make present that which is absent – through taking the name of the absent person or thing. He tells us that the “word is a presence made of absence” (1977:65).²⁷ Yet in contrast, even by extensive invocation of the word that is the “Name” of the Goddess, through the 100,000 repetitions of her *vidyā*, the Gods cannot *make* her appear. As master of speech, she appears of her own will, when she wishes (*kāmacāriṇī*). Waiting and remembering her, without any real power, seems to be the best the gods can do to impose a scheme of causality on her presence and absence.

This notion of a woman who keeps disappearing parallels the absence of the mother in Freud’s description of his nephew who devised the game which Freud called the “*fort! da!*” to cope with the problem of the absent mother. Like the young boy’s “*fort! da!*” and Lacan’s sophisticated philosophizing of it, the myth in the *Bṛhannīlatantra* also addresses the problem of a Woman who just keeps disappearing without the permission and beyond the control of the male. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud first presented his discovery. Watching his nephew play a curious game with an object tied to a piece of string which he would toss out and pull back, Freud came to understand that the “*fort! da!*” of his little nephew entailed a successful linguistic attempt to master the unpredictable appearance and disappearance of the young boy’s mother.

Lacan returns to this discovery of Freud on numerous occasions (for instance Lacan 1977, 103-104, 215, 234), and in a brilliant linguistic interpretation of this game, Lacan formulated a key element of his own

27 This is fundamentally the Lacanian “phallus” as signifier (LACAN 1977: 285f).

renovations of Freud. In analyzing the function of the oedipal complex as a linguistic entry into the realm of the symbolic and language, Lacan proffers his own profound discovery that clarifies the crucial link between the oedipal complex and language – the oedipal complex addresses the absent mother and marks the sense of subjective self through a shift away from this mother into language, the symbolic. That is, the “word is a presence made of absence” (LACAN 1977, 65). The word offers a presence in place of the absent mother. He carries this idea one step further as well, when he suggests that the word in fact, has also the power to displace the object which is absent. This capacity to displace the object is what affords the mastery that language offers. With this reference to Freud’s nephew who uses the word, the “*fort!-da!*,” Lacan suggests that the young boy’s entry into language enables him to employ the word to at once master the absence of his mother and displace it, by elevating desire into a power which repeats its own circuit all apart from the object that was initially desired (LACAN 1977, 103-104).

Lacan is certainly aware of the implications of his banishment of woman from the universal,²⁸ suggesting that this absence which language masks and displaces constitutes a rift at the core of subjecthood. This difficult transition from the absent mother to a speech which makes up for the loss of the mother forms a key aspect of the reinterpretation of the oedipal complex along linguistic lines, and one that sits at the foundation of the notion of the speaking subject.

Judith Butler (BUTLER 1997a) and Joan Copjec (COPJEC 2002) have both followed up on this idea of a loss (of the mother) that has been displaced by language as the very foundation for a sense of subjectivity.²⁹ In this sense, the subject’s sense of self is based upon an initial awareness of lack. For Butler in particular language is the law which both constructs the subject and subjects him or her to a law predicated upon a lack. In this way, the word is the oedipal father’s phallus. It constructs an identity for the amorphous child where the desire trying to fill this lack takes on a life of its own – displacing the original object of desire (the absent mother) through a circuitry of repetition. Thus desire, which arises out of the sense of lack, becomes the basis for the sense of self. In this equation language

28 Lacan’s later work, specifically his XXth seminar to some degree adjudicates the matter differently, where the sign of woman becomes also a place of an excess, where the “real” of the other can interrupt the order of the law of language.

29 JOAN COPJEC, *Imagine There’s No Woman* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002) in particular sees this in the idea of woman as “not-whole” as signifying the possibility for a compelling ethical element of the feminine and as offering possibilities for a feminist recovery of Lacan.

as displacement of the absent mother, with its capacity to figure desire and displace it, becomes associated with the Father, in what Lacan calls the Name of the Father.

Not entirely happy with this, throughout his “Function and Field of Speech and Language” (LACAN 1977) and his XXth seminar (LACAN 1998) Lacan moves back and forth between banishing the woman from the field of language and recovering her as the Other. Somewhat like the *fort! da!* of the young nephew, he shifts between woman as the “*petit objet a*,” the sign of displaced desire, and homologizing her with the big Other, God (LACAN 1998:73ff). Lacan’s later work, especially his XXth seminar, may be read to more positively valorize this position of women as outside the universal than his earlier work. In his later work, by analogy, he even hints at links between the Woman and God (LACAN 1998:77).

Even with Lacan’s profoundly complex reading of the woman and the word, what is maintained, however, is the binary which structures the passage into language as a necessary exclusion of the feminine, which also constitutes the subject, and which erects a barrier between Woman as gendered and the universal law of language. Language as logocentricity, that is, as the masculine realm of the Lacanian symbolic, here displaces the Woman. Not conceiving the possibility of another kind of language, the magical language of the *vidyā* that we find in the *Bṛhannīlatantra*, woman can only remain in a state of limbo, as the “not-whole” (*pas-toute*).

The *Bṛhannīlatantra*’s treatment of this theme interestingly both parallels and undercuts a Lacanian notion. First, it parallels it insofar as it operates on this same principle of the word as presence made of absence. That is, the *vidyā* itself as word also makes present the deity which it names. Secondly, the *Bṛhannīlatantra*’s story also parallels Lacan’s version insofar as both represent the psychological dynamic of the child attempting to deal with the absent mother. Again, in both cases desire is the driving force. It undercuts a Lacanian notion, however, in that speech does not become the child’s replacement or the mechanism for mastery over the absent mother, because the Goddess of Speech is herself is the master of speech. Hence she both comes and goes as she wishes (*kāmacārīnī*), and since she herself is the essence of speech, she cannot be displaced by speech. Thus, the Tantric myth refuses the rejection of the absent mother, by fusing the word with the very being of the Goddess – as Goddess of Speech. This is also signaled in that the Words, which are *vidyās* are not spoken by her, but are instead born out of her body.

One can read the *Bṛhannīlatantra*’s story as literalizing Lacan’s proposition. In the *Bṛhannīlatantra*’s case, the disappearing Mother and Savior gives to her helpless children the Word as the weapon that they will then use in their fight against the demons. At the same time, the story the

Bḡhannīlatantra presents instead offers a different image of this Word, not the word as the Name of the Father, but one that instead shifts the polarity of gender Lacan ascribes to language, the Word as Mother.

Thus, to sum this up, the *Bḡhannīlatantra*'s myth suggests a different conclusion to the problem of the disappearing mother than the Lacanian entry into the realm of the symbolic, i.e., into language figured as the Name of the Father. Rather, for the *Bḡhannīlatantra*'s myth, the Woman who keeps uncontrollably disappearing is herself the source of language, the Blue Goddess of Speech. Since language is Woman, this means that one cannot make up for the disappearing mother by a shift to the father as language. At the same time, the Word that the Blue Goddess of Speech offers is a Word that precisely refutes the operation of language as sign replacing and displacing the absent mother through an operation that founds the subject on a circuitry of continual displaced desire. Rather this word fuses the Mother and the Word into a simultaneous bodied presence. What it offers is a capacity as Feminine Word to perform rather than to distance the other through naming, and its concomitant cycle of repeating desire. In this way the *Bḡhannīlatantra* short-circuits the oedipal scheme, which depends on language to displace the desired object through the child's move into the Name of the Father.

Thus with this refusal, the *Bḡhannīlatantra* proposes a different route. We arrive not at a mastery over the mother's absence, what Freud's little nephew accomplishes with the *fort! da!* Nor do we find, as Lacan suggests (LACAN 1977, 103), the construction of desire at the core of the subject which reconstitutes itself repetitively, even as it mitigates the angst of having an unpredictable mother. The *Bḡhannīlatantra* suggests, instead, an act of faith, an active performative mode of waiting. In this case the Gods must ride out a space of precarious waiting in which no assurance is offered. This choice foregoes the possibility of a masculine mastery over the angst of loss, but it suggests the possibility of two other gains. First, it promises the hope of a self which is not at its core founded on the rift of absence – that is, not founded on a necessary banishment of the feminine from the proper domain of the speaking subject.³⁰ Secondly, by allowing for the play to unfold, rather than foreclosing it in order to avoid the angst of the absent mother, this endurance offers also the possibility of actually hearing woman's speech.

30 This notion which Lacan articulates has been pursued in much contemporary psychoanalytic thought. For one especially cogent representation of the dilemmas involved here, see JESSICA BENJAMIN, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

Furthermore, on a dual front, both in terms of the semantic function of language to symbolize something other than itself, and in the graphic images of these Goddesses as sound, these feminine *vidyās* serve as a site recalling that which has been repressed. Graphically the image of the fierce fanged Frightening Goddess Bhairavī or the socially antinomian Chinnamastaka, holding her own bloody severed head in her hand conjure the stuff of nightmares. They are images which concretize the host of (perhaps mostly, though not necessarily entirely) male repressed fears and fantasies regarding the idea of woman. Jeffrey Kripal astutely notes that the Goddess Kālī is more than anything a Goddess of male fears (KRIPAL 2000, 241). These Goddesses in their form of being, in their very entrance into existence simulate a flood of repressed and perhaps redemptive images of woman.

One could also construe the literalized depictions of the story as a psychological technique. The *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s author(s) represent philosophical and psychological concepts through literalized visual analogues. Like the dream in psychoanalysis, the myth speaks in an oblique and visual way, expressing what must be both told and hidden by transposing the word with an elusive tangential visual image.

Blue Goddess of Speech as Māyā, the Power of Illusion and the Not-whole of Woman

One more term in this equation deserves mention. Throughout this story of the birth of the feminine word, the Blue Goddess' power to delude, to trick, to mystify is highlighted in the variety of epithets she is given: *Mahāmāyā*, "Great Illusion" *sṛstasarvavimohinī*, "she who deludes the whole of creation," *māyārūpavatī*, "she whose form is illusion." Her power of illusion, this *māyā*, pivots upon the notion of presence and absence. She is a master of creating illusion. To put this another way, her power is the capacity to make that which is absent appear to be present. Included within these epithets is always the implicit suggestion that her power hinges upon her ability to create desire and to weave her illusions through the workings of desire. *Māyā* operates through desire.

What I'm going to suggest here is that the feminine figure of *Māyā* alludes back to the problem of the absent mother, and as such she presents an Indian response to the problem of desire. In the classical, non-Tantric context, *Māyā* presents a feminine deceiver. She stands as the category of illusion. Not actually ever really existent in classical Indian philosophy, she is a specter, a phantom, always feminine. She is the ultimate temptress, the very form of desire who lures one into believing in the unreal presence of

bodies, of time, of a universe in flux. It is Māyā who causes the ascetic and the sage to be tempted by the form of woman, the beautiful otherworldly maidens (*apsaras*) whose sexual allures prevent the ascetic from reaching the culmination of his asceticism, an absolute mastery of self and world. In its impetus the ascetic's desire for mastery through the rejection of the feminine illusoriness of the world parallels the impetus of Freud's young nephew's game of the "*fort! da!*" as a means of rejecting and mastering the unpredictable mother.

Māyā constructs the ties that bind us emotionally to both love and desire for an other. Only when she is conquered, transcended can one enter into the static beatitude of enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*, *mokṣa*, *kaivalya*). This state of beatitude, "extinction," "liberation" and "aloneness," the literal translations of the words usually translated as "enlightenment," entails a mastery over the self and a freedom from dependence on others. This is the classical Indian conception, not a typical Tantric view.

Certainly Māyā is desire and the illusion that deludes one into desiring. She is also the reemergence, as a category, of desire which was earlier repressed, which must be continuously repressed. She is a visible *id*, given a mythic if appropriately shifty form. What we may bring back from this Indian coding of desire as gendered, as Woman, is a new lens on the Freudian category of *id*. It makes one wonder whether the gender of the *id* itself has not been repressed, in a repression that keeps returning. Might we read the subjectivity of the *id* as feminine? We could perhaps also understand the aggression Freud imputes to the *id* as the means whereby the self attains a mastery over its own repressed feminine element, a way of controlling by repressing its own unacceptable desires. The concept of *id* itself may be understood as encoding an equation of desire and the feminine, which must be masked, repressed and mastered by a hypermasculine asceticism.

We see another point of commonality between the Woman in the psychoanalytic view and Māyā. Just as Lacan construes the woman to an ontological limbo, describing her as the "not-whole," so too the category of Māyā in the scheme of classical Indian philosophy entails an ontological limbo. The 8th century Śāṅkara's formulation is well-known: Māyā is neither existent nor non-existent. Like Lacan's woman, she stands outside of the universal order of being and its opposite. Even Lacan's formulation that "the Woman does not exist" where he strikes out the word "Woman" suggests also this peculiar ontological ambiguity, since the strike-over appears to act as a double negative, linguistically, and visually it heightens and fixes our attention on the figure of woman, just as Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta discussions of Māyā focus interminably on the problem which this non-entity proposes.

We should also note, in conjunction with our earlier discussion of the Blue Goddess of Speech's unpredictable disappearing act, the connections with Māyā. Māyā is the Goddess, or figure, of illusion. Now what, after all, is illusion, but a "seeming presence"? And the *Bṛhannīlatantra* stresses this equation by referring to the Blue Goddess of Speech throughout as the Goddess of illusion as we noted above.

Here we might recall again Lacan's notion that the "word is a presence made of absence." The word, in this view, functions to distract, to both represent and displace that which is the real, which is absent. Curiously, the word itself also parallels the notion of Māyā. Both are not entirely real; both operate through displacement/replacement of what is real; both encode the fabrication of a "seeming presence;" both function through a circuitry of desire. Interestingly, Māyā in this sense corresponds to the Indian correlate for the functions of the Lacanian "word." If we look back at the Tantric view, however, we notice an odd gender disjunction. While the Lacanian "word" is part of the order of the symbolic and as such aligned with the "name of the Father," Māyā is feminine. So the *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s myth encodes Māyā as *both* feminine *and* as the "word." Far from being excluded from language, the feminine *is* language. She is bodied fecund language, as the Blue Goddess of Speech, the very source of language.

In this sense, the function of the Name of the Father, the repression which is the completion of the oedipal complex, a linguistic manufacturing of a self as separate from the mother, via the intervention of the father as a name, as language, is a road not taken for the *Bṛhannīlatantra*.³¹ The *Bṛhannīlatantra*'s Tantric response to the problem of the disappearing Mother is to reconfigure the category of desire, Māyā. Whereas in Brahminical contexts – as in the West – desire is repressed; (Māyā is denounced in normative Hinduism and Buddhism – as the *id* is, with its unspeakable desires in a Western context), when Māyā returns in her Tantric form in the *Bṛhannīlatantra*, she is not rejected. Rather Māyā as a Goddess is revered; desire is embraced, and the Word takes on an alternative feminine, performative identity.

This positive valorization of what was earlier rejected represents an embrace of what had been repressed. We could construe this as a psychic

31 In this instance it is probably not accurate to subscribe to an argument of cross-cultural difference to discount the presence of the oedipal complex in the Indian context. Certainly the permutations and responses vary. For instance, the God Gaṇeśa is himself beheaded by his father rather than slaying his father as in the Greek myth. However these permutations themselves point to an awareness of the fundamental ternary structure which psychoanalytic theory outlines.

therapeutic, a willingness not only to confront the repressed, but further to reincorporate, reintegrate, remember what was repressed into the construction of the self. Here where the Goddess as Word is the great Māyā, who then proliferates her form linguistically, we find an embrace of the repressed in language, as bodily, semiotic, presence, in the very space where in Lacanian terms the absent repressed can only be figured symbolically. So when the Gods embrace the feminine as language, *re-mem-bering* the Goddess of Speech who is illusion, they reintegrate into themselves the power of feminine performative language. That is, we have a linguistic recovery of desire.

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PART II
Mongolia, Tibet, and China

Embodying the Dharma

The Buddhist Way into Mongolia

KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ

Introduction

When in 1578 the Altan Khan of the Tümed Mongols and bSod nams rgya mtsho, the then abbot of 'Bras spungs monastery, met at the temple of Cabciyal at Köke nor lake, their meeting marked the beginning of the Buddhist conversion of the Mongol regions.¹ In a very short time Tibetan Buddhism came to be the most prominent religious tradition in Mongolia. Its rapid spread among the Mongols leaves us on the one hand with the question: which factors led to the success of Buddhism? How did the Tibetan lamas manage to succeed in such a short time? What methods did they apply in their missionary endeavours? On the other hand we have to consider the intellectual outcome of the encounter situation between Buddhism and the indigenous religious actors.

In my paper I argue that the Buddhist mission was successful because certain indigenous religious concepts and practices were generically similar to their Buddhist counterparts, most of those being Tantric. Tantra, not as a secret esoteric doctrine and method of liberation, but as a technique to get support in everyday nomadic life, was used as an effective method to render the Buddhist mission in Mongolia successful. I contend that the generic similarities between some aspects of the Mongols' indigenous religious tradition and Tibetan Tantric notions were consciously played upon by the Buddhist monks. Moreover the encounter between Buddhist monks

1 Buddhism was well known among the Mongols since the time of the Mongol empire in the 13th century. Contrary to Mongolian historiography and scholarly opinion, Buddhism after the fall of the Yuan dynasty did not disappear from Mongolian soil but was present throughout the 15th and 16th century, although on a low scale, see HENRY SERRUYS, "Early Lamaism in Mongolia," *Oriens Extremus* 10 (1963), 181-216, and his "Additional Note on the Origin of Lamaism in Mongolia," *Oriens extremus* 13 (1966), 165-173.

and indigenous religious specialists on the discourse level led to the reification of a “teaching of the shamans”, in Mongolian *böge ner-ün sasin*, which in turn has influenced the formation of the European discourse on “shamanism”. Further research into the religious situation in 16th- and 17th-century Mongolia may thus not only provide new insights into the adaptation processes which religious traditions undergo in an encounter situation, but may also contribute to our knowledge of the intellectual history of Asian societies in the early modern era, thus challenging the notion of the singularity of the European intellectual development culminating in the enlightenment.

I. The Advent of Tibetan Buddhism in the Mongolian Steppes: Economic and Political Aspects

Soon after the meeting of the Altan Khan and bSod nams rgya mtsho, Tibetan lamas began to spread the *Dharma* among the different Mongolian tribes, and within a time span of not much more than forty years the Mongols had completely taken over Tibetan Buddhist concepts and practices. Only in the adjacent regions of present-day Buryat Mongolia this process slowed down and Tibetan Buddhism took root in these regions as late as the 18th and the early 19th century. The reasons why the Mongolian nobility so willingly adopted Tibetan Buddhism and pressured their subjects into doing likewise, can only be speculated about. Scholars of Mongolian Studies often assume that the Altan Khan needed an ideological backing for his position as the then most powerful ruler in the Mongolian territories, and Tibetan Buddhism with its religio-political concept of universal ruler, *cakravartin*, provided him with just such an ideology. The historiographical sources at our disposal do not shed any light on the Altan Khan’s motives other than his alleged faith and piety. Be that as it may, the subsequent measures taken to spread Buddhism among the Mongols aptly demonstrate that the persons in power, the rulers and the nobility, took an active interest in implementing the new religion among their subjects. From the beginning the encounter was not so much a contest of different world views, but a struggle about power between two opposing groups of religious specialists, the male and female shamans and the lamas. The local rulers in 16th- and 17th-century Mongolia issued laws that prohibited shamanizing and the indigenous religious practices that were connected with it. These practices included the worship of the *ongyod*, the powerful ancestor spirits and spiritual helpers of the shamans, both male and female, and blood sacrifices. Most other indigenous religious practices,

for example the *obo* worship, the mountain cult or the worship of the deity of the hearth, were neither forbidden nor prosecuted.²

The juridical measures taken to assert the preference of Buddhism focussed on the select group of the *böge*, the male shamans, and the *iduyan*, the female shamans, within Mongolian society. The local rulers did not only prohibit the practice of shamanizing, but actively persecuted the male and female shamans, as one of the earliest Mongolian chronicles from the year 1607 states:

After they had set on fire the outer³ *ongyod*-images, they weakened and eliminated the ecstatic and ignorant male and female shamans.⁴

Besides effectively stopping the activities of the shamans by law, the secular authorities provided material incentives to employ Buddhist rituals, thereby undermining the power of the shamans. Vivid descriptions of such incentives are given in the *Cindamani-yin erike*, the “Garland of wish-fulfilling jewels”, the biography of the famous monk Neyici Toyin, a Toriyut Mongol from Western Mongolia who in the first half of the 17th century

2 Apart from the practices connected to the shamans, the Buddhist monks opposed blood sacrifices like the *tailyan*, the horse sacrifice, because they violate the first of the five Buddhist precepts which are binding for lay-people as well as for the monks and nuns. One of the most important topics of the Tibetan Buddhist discourse on the cultural and religious “other” was the reproach of being people “who eat the flesh and drink the blood of living beings”, see KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, “‘Religionslos ist dieses Land’: Das Mongolenbild der Tibeter”, *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* LIV/4, 2000, 875-905, and “Uncivilized Nomads and Buddhist Clerics: Tibetan Images of the Mongols in the 19th and 20th Centuries”, MONICA ESPOSITO (ed.), *Images of Tibet in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. II, Paris 2008, 707-724.

3 “Outer” mirrors the Tibetan differentiation between “inner” (tib. *nang pa*), i.e. adherents of Buddhism, and “outer” (tib. *phyi pa*), i.e. Non-Buddhists.

4 *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur*, fol. 29r12-15. This text, a verse biography of the Mongolian ruler Altan Khan of the Tümed, is one of the earliest known Mongolian historiographical sources. There exists only one manuscript of the chronicle that is preserved in the library of the Institute for History and Literature of the Inner Mongolian Academy of Social Sciences. I have at my disposal a Xerox copy of the original manuscript. The text is made available in a modern Uiguro-Mongolian edition alongside the facsimile in JORUNGF-A, *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orosiba*, Beijing 1984. There exist translations into Japanese (T. MORIKAWA, *Study of the Biography of Altan Khan*, Kyushu University, Fukuoka 1987), Chinese (ZHU RONG GA, *A-le-tan han zhuan*, Hohot 1991), German (KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur*. Die Biographie des Altan qayan der Tümed-Mongolen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der religionspolitischen Beziehungen zwischen der Mongolei und Tibet im ausgehenden 16. Jahrhundert, Wiesbaden 2001) and English (JOHAN ELVERSKOG, *The Jewel Translucent Sūtra*. Altan Khan and the Mongols in the Sixteenth Century, Leiden 2003).

was mainly active in Eastern Mongolia, among the Ongniyud and Qorcin Mongols.⁵ According to this source the Tüsiyetü Qan⁶ publicly proclaimed material rewards if the local people learnt to recite Buddhist formulas. The promise of a cow or a horse in exchange for memorizing some *dhāraṇīs* probably looked like a good deal for some destitute nomads living at the edge of starvation.⁷

Not only the secular authorities, but also the monks themselves took to bribery in order to win the Mongols over, as the *Cindamani-yin erike* reports:

From all different kinds of jewels, gold and silver, and from different kinds of things like silk and sable, which had been presented [to him] by many donors, princes as well as great and petty nobles, [Neyici Toyin] gave in all directions and everywhere one ounce of gold to everybody who could memorize the *Yamandaga*, and one ounce of gold and silver each to everybody who could memorize the *sādhana* and the *bija-mantra* of *Guhyasamāja*, and to the poor people, according to their wishes, goods and cattle. Thereupon there were generally very many [people] who memorized the *Yamandaga* and the *Guhyasamāja*.⁸

The author of his biography called this method of proselytizing “the two ways, the inner [way] of *Dharma*-giving, and the outer [way] of giving material goods”.⁹

5 His biography was written nearly a century later, in 1739, by one Prajñāsāgara. The full title of the work is *Boyda neyici toyin dalai mañjusryi-yin domoy-i todorqai-a geyigülügci cindamani erike kemegdekü orosiba* (Beijing xylograph, 92 folios). WALTHER HEISSIG has translated the main events of the biography, see his “Neyiči toyin. Das Leben eines lamaistischen Mönchs (1557-1653)”, *Sinologica* III, 4 (1953), 1-44, and IV, 1 (1954), 21-38.

6 This is the Tüsiyetü Qan of the Qorcin Mongols who in 1624 had accepted Manchu sovereignty. He is also known as Aoba/Ooba. For him see VERONIKA VEIT, “Die Verabschiedung des Aoba der Horcin nach dem Neujahrsbesuch bei Abahai 1631”, *Heilen und Schenken (Festschrift für G. Klinge)*, Wiesbaden 1980, 133-38.

7 *Cindamani-yin erike*, Fol. 46v2-19: “In order to further the good spread of the Buddha’s teaching by a wise and compassionate idea, the Tüsiyetü Khan proclaimed publicly: ‘I will give a horse to whomever has learnt the *Quriyangyui* by heart! I will give a cow to whomever has learnt the *Yamandaga* by heart! Immediately after they had listened to this public announcement, the poor and destitute people, according to their mental capacity, learnt the complete *Dharma* by heart. Because he, according to his announcement, also gave those a horse and a cow who had earlier learnt [them] by heart, soon there were many faithful who followed his advice and knew the great and little teachings by heart.’”

8 *Cindamani-yin erike*, Fol. 74r16-74v5.

9 *Cindamani-yin erike*, Fol. 74v5-8.

This look at the juridical measures and the economic incentives gives us a vital clue to the nature of the initial interaction between the indigenous religious specialists and the newly arrived Tibetan lamas and monks. The interaction was characterised by economic competition for the limited material resources of the lay population available to both groups. In this competition the Tibetans were on the winning side, because they had been able to secure the support of the secular authorities.

II. Tibetan Buddhist Strategies to win over the Mongols

However, juridical measures and economic incentives alone do not explain the rapid success of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongols. The success is due to the specific missionary strategies, employed by the Tibetan Buddhist monks, which directly affected religious practices. These strategies proved to be successful because the Mongols and the Tibetans shared a similar socio-religious habitus in a common religious field.¹⁰ Conditioned by society and history, the habitus is constituted by individual and collective experiences, or, in Bourdieu's words, the habitus is "embodied history", whereas the field is "history objectified".¹¹ Social meaning is tied to the human body, and the human body in turn is shaped by the habitual schemes which are acted out implicitly, i.e. on an unconscious level. Therefore the Buddhist monks were able gradually to incorporate Buddhist world concepts into indigenous ones, which thus infiltrated the indigenous religious field and became an essential part of Mongolian religious life. This was achieved mainly by ritual performance. In the Mongolian communities of that period rituals and practices, which we label with the term "religious", very much focused on bodily performed patterns of behaviour. This focus is mirrored in the descriptive terms applied to Buddhism and so called "shamanism" in our sources. In Mongolian texts of the 17th and 18th centuries the terms (among others) *sasin mörgül* for "Buddhism" and *böge mörgül* for "Shamanism" were used. Mongolian *mörgül* literally denotes

10 I refer here to the theory of *habitus* developed by Pierre Bourdieu. According to him forms of *habitus* are "systems of enduring *dispositions*, structured structures, which are suitable to operate as structuring structures, in other words: as generating and structuring principles of practice forms and representations" (PIERRE BOURDIEU, *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis auf der ethnologischen Grundlage der kabyllischen Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 1976, 165; my own translation).

11 PIERRE BOURDIEU, *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main 1993, 122.

“the act of bowing down”, stressing the bodily performance of venerating the *Dharma* or, respectively, the shamans. Both terms emphasize the visible and performative aspects of the Mongolian understanding of “religion”. The *Dharma* should be embodied, as the indigenous practices were embodied. In early modern Mongolian societies the acting out of embodied socio-religious norms and roles proved to be of crucial importance. Therefore, rather than bluntly attempting to exchange existing religious concepts and practices, the Buddhist monks in 17th-century Mongolia put considerable effort into giving new or additional meaning to the bodily engrained patterns of behaviour, thereby slowly transforming these practices and rituals. Calling to mind the passage from the *Cindamani-yin erike* cited above, i.e. the promise of a cow or a horse if one recites Buddhist *dhāraṇīs*, the recitations were not used as substitutes for indigenous prayers. At least this is not mentioned anywhere in our source. In actual fact, the recitations had multiple purposes for different actors. The lay people, on the one hand, would recite the *dhāraṇīs* as a means of receiving worldly goods, along with the well-known traditional invocations, whereas for the Buddhist monks they would have served to accumulate positive *karma*.

The narrative sources of the time, mostly Buddhist chronicles or biographies, reveal that the meaningful transformations enacted by the lay people on a performative, embodied level, were consciously reinforced by the religious elite. The Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhist monks mainly followed two strategies to win over the lay population: (1) competitive ritual actions with regard to (mostly) healing techniques, divination and exorcism, and (2) at a later time the conscious transformation and adaptation of originally indigenous deities, prayers etc. into Buddhist ones.

II.1. Competitive Ritual Actions

We do not have any primary sources from the late 16th century which provide data about shamanic practices during the early years of the Buddhist conversion. The earliest source which gives us a detailed account of the encounter between male and female shamans and Buddhist monks during the late 16th and early 17th century is the *Cindamani-yin erike*, which, however, was written more than a century later and thus presents us with a retrospect interpretation. From this source we learn that shamans during that time period mainly specialized in healing, an aspect which in the 18th century was confirmed by European ethnographers who travelled at the fringes of the Russian Empire and gave the first detailed reports about the religious specialists of the regions they visited. Apart from healing techniques shamans were also apt at exorcism and the conjuring of evil forces.

In a Buryat Mongolian chronicle from the 19th century¹² the following shamanic practices are enumerated:

- The treatment of a person who is ill or very old. This is done by invoking a particular *ongyon*, a powerful ancestral spirit that acts as a helper of the shaman. The shaman's task is to heal the person and to prevent his or her death (Mong. *ebedgülkü ba ükügülkü jabduju*).
- Exorcism (Mong. *kögejü üledekü üledbüri*) of an evil spirit (Mong. *qourlaju cidkür*). A *cidkür* is on the one hand a collective name for evil spirits, especially spirits that cause illness, on the other hand the term denotes the spirit of the soul of a person who has died an unnatural death and does not find peace. The shaman bans the *cidkür* into a substitute (Mong. *jolij*) which is burnt, or into a living animal which is slaughtered.
- Divination from the shoulder blades of a sheep (Mong. *qoni-yin daluyin yasun*). This divination method is already well attested in the 13th century when the Franciscan brothers at the court of the great Khans at Karakorum reported this custom.
- Expulsion (Mong. *yaryayal*) of an evil spirit, if something bad happens to a living being or one's possessions.
- Invocation by spells, blessings and formulas (Mong. *dalalya*) to protect the children, the cattle, hunters etc. against evil spirits and contagious diseases and to bring blessings and luck to them.

As these activities were the main field of shamanic practitioners, it comes as no surprise that in the formative phase of Mongolian Buddhism the Tibetan monks employed rituals and practices primarily aimed at healing and divination, at exorcising and conjuring up evil forces. These rituals and practices had a strong Tantric flavour. It is well known that Tantra does not only imply techniques for the achievement of the soteriological goal of enlightenment, but also techniques for achieving worldly results. In this respect Tantra as practised in Tibet and the Himalaya regions shares a common religious ground with indigenous Mongolian concepts and practices. Like a shaman, who with the help of his "method that helps the living beings" (Mong. *amitan-i tusaladay ... ary-a*) can magically induce rain, the Tantric practitioner does the same, as is described in detail in the

12 Cited after WALTHER HEISSIG, "Die Religionen der Mongolei," GIUSEPPE TUCCI and WALTHER HEISSIG, *Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei*, Stuttgart 1970, 311-2.

Hevajra-Tantra.¹³ Like shamanising, Tantra too is a practice that is useful for worldly needs such as good health and long life for the family and the clan, the prospering of cattle, fertility etc. Thus the Mongolian Buddhist sources are full of stories in which a Buddhist lama competes with a shaman in healing a sick person. The *Cindamani-yin erike* reports the particularly impressive story of an old blind female shaman who is healed by Neyici Toyin and in the aftermath “the shamaness worshipped with true and sincere faith” (Fol. 44r14-16).¹⁴

For the Mongols in early 17th-century Mongolia the notion of Tantra promised power over evil spirits, and it was respected as the most powerful tool of the foreign monks. The monks themselves were well aware of the image they carried as Tantric knowledge holders and used it to their advantage, without any scruples concerning its more esoteric aspects. The *Cindamani-yin erike* comments on this specific use of Tantra in the context of conversion:

One day, when [Neyici Toyin] stayed at a place called *Keyid-ün qosiyun*, some lay people came to venerate him. When he proceeded to teach them the most secret doctrine (*imayta niyuca nom*), his close disciples asked him: ‘When you showed us the highest Secret, you told us: Do not show it to persons without initiation (*vang*) and *abhisheka*, do not teach it! Why do you now teach the Secret to everybody?’ The Lama said: ‘You are certainly correct, but by teaching the highest Secret to these commoners just once, who can retain and understand it? I am anxious to get them to listen, telling them: There should be endeavour in every rebirth!’ (Fol. 41r4-23)

The pragmatic attitude of teaching Tantra to lay people with the sole purpose of getting their attention, highly questionable from the point of view of higher Tantric transmission, got Neyici Toyin into trouble with the Buddhist authorities, an aspect I cannot pursue here.

In our narrative sources the term “Tantra” is devoid of any specific meaning. It is rather used as a cipher for ritual power. The popularity of what I will call “the Tantric approach” and the high social status of its practitioners in the 17th century is in stark contrast to the social status and the image of the Tantric practitioner in the 19th century and later. The 19th century saw dramatic changes in the social situation of the Mongols, especially in the Inner Mongolian regions which were to a high degree

13 See for example *Hevajra-Tantra* I.i, 20, “Rain-producing ritual“, DAVID L. SNELGROVE, *The Hevajra Tantra. A Critical Study*. Part I: Introduction and translation, London 1980, 51.

14 I translate Mong. *süsüg* (Sanskrit *śraddhā*) as “faith”.

colonized by Chinese settlers. The Chinese settlements and the transformation of the pastures into fields brought poverty and starvation to these regions. The rich monastic estates further aggravated this explosive social situation.¹⁵ 19th-century and early 20th-century Mongol oral tradition describes the Tantric practitioner as the prime example of the depraved, sexualized and obscene monk who exploits the long-suffering lay population. This social criticism was expressed in satirical songs (Mong. *šoy qosin dayuu*), ballads and jokes first transmitted orally, later also written down. Walther Heissig cites one particularly telling example from a collection of orally transmitted stories from South-east Mongolia:

A Tibetan Tantric practitioner comes to an Ayil to recite some prayers, because a woman is very ill. He tells the husband that his wife is possessed by evil spirits, but that he will be able to expel them. He explains to the husband that after finishing the prayers the husband is not allowed to enter the yurt but has to remain in front of it in pure devotion. If the bell sounds once, the husband has to bow down once; if the bell sounds twice, he has to bow down twice. The lama starts his prayers in the yurt. Then the bell sounds once and the husband in front of the yurt bows down once. The bell sounds twice, the husband bows down twice. The bell starts to sound incessantly, and the husband bows down incessantly. After a while, however, he wonders what happens in the yurt, and when he peers into the yurt, he sees the lama lying on top of the woman. Enraged he takes his wooden pole (*uur*) and beats the lama on his back, then he chases him off.¹⁶

The testimonies of the depravity of the monks who claimed to be practitioners of Tantra fit well with the claim of European orientalist scholars in the 19th century that Tantra is the most overt mark of the degeneration Buddhism suffered through the centuries, turning from a lofty philosophical doctrine into a sexualized and obscene ritualized teaching. Mongols of the 19th and 20th century certainly thought along similar lines.

15 See ROBERT J. MILLER, *Monasteries and Culture Change in Inner Mongolia*, Wiesbaden 1958.

16 WALTHER HEISSIG, *Geschichte der mongolischen Literatur*. Band II. 20. Jahrhundert bis zum Einfluss moderner Ideen. Darmstadt 1994, 740. The Mongolian text is given in note 145, 779-80.

II.2. Transformation and Adaptation of Indigenous Religious Concepts

After Buddhism had taken root in Mongolia, the Buddhist monks used yet another method to deepen its impact on Mongolian religious life. They incorporated and transformed indigenous religious concepts into Buddhist ones. For this consciously employed missionary strategy, which was clearly installed in a later phase of the Mongolian assimilation of Buddhism, we have numerous examples, of which I want to mention just two. The first takes us back to the 13th century, the period of the formation of the Mongol empire. Already in this period the *sülde*¹⁷ played an important role in the shamanic conception of the world among the Mongols. The *sülde* was considered the vital life force that animates and protects a man and his lineage, so that he is able to fulfil his destiny, *jayayan*, i.e. the destiny to rule preordained by heaven (*tngri*). The main aspects of the *sülde* are strength (*gücün*) and good fortune (*su*). As Igor de Rachewiltz asserts,

This inborn ‘virtue’, or power, appears in individuals who are destined to become great leaders as a majestic aura, an august (imposing, awesome) appearance, conferring on them the qualities of what we may call today a ‘charismatic personality’. Embodying, as it did, the concepts of ‘strength’, ‘good fortune’ and ‘Heaven’s protection’, *sülder* in time came to assume the role of a protective spirit in relation to the family or clan so favoured by Heaven. Thus *sülder*, as a force resulting in Heavenly-bestowed good fortune, and as the tutelary genius of the clan, was the very essence of the might and grandeur which a ruler and his family and descendants enjoyed.¹⁸

The concept of the *sülde* was later merged with the individual “soul”, the *sür* or *sür sünesün*, one of the (mostly) three souls in the indigenous Mongolian world-view¹⁹ that could return after death and turn into the ancestor spirit to be venerated in the *ongyon*-figure. The *Sür sünesün* of a powerful ancestor could turn into the *sülde* not only of his own clan, but also of a whole tribal federation. Thus, when after his death Cinggis Qan was venerated as a powerful ancestor deity by the ruling clan of the Borjigid, already his successor Ögedei Qayan declared Cinggis Qan not only to be

17 In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, the oldest extant literary document of the Mongols, the word *sülde* occurs as *sülder*, see § 62 and 63, 201 and 249 of the *Secret History*.

18 IGOR DE RACHEWILTZ, *The Secret History of the Mongols*. A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century. Translated with a historical and philological commentary, Leiden 2004, I, 329.

19 The *sür sünesün* was later equated with the Tibetan *bla*, the indigenous Tibetan concept of a “life soul”.

his clan's ancestor deity, but the ancestor deity of the whole Mongol *ulus*, the Mongol nation. His veneration was prescribed by law in the whole empire. Cinggis Qan's life spirit, the *sülde*, animated the great war standard (*tuy*).²⁰ At the beginning and the conclusion of a war campaign, sacrifices in form of libation offerings were offered to the standard in order to propitiate its spirit. Many sources also report that during the consecration of the standard human sacrifices were performed. In later times the *sülde* was personified in the *sülde tenggeri*, a war deity that is iconographically depicted as a warrior with a white helmet and high warrior boots.

In the 17th century the ancestor deity Cinggis Qan was incorporated into the Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhist pantheon as "protector of the Dharma" (Tib. *chos skyong*). At the request of Mongolian nobles the first lCang skya Qutuytu Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan composed a prayer to Cinggis Qan as *chos skyong*.²¹ Thus the indigenous concept of the life-spirit of this powerful ancestor deity, closely connected to the "destiny" (*jayayan*) of the whole Mongol *ulus*, was transformed into the Buddhist concept of a protector deity, no longer pertaining to socio-religious and political notions of a Mongol "nation" but to a wider, trans-ethnic religious identity.

The second example demonstrates the conscious attempts to adopt Buddhist and indigenous religious practices also on the discourse level. In the 18th century the famous South-Mongolian lama Mergen diyanci blama gegen Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan tried to create a kind of Mongolian liturgy to be used in the temples and monasteries, combining indigenous prayers and praises with Buddhist *dhāraṇīs*. He also composed Buddhist prayers for the mountain cult and the traditional fire offerings, an obvious attempt to transform these important indigenous religious practices into Buddhist ones. Like the indigenous prayers, his "invented" prayers were printed anonymously and widely distributed.

20 The "white standard with nine feet" (*yisün költü cayan tuy*) is still the symbol of the Mongol nation and worshipped today, see ELISABETTA CHIODO, "The White Standard (*čayan tuy sülde*) of the Čaqar Mongols of Üüsin Banner", *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*, N.F., Bd. 16, 1999/2000, 232-244. See also HENRY SERRUYS, "A Mongol Prayer to the Spirit of Cinggis-Qan's Flag", *Louis Ligeti* (ed.), *Mongolian Studies*, Budapest 1970, 527-35, and KLAUS SAGASTER, "Die mongolische Hauptstadt Karakorum", *Beiträge zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie*, Band 19, Mainz 1999, 113-128.

21 NGAG DBANG BLO BZANG CHOS LDAN, *gSung 'bum*, VII, No. 75: *Tngri-yin jayayatu yajar-un esru-a cinggis qayan-u altan uruy-un sakiyulsun sangkabala bayatur cayan tngri-yin jalbaril takil yeke amuyulang öbesüben bütügsen*.

III. Reifying the Religious Opponent: The Creation of “The Teaching of the Shamans”

One article of the Mongol law code of the Kangxi Era (1662-1722) concentrates on the community of the Lamas and the community of the male and female shamans (*lam-a-nar-yin ayimay. böge iduyan-u ayimay*).²² It contains instructions for how to deal with lamas or shamans who do not adhere to the socially accepted rules (*yosun*). The Qing administration clearly addressed an institutionalized body, although we do not know with what kind and degree of institutionalization we are dealing with here. Interestingly, at a later date this article was annulled. The annulment may hint at a change in the political significance of the shamans: whereas in the beginning of the Kangxi Era the shamans played a significant role in the political and social life, so that the Manchu considered them well worth mentioning, in a later period they had probably lost their political importance among the Mongols.²³

From the above cited article in the law code of the Kangxi Era we can draw the conclusion that the Qing government acknowledged the male and female Mongolian shamans as a juridical body. This reveals the extent of the reification process the “teaching of the male and female shamans” had already undergone during that time. In the late 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century the competitive encounter between the newly arrived Tibetan Buddhist monks and the Mongolian religious specialists, the male and female shamans, gradually led to the categorisation of the religious opponents on the discourse level. In the *Cindamani-yin erike* we observe the formation of a discourse about the “true teaching”, namely Buddhism, and the “false world-view/doctrine”, which the shamans possess. The term *buruyu üjel*, “false world-view”, is used in opposition to

22 Mongol law code, Fol. 39v-41r. This law code of the Kangxi Era consists of 152 articles. Some of the articles are dated (the youngest dates from 1694), but most of them are not dated. The law code was published sometime after 1694. The text is nowadays preserved in the State Library of Ulanbator under the title *yadayadu mongyol-un töri-yi jasaqu yabudal-un yamun-un engke amuyulang-un üye-e-dü 1693 on-du keblegen. Dotor-a 1629 on-aca ekileged uday-a daray-a qayad-un üy-e-dü jarlaysan cayaja-ud-i jasmjilaysan mongyol-un cayajan-u bicig*. I quote the text from Dorothea Heuschert, *Die Gesetzgebung der Qing für die Mongolen im 17. Jahrhundert anhand des Mongolischen Gesetzbuches aus der Kangxi-Zeit (1662-1722)*, Wiesbaden 1998, 215-6.

23 This observation does not pertain to the Manchu. Shamanic rituals played a vital role in establishing and maintaining a separate Manchu identity in the Qing empire up to the 20th century, see EVELYN S. RAWSKI, *The Last Emperors. A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1998, 231-44.

burqan-u sasin,²⁴ the “teaching of the Buddha”, as we note in the sentence: “In this way the false doctrine was brought to an end and the teaching of the Buddha turned out to be immaculate.”²⁵ Our source, however, is vague about what particular doctrines, practices and rituals the term *buruyu üjel* referred to. As is well known, the shamans did not adhere to a worldview different from the community they belonged to. They were ritual specialists and mainly involved in healing.²⁶ The shamanizing practices and rituals were only part of a multitude of traditional Mongolian religious concepts and practices. Ritual practices like the mountain cult, the fire cult and the veneration of the hearth deity, the cult of *Cayan ebügen*, the “White Old Man”, and *Geser Qan*, as well as the various groups of gods, demons and spirits played an important role in every day religious life. Since the 17th century, however, the shamans often occupied a marginal role in their community and were excluded from some of the practices mentioned above. They were, for example, not allowed to participate in the *obo*-cult in high summer or in the ceremony of the offering of the first fruits of mares’ milk. The social marginalisation of the shamans is also attested in European sources which from the 18th century onwards form an important source about Northern Asia and Mongolia. However, we do not know when the social marginalisation of the shamans in Mongolian societies commenced. In the *Secret History of the Mongols* (*Mongyol-un niyuca tobciyan*) the shaman Kököcü, also known as Teb tenggeri, was not only endowed with spiritual power and astrological knowledge, but also had an important political position. According to the account of the *Secret History* he publicly announced that Cinggis Qan was the ruler destined by Heaven Above, and at the *Quriltai* in 1206 bestowed on him the title *Cinggis*. Shamanic power during these early days of the Mongol empire was very much defined by the shaman’s ability to communicate with Heaven Above (*deger-e tngri*) and his knowledge of divination and astrology. Teb Tenggeri was, however, soon considered a threat to Cinggis Qan’s rule, and the Qan allowed his brother to kill the shaman, whereupon he himself assumed the shamanic task of communicating with Heaven.

The latent tension between the ruler and the shaman which is obvious in the oldest literary document of the Mongols may have contributed to

24 In the *Cindamani-yin erike* the term “sasin” is still used in its exclusivist meaning, denoting only “Buddhism”. Later the Mongolian “sasin” came to mean “religious teaching” in general, i.e. “religion”. Nowadays the term is used to translate the European term “religion”.

25 *Cindamani-yin erike*, Fol. 54r11-13.

26 The shaman’s function at that time differed notably from the ritual functions of the shamans during the time of the Mongol Empire.

the later displacement of the shamans from the centre of political power.²⁷ As Caroline Humphrey has asserted, from the 19th century onwards in Mongolian societies two different forms of socially constituted agency are prevalent, which she calls “chiefly agency” and “shamanist agency”.²⁸ The adjective “chiefly” refers to the chief or ruler of a community who strives to achieve global power in society. He legitimizes his claim over his patrilinear descent, but also over his destiny (*jayaya*) that is bestowed on him from Heaven Above and which becomes manifest in his military power and achievements. The shaman, in contrast, according to Humphrey does not define him- or herself through descent, but is chosen by the spirits. He or she is not interested in a well defined role as leader in society, but rather in getting direct access to the different energies manifest in the surrounding world. Whereas the chief or leader is closely associated with a centralized polity and ultimately the state, the shaman is associated with access to multiple sources of power and a direct approach to the different energies he or she engages with.

Both forms of agency outlined above are gendered: the sole legitimation by patrilinear descent excluded women, whereas the shamanic stress on personal ability permitted both men and women to act as shamans. The strong stress on gender explains why in some indigenous religious rituals women and shamans are excluded. In rituals predominantly performed by the group leaders and thus stressing patrilinear notions of power, for example the *obo* ritual, female participants as well as shamans were excluded. As Humphrey asserts, shamans were generally seen as “destabilising pretenders to a different and more direct access of the spirits.”²⁹

Humphrey’s analysis fits well with the more recent developments in the Mongolian socio-religious field, especially in the 19th and early 20th century. Considering the role and status of shamans in the earlier centuries, we lack the written sources which would allow us to draw conclusions about the changing and shifting positions of shamans in historical Mongolian societies. During the Yuan dynasty, in the late 13th and throughout the 14th century, male and female shamans held important positions in

27 Based on this latent tension Caroline Humphrey develops a generalized theoretical approach, according to which shamanic practices and state formation are based on mutually exclusive notions of power, see her “Shamanic Practices and the State in North Asian Shamanism”, in: THOMAS/HUMPHREY (eds.), *Shamanism, History and the State*, 191-228.

28 CAROLINE HUMPHREY, “Chiefly and Shamanist Landscapes in Mongolia,” ERIC HIRSCH and MICHAEL O’HANLON (ed.), *The Anthropology of Landscape. Perspectives on Place and Space*, Oxford 1995, 135-162.

29 HUMPHREY 1995, 148.

the state cult, especially in the ancestor cult and the offerings to Heaven and Earth.³⁰ Due to the lack of sources we cannot comment on the role of shamans in the 15th and 16th centuries. Judging from the narrative accounts in later Mongolian sources from the 17th century onwards, we can conclude that at the eve of the 17th century male and female shamans held powerful positions in Mongolian societies.

When Buddhism arrived on the scene, Tibetan Buddhist monks entered into a close relationship with the rulers and leaders of the centralized power, the state. Therefore the second of the above mentioned two strategies to win over the lay population, the transformation and adaptation of originally indigenous deities, prayers, rituals and practices into Buddhist ones, had its limits when the male power of the monks was intrinsically threatened. Where male-dominated cults like the mountain cult were involved, the Buddhist monks adjusted the existing practices to Buddhist conceptualizations of sacred space. The adjustment went along with a reduction of the variety of existing rituals and a standardization process of them. A Mongolian Buddhist text for *obo*-worship dating from the year 1893 consisted of fixed formulas in which the local leaders were invited to insert lists of the local mountains, rivers etc. they wished to invoke.³¹ Blood sacrifices among the offerings for the mountain were forbidden.

In contrast to the mountain cult the cult of the earth (*yajar*) and the mother *Etügen* is relatively unknown, although the veneration for “old mother *Etügen*” is already present in the Secret History.³² In the northern regions of Mongolia and adjacent Buryatia, where forests are prevalent, caves were venerated as “wombs”, *umai* or *eke umai*, “mother womb”. The cult of the caves is closely connected to fertility rituals which are performed exclusively by shamans. Buddhist monks did not aim at transforming these cults, but tried to destroy or at least negate them. If possible, shamanic ritual sites were turned into male dominated *obo* and new rituals, often in the Tibetan language, were introduced. The fierce competition between the Buddhist monks and the indigenous religious specialists becomes manifest in the clash between these gendered conceptualizations of the world.

On the discourse level the Buddhists had the advantage of the book, whereas the shamanic practices were transmitted orally. In one of the many

30 HERBERT FRANKE, *From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty*. München 1978, 30-2.

31 CHARLES R. BAWDEN, “Two Mongolian Texts Concerning Obo-worship”, *Oriens Extremus* 5/1 (1958), 57-61.

32 For example in §113 of the *Secret History*, when Cinggis Qan addresses To’oril Qan and Jamuqa, speaking of his “strength increased by Heaven and Earth.”

shamanic hymns recorded in the first half of the 20th century, one East-Mongolian shaman sings about his “doctrine without a script.”³³ In Buddhist writings the activities of the shamans were gradually turned into a bundle of practices that first received the standard appellation *buruyu üjel*, “false, heretical world-view” and later the label *böge-ner-ün sasin*, “teaching of the shamans”. The term *buruyu üjel* translates the Tibetan term *lta log* and is thus closely connected to the Tibetan-Buddhist polemical discourse. Tibetan *lta log* respectively *chos log* is used in Buddhist polemics to denounce the doctrinal adversaries. The terms *chos* and *chos log* are thus closely dependent on each other and are commonly used in Inner-Buddhist discourses. The use of this term, albeit in its Mongolian translation, demonstrates that initially the practices of the shamans were looked upon from a normative and exclusivist Buddhist viewpoint. The idea of a plurality of different “religious teachings” is not yet present, and therefore the shamanic practices are judged to be “false” from the only standpoint imaginable.

Mongolian sources of the late 18th and 19th century rarely apply the term *buruyu üjel* to shamans and their practices. Instead they mostly talk about *böge-ner-ün sasin*, the “teaching of the shamans”. The term *sasin*, “teaching”, is now increasingly used to describe religious “systems” which are not Buddhist. The use of *sasin* together with a defining attribute led to its development from an exclusivist to a comparative term, denoting “religion”³⁴ as a general concept. Thus a 19th-century Buryat Mongolian chronicle talks about *böge-ner-ün sasin*, “the teaching of the shamans”, to denote the practices (and concepts respectively beliefs) of the male and female shamans still dominant at that time in the Qori region of Buryat Mongolia.³⁵

33 Quoted after WALTHER HEISSIG, *Die Religionen der Mongolei*, 1970, 300. This, however, is not exactly true, because in the course of the last two centuries many shamanic hymns were written down. There also exists a chronicle which deals exclusively with shamanic beliefs and practices and even tries to explain shamanizing as having developed out of the ancestor worship, see *Ongyot qara sakiyusun teüke sudur bicig orosiba*, preserved in the Royal Library at Copenhagen (Mong. 41). I wish to thank research librarian Bent Lerbæk Pedersen from the Oriental and Judaica Collections for his helpfulness to make the text available to me. A part of this text is given in Roman transcription in WALTHER HEISSIG, “A Mongolian Source to the Lamaist Suppression of Shamanism,” *Anthropos* 18 (1953), 501-503.

34 See note 43.

35 See WANGDAN YÜM CÜNG, *Qori-yin arban nigen ecige-yin jun-u uy ijayur-un tuyuji*, cited after NIKOLAUS POPPE, *Letopisi khorinskikh buryat*. Trudy IX, Leningrad 1935, 92, where the Mongolian text is given. The whole passage reads as follows: *tere üye-edü*

IV. Emic Discourses and the “Shamanism” of the Early Ethnographers

In the course of the Buddhist encounter with the Mongolian shamans the loosely connected and extremely localized shamanic ritual practices which centred on the male and female shamans as ritual actors were reified and in the end unified into a system called either *böge-ner-ün sasin* or *qara sasin*, “black teaching.” The second term derives from the self-descriptive *sira sasin*, “yellow teaching”, as the monks of the *dGe lugs pa*-tradition called themselves in the Mongol regions. *Qara sasin* was at first clearly a pejorative term used by the Tibetan Buddhists to belittle their religious opponents, as “black” is a highly inauspicious colour among the Mongols. The usual colour of the Mongol shamans was white, already attested in the *Secret History*. Very soon, however, the shamans used this polemic term themselves. The reasons for the acceptance of the term are not known. In 1846 the Buryat scholar Dorji Banzarov published a work entitled in Russian *Černaya vera ili šamanstvo u mongolov* (“The Black Faith or Shamanism among the Mongols”), thus making the emic term *qara sasin* known to a wider scholarly audience in imperial Russia. Dorji Banzarov was the first scholar to write a monograph about the so-called “shamanism,” although “shamanism” already in the early 19th century was a well established construct in European intellectual discourse.³⁶ The discourse on native, “primitive” religious concepts which led to their reification in the notion of “shamanism”, up to now is solely considered to be constructed on the basis of European knowledge formations. The question whether the European discursive construct could have been influenced by Central Asian discourses has not yet been raised. Taking a closer look at the ethnographic accounts from which the European thinkers of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment romantic renaissance drew their knowledge about “native religiosity” we should reconsider our assumptions about the emergence of the reification of “shamanism.” Ethnographers like Johan Gottlieb Georgi show in their reports that they were at least acquainted with

böge-ner-ün šasin büri delgeregsen bülüge (“At that time the teaching of the shamans was flourishing”).

36 In recent years the European construction of “shamanism” as a discourse formation has been amply documented and analysed, see RONALD HUTTON, *Shamans. Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*, Hambledon and London 2001, KOCKU VON STUCKRAD, *Schamanismus und Esoterik. Kultur- und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, Leuven 2003, and ANDREI A. ZNAMENSKI, *The Beauty and the Primitive. Shamanism and the Western Imagination*, Oxford 2007.

the negative attitude the Buddhist monks nurtured against the shamans. Georgi asserts when he encounters the shamans among the Kalmuks:

Unter dem Volke sind Zauberer, (Bö), die nach der Art der Schamanen Thiere schlachten und mit ähnlichen Grimaschen Gebete an die Burchane und Tinrirs halten, sich mit Tamarisken- und Weisstannenreisig räuchern, sich entzückt und verrückt stellen und Unsinn reden. Die lamaischen Geistlichen verfolgen diese Zauberer, und die Gesetze strafen sie und die sich ihrer bedienen.³⁷

Peter Simon Pallas likewise mentions the persecution of the shamans:

Sie haben noch izt heimliche Zauberer beyderley Geschlechts unter sich, welche ohngeachtet sie von den Lamem verfolgt und verflucht werden, unter dem abergläubischen Pöbel dennoch ihr Spiel treiben.³⁸

The Russian and German ethnographers who travelled among the Mongols in the late 18th and early 19th centuries have been well aware of the Buddhist attitude towards the indigenous religious specialists. We can safely assume that the judgment of the Buddhist lamas who were considered by them to have a “civilizing” influence on the “barbarian natives”,³⁹ influenced their own attitude towards these indigenous religious specialists. The European ethnographers, however, did not support their judgment by consulting Mongolian or Tibetan written sources. Although a direct influence of the indigenous intellectual discourse about “the teaching of the shamans” on the European conceptualization of “shamanism” cannot be

37 JOHANN GOTTLIEB GEORGI, *Beschreibung aller Nationen des russischen Reichs, ihrer Lebensart, Religion, Gebräuche, Wohnungen, Kleidungen und übrigen Merkwürdigkeiten*. 4. Ausgabe: Mongolische Völker, Russen und die noch übrigen Nationen, St. Petersburg 1776-1780, 416.

38 PETER SIMON PALLAS, *Sammlungen historischer Nachrichten über die mongolischen Völkerschaften*, 2 Theile. Um eine Einführung vermehrter Nachdruck der 1776 und 1801 bei der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften in St. Petersburg erschienenen Ausgabe. Mit einer Einführung von S. Hummel, Graz 1980, 341.

39 AS PALLAS, *op. cit.*, 103, remarks: „Gleichwohl merkt man bey den Kalmücken und noch mehr bey den Mongolen, welche die lamaische Religion bekennen, dass ihre Sitten theils durch die Gemeinschaft mit den Chinesen, theils durch die tangutische Geistlichkeit, unendlich milder geworden sind, als man sie noch jzt unter den Buräten, die dem Schamanischen Aberglauben anhängen, und gleichsam das Ebenbild von dem sind, was auch ihre Brüder sonst waren, findet.“ See also KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, „Zur europäischen Rezeption der mongolischen autochthonen Religion und des Buddhismus in der Mongolei“, PETER SCHALK et al. (ed.), *Religion im Spiegelkabinett. Asiatische Religionsgeschichte im Spannungsfeld zwischen Orientalismus und Okzidentalismus*, Uppsala 2003, 243-288, especially 267-275.

proven without doubt,⁴⁰ the similarities between both constructions of a religion/ teaching called “shamanism” are striking. It would be a fruitful future task to explore the connection between the Mongolian reification of the shamans’ beliefs and practices into a homogenous “system” and the European creation of a religion called “shamanism”.

V. Conclusion

As Geoffrey Samuel has suggested for Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Tibetan context of the first millennium,⁴¹ Buddhism had already found a place within the indigenous Tibetan religious traditions and had engrained and adjusted itself within this particular religious context. The infiltration laid the ground for the later Buddhist success. We clearly observe similar patterns in the Mongol regions, which in retrospect can perhaps shed some light on the situation in Tibet. For both Buddhist and shamanic actors our Mongolian sources point to a remarkably similar socio-religious *habitus*, acted out on the individual and collective level in a shared religious field. The alliances in this field were shifting and pertained to the efficiency of the methods used to reach a common goal, this goal being rather a better and more secure life than distant *nirvāṇa* or Buddhahood. The shared religious field provided the background for the highly sophisticated and planned missionary strategies of the Tibetan Buddhist monks to win the Mongols over to Buddhism. Rather than exchanging existing religious concepts, the Buddhist monks and lamas put considerable effort in giving new and additional meaning to existing practices and rituals, thereby subtly transforming bodily engrained patterns of behaviour. The result of this embodiment of new religious concepts was nothing less than a new Mongolian cultural-religious identity.

The Buddhist way into Mongolia as analysed in my paper leads us to yet more and far reaching theoretical conclusions. An encounter situation

40 One of my students at Bern University, ANDREA BUESS, wrote a short thesis about „Die deutschen Forschungsreisenden des 18. Jahrhunderts in der Mongolei und ihre Rezeption einer schamanischen Religion: Eine ideengeschichtliche Verbindungsstelle des mongolischen und europäischen Schamanismuskurses?“ and drew the conclusion that, as the European construction of “shamanism” was highly dependent on the ethnographers’ accounts about the Mongols, the Mongolian emic discourse in all probability indirectly influenced the European discourse.

41 GEOFFREY SAMUEL, “The Vajrayāna in the Context of Himalayan Folk Religion”, HELMUT KRASSER et al. (ed.), *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*. Vol. II, Wien 1997, 843-50.

within a social-religious field can lead to the development of a reflexive analytical terminology and thus the distinction of an autonomous field of “religion” on the discourse level. This holds true for the medieval Near East where the Persian Sharastani (1086–1135) composed the first ever written comparative history of religion, as well as for Western Europe in the Middle Ages.⁴² The same holds true for Asia, in our case Inner Asia, as has been shown for the Tibetan-Mongolian religious encounter. The development of a comparative term for “religion”⁴³ in the Mongolian societies of the 17th and 18th century was closely connected to the politics of the local rulers and the newly emerging social class of the Buddhist *sangha*. Not unlike the European situation, the discourse about “religion” in Mongolian societies is intricately interwoven with power relations. Furthermore, the construction of the religious “other” led to the creation of a systematised tradition, the so-called *böge-ner-ün sasin*, amply attesting to the fact that the elements in the development of the reflexive study of religion so prominently promoted to be singularly “Western” “are not bound to the culture of “the West”, as Michael Pye asserts.⁴⁴ In this sense the research results presented here may contribute to the project of a global history of religion that aims at de-centralizing the theoretical perspectives of the study of religions in so far, as the focus on Europe as the centre of reflexive religious production is abandoned in favour of a multi-centred perspective, which includes non-European analytical perspectives on the discourse field of “religion”.

42 There were different comparative terms used in Medieval Europe. Roger Bacon used the term *sectae*. He differentiated five *sectae*, the *Pagani puri*, *Idolatrae*, *Tartari*, *Saraceni* and *Iudei*, whereas Raymundus Lullus used *fides* in his *Liber de Gentili et Tribus Sapientibus*, see MICHEL DESPLAND, *La religion en occident. Evolution des idées et du vécu*, Montréal 1979, 117 and 119.

43 The Mongolian term *sasin* is functionally and structurally analogous to the European term “religion.” In content the term differs significantly from its European equivalent. *Sasin* focuses on the beliefs that can be observed outwardly, i.e. the religious practices. In the Mongolian context it has a strong ritual connotation and stresses the importance of the respective religious specialists. Both *religion* and *sasin* are culturally particular terms, in content bound to their respective cultural context. The same applies, of course, to the Tibetan *chos/ chos lugs*. See also KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, *Zur Ausdifferenzierung eines autonomen Bereichs Religion in asiatischen Gesellschaften des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts: Das Beispiel der Mongolen*, Bern 2007, 15–17.

44 MICHAEL PYE, „Overcoming westernism: the end of Orientalism and Occidentalism”, PETER SCHALK et al. (ed.), *Religion im Spiegelkabinett. Asiatische Religionsgeschichte im Spannungsfeld zwischen Orientalismus und Okzidentalismus*, Uppsala 2003, 91–114.

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Amitāyus and the Development of Tantric Practices for Longevity and Health in Tibet

GEOFFREY SAMUEL

I. Practices for Health and Longevity within Tibetan Buddhism

This chapter discusses the history and development of the longevity practice (*tshe sgrub*) associated with the deity Tshe dpag med (Skt. Amitāyus) in Tibet. It derives from a research project in which I have been engaged with several collaborators, on a widely-known contemporary set of longevity practices, the 'Chi med srog thig ('Essence of Immortal Life' or 'Immortal Life's Creative Seed'; DUDJOM RINPOCHE 1979-1985, vol.14, 75-554). This cycle of teachings, which focuses on a specific form of Amitāyus, has been widely propagated by the distinguished 20th-century lama Dudjom Rinpoche (bDud 'joms Rin po che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1904-1987; cf. DONGYAL, 2008; THAYE, n.d.).¹

It is evident that the practical use of Buddhist ritual for health was a major concern of Indian Buddhism. One of the most obvious expressions of that concern is the cult of the Buddha of Medicine, Bhaiṣajyaguru (see e.g. BIRNBAUM 1980). Bhaiṣajyaguru's cult rapidly spread throughout East Asia and is centred, as one might imagine from his name, on healing, both of oneself and of others. Bhaiṣajyaguru, sMan bla in Tibetan, also became important in Tibet, and is strongly associated with the Tibetan tradition

1 The research was funded by the U.K. Arts and Humanities Research Council. While the paper presents my own interpretation of this material, I acknowledge here the work of my fellow-researchers, Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer, of the Venerable Ogyan P. Tandzin Rinpoche, who has assisted us and indeed been an integral part of our project, and of Barbara Gerke, whose parallel work on the ethnography of longevity practice, in the context of an Oxford DPhil in medical anthropology, has also made a major contribution to our understanding of these issues. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Lama Kunzang Dorjee of Byang sa dGon pa, Kalimpong, and of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, to whom I owe much of my knowledge of *tshe sgrub* practice in general.

of medicine or *gSo ba rig pa*. The principal Tibetan medical scripture, the *rGyud bzhi* or Four-fold Medical Tantra, is traditionally regarded as a revelation by Bhaiṣajyaguru, and his cult is important for Tibetan *a mchi* or doctors. Bhaiṣajyaguru can be invoked and worshipped, and his assistance obtained, through standard Buddhist Tantric procedures of visualisation, mantra practice and the like.²

The cult of Bhaiṣajyaguru is however not the only Tibetan Tantric approach to healing. There are a variety of Tantric practices in Tibet that have some association with health and healing, but the subject of the present paper is a set of Tantric practices that appears to be a specifically Tibetan development of Indian Tantric techniques. These are the practices generally known in English as long-life or longevity practices; *āyuhśādhana* in Sanskrit, *tshē sgrub* in Tibetan. The principal Tibetan deities employed for *tshē sgrub* practices in contemporary Tibetan practice are Amitāyus, White Tārā and Uṣṇīṣavijaya. Amitāyus and White Tārā are regarded by Tibetan lamas as specialised forms of two of the most important Tantric deities, the Buddha Amitābha and the goddess Tārā. There are numerous Tantric lineages in contemporary Tibetan practice focussing on specific forms of Amitāyus and White Tārā, as well as others involving Uṣṇīṣavijaya³ and yet other deities.

The cults of Amitāyus/Amitābha and Tārā, like that of Bhaiṣajyaguru, go back in some sense to the early Mahāyāna Sūtras, but they have undergone a progressive transformation and specialisation in Tibet, taking on a health-giving role that appears to have been only a secondary element within their initial context. This makes them of particular interest within a conference whose focus is on processes of transformation and transfer within Tantric history. This paper is primarily about Amitāyus, but I shall give some attention too to White Tārā, since the practices associated with the two deities have had different histories and employ different techniques.

2 For a brief example in English by a contemporary 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud lama, see GYALTSEN 1988: 145-8.

3 I do not discuss Uṣṇīṣavijaya (gTsong tor rNam rgyal ma) further in this paper, since I have not had an opportunity to study Uṣṇīṣavijaya texts or practices in detail. Like Amitāyus and Tārā, her cult has an Indian textual basis, and she is often counted by Tibetans as a form of Tārā (specifically as fourth of the well-known set of twenty-one). Offering rituals to Uṣṇīṣavijaya are common, and are intended to extend life and remove obstacles, but as far as I know there are no actual *tshē sgrub* or *tshē dbang* rituals based on Tantric identification with her.

2. The Meaning of Longevity Practice

There are many hundreds of *tshe sgrub* practices in Tibet. While they can be employed by practitioners for their own benefit, many of them also have associated *tshe dbang* or life empowerment rituals, in which the power of longevity is conveyed to others. Whether the practices are performed for oneself or for others, the most common understanding of their effect is, quite straightforwardly, that the practitioner or recipient will live longer. The stories associated with these practices tell of past Tantric masters who faced potentially fatal obstacles to their health, but overcame them through the practice of these longevity yogas and lived for a further fifteen or twenty years. Thus a White Tārā empowerment text tells the story of an important early member of the lineage, sGre pa, who was told by a yogin that he had only three more years to live. He encountered the bLa ma sLe nag pa, who taught him the White Tārā practice, and undertook a retreat to evoke her:

After only a month had passed, he clearly saw the Holy Lady's face, and she told him: "You will live to be sixty years old and be of benefit to beings."

Later, when he had reached sixty years of age, he prayed to the Holy Lady, and she said: "Erect an image of me, and you will live another ten years." Thus, it is said, he set up a painting.

When he turned seventy, he prayed again, and again she said: "Erect another image, and you will live ten years." Thus, it is said, he set up a metal statue. Both these images are reputed to have great empowerment, and it is said that the painting may be found in Radreng [Rwa-sgreng] Monastery even to this very day.

When he turned eighty, he prayed again to the Holy Lady, and she said: "Now if you erect an image of me, you will be able to live for many more years." So he set one up in front of his dwelling to the north, and it is said that he lived to be ninety-five years old.

If one prays to this goddess, she grants not only long life but also the greater and greater increase of one's wisdom [...] (BEYER 1973: 387-8).

Lay Tibetans may assume, or at any rate hope, that going to an effective *tshe dbang* or long-life empowerment and receiving the empowered liquids and pills distributed to participants will lead to an extension of some years in their life-span. Barbara Gerke, who undertook ethnographic research on contemporary long life rituals among the Tibetan population of the Darjeeling-Kalimpong area of West Bengal, came across people who when asked how long an extension a ritual might make to their life-span, replied, 'About fifteen years'. She also came across others, old people who felt ready to die, who claimed that they were not attending the long-life ritual because they did not want to live longer (GERKE 2010: 440. 427).

Such comments should not perhaps be taken entirely at face value, but they nevertheless point to the immediate and explicit goal of Tibetan long-life practices.

There are however other understandings of what long-life ritual is meant to achieve, and these relate to the central purpose of the practice as a whole, which is not in fact to extend one's present life but, as we shall see, to attain the *siddhi* or magical power of control over life. Thus one may be told that the 'real' *siddhi* of long life is the realisation of the illusory nature of our ordinary perceptions of space and time, which is part of the attainment of Buddhahood. If time is illusory, then the duration of life is also without meaning.⁴

More generally, these practices are very closely integrated with the central goal of the attainment of Buddhahood. The liturgy of a practice such as the 'Chi med srog thig constantly refers to and reaffirms central Buddhist goals and values. The normative reason for extending one's life is to be able to make fuller use of the precious opportunity offered by human embodiment for the practice of the Dharma, in order to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

3. The 'Chi med srog thig : A Brief Introduction

The particular form of Amitāyus central to the 'Chi med srog thig cycle is associated with a narrative relating to Padmasambhava (Gu ru Rin po che), the primal guru of Tibetan Buddhism, a legendary and probably also historical figure who is particularly important for the rNying ma pa tradition to which Dudjom Rinpoche belonged. Padmasambhava is held to have visited Tibet for some years in the late 8th century, at the time of the early Tibetan Empire, and to have transmitted Tantric practices to the Tibetan emperor of that time (Khri srong lde'u btsan) and to a number of close disciples. More specifically, the 'Chi med srog thig deity is a specific form of Amitāyus in union with his consort that is held to have been realised by Padmasambhava and his female consort Mandāravā when they attained the Tantric *siddhi* of power over life. This is an event which is said to have taken place at a location in India called Māratika, which is now generally, though not universally, identified with a pilgrimage site in central Nepal known as Halase (BUFFETRILLE 1994, 2000: 293-341). Padmasambhava is an important figure within Tibetan religious literature, particularly for the rNying ma pa tradition to which Dudjom Rinpoche belonged, so the

4 CHANGLING RINPOCHE (personal communication, London. 1 October 2006).

grounding of the 'Chi med srog thig in Padmasambhava's life-narrative is of some significance.

In fact the relationship with Padmasambhava is closer than this historical connection would indicate. The 'Chi med srog thig is a *gter ma* practice, i.e. a practice revealed through a visionary lama (*gter ston*) who was himself believed to be a rebirth of one of Padmasambhava's Tibetan disciples, and to have received the practice directly from Padmasambhava during the latter's stay in Tibet. The first *gter ma* teachings were revealed in around the 10th and 11th centuries, and many longevity practices originate in this way. The legend of Padmasambhava's activities was also developed and elaborated through a series of these *gter ma* teachings, a theme to which I shall return later.

Dudjom Rinpoche was himself a *gter ston*, as was his previous rebirth Dudjom Lingpa (bDud 'joms gLing pa), but in this case the practice was revealed by another *gter ston*, Zil gnon Nam mkha'i rdo rje, who had discovered it in 1902 and entrusted it first to the 15th Karma pa, mKha' khyab rDo rje, and then, after the Karma pa's death in 1922, to Dudjom Rinpoche (DONGYAL 2008: 89). Both the 15th Karma pa and particularly Dudjom Rinpoche developed the cycle further, composing liturgical sequences, ritual manuals, and explanatory texts, and the practice became one of Dudjom Rinpoche's principal practices. Dudjom left Tibet in 1958, settling first in Kalimpong in India and then in Nepal, where he lived until his death in 1987.

Dudjom Rinpoche had a large number of disciples and students, both Tibetan and non-Tibetan, so the 'Chi med srog thig is now widely performed both by individuals and as part of collective ritual. Thus the Byang sa or 'Bhutanese' monastery at Kalimpong, a community of lay tantric practitioners under the direction of Lama Kunzang Dorjee, son of one of Dudjom Rinpoche's close disciples, carries out a seven-day long *sgrub-chen* ritual of the 'Chi med srog thig each year shortly after Tibetan New Year.⁵ The 'Chi med srog thig is also taught and practised by a number of groups in Europe and the USA.⁶

5 Our team was able to study, document and participate in this ritual in March 2009, and we will be incorporating data from it in future publications. The sand maṇḍala reproduced below was made on this occasion.

6 Among these is the community headed by the Italian-American teacher Ahkon Lhamo, who has been recognised as the rebirth of a Tibetan nun and also as a reincarnation of Mandāravā. Ahkon Lhamo can be seen introducing the practice on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITc1o-ZqIK4> (accessed 30 July 2009). Her description of her visit to the Halase-Maratika cave in Nepal can also be found on Youtube, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec13WXCyGWA (accessed 30 July 2009).



Fig. 1: 'Chi med srog thig deities depicted in wall painting, Upper Lhakhang, Byang sa dGon pa, Kalimpong, West Bengal, India, January 2007.
Photo by author.

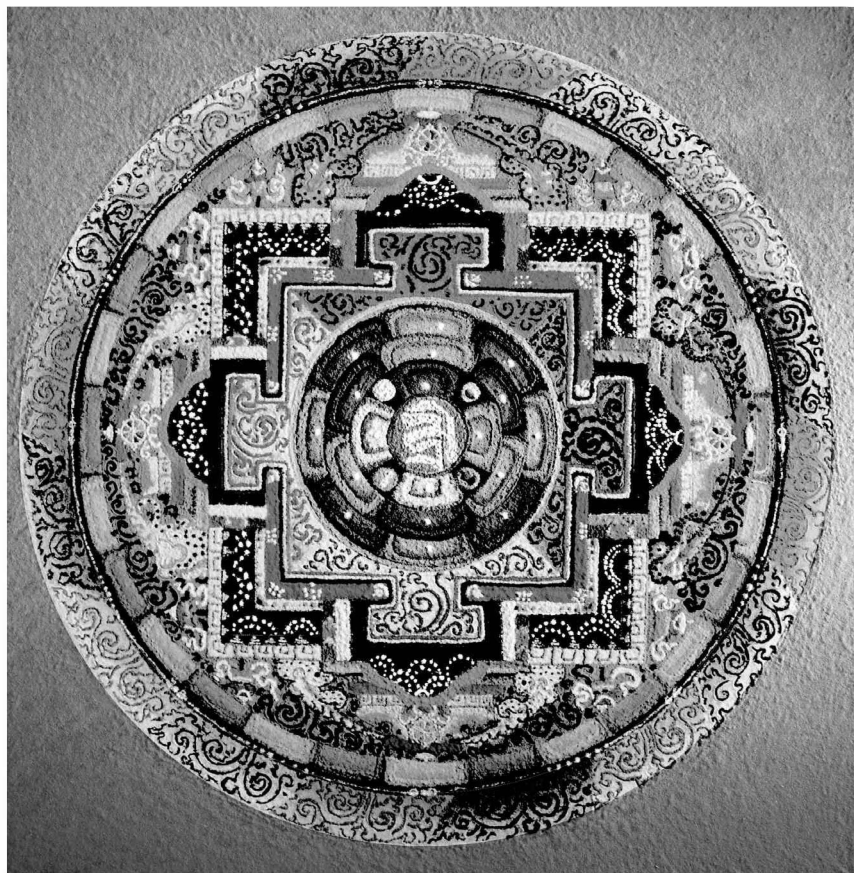


Fig. 2: 'Chi med srog thig deities in the form of a sand mandala. Byang sa dGon pa, Kalimpong, West Bengal, India, March 2009. Photo by Cathy Cantwell.

As we have seen already, for contemporary Tibetans, these long-life or longevity practices are intended to extend one's life span. More specifically, the practice is conceived of as replenishing and strengthening various life-forces or elements of life that can become weakened and depleted by loss to negative forces (malevolent and hostile spirits and the like) in the environment. The practice is thought of as restoring health and vitality, and so promoting a longer life (GERKE 2008, 2010; SAMUEL 2008a).

Elsewhere I have discussed the structure of the 'Chi med srog thig in some detail, explaining how it is intended to bring about this replenishing

and strengthening of the life-force (SAMUEL 2008a; see also CANTWELL and MAYER 2008, 2010). The key element is the practitioner's visionary self-transformation into the deity 'Chi med srog thig at the centre of a maṇḍala of long-life deities.

This maṇḍala (Figs. 1 and 2) consists of 32 deities, who are indicated by dots and symbols in the sand-maṇḍala. They are described in detail in a number of texts included in the 'Chi med srog thig section of Dudjom Rinpoche's *gsung 'bum* or Collected Works, most notably in the deity generation section of the main *las byang* or ritual manual (DUDJOM RINPOCHE 1979-1985, vol. *pha*, 85-90).⁷ They can be listed in tabular form:

Centre	Padmasambhava and Mandāravā in union, manifesting as Padma Thod phreng rtsal and his female consort Caṇḍālī, holding a life-vase (<i>tshe bum</i>).
Four main lotus petals of inner circle	Four Thod phreng rtsal deities, corresponding to the four remaining Buddha families (Vajra in the East, Ratna in the South, Buddha in the West, Karma in the North) in union with their consorts, each holding life-vases
Six lotus petals of second circle	Six Vajra Goddesses of Form, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch, Dharmas
Eight lotus petals of third circle	Eight Offering Goddesses: Vajra Charm, Vajra Garland etc.
Four doors	Four female door-guardians in union with male consorts

To these may be added two further pairs of deities visualised in space above the central deities, and so not shown explicitly on the sand maṇḍala, bringing the total to 36:

⁷ The full title of the *las byang* is rdo rje phur pa yang gsang phrin las bcud dril las: tshe sgrub 'chi med srog thig, and it occupies pp. 75-143 of volume *pha* in DUDJOM RINPOCHE 1979-1985.

Above central deities	Padma Gar dbang (Padma Nāṭeśvara) and Gsang ba Ye shes (Guhyajñāna) in union
Above Padma gar dbang and Gsang ba Ye shes	sNang ba mtha' yas (Amitābha) and Padma dbyings phyug ma (Padma Dhātviśvarī) in union

These two deity-couples represent the *sambhogakāya* and *dharmakāya* levels of Buddha-manifestation (the main maṇḍala being implicitly at the *nirmāṇakāya* level). The sand maṇḍala also includes four symbolic objects at the intermediate directions of the inner circle. These are a white crystal vajra in the SE, a yellow swastika in the SW, a blazing sun and moon locket in the NW and a green victory-banner (*rgyal mtshan*) in the NE, and they correspond to four aspects of the underlying energy that supports life and vitality.⁸ These can be translated as the life spirit or protective energy (*bla*), the life span (*tshe*), the life force (*srog*) and the breath (*dbugs*).⁹

The 'Chi med srog thig practice takes place within a typical Tibetan Tantric liturgical framework involving lineage prayers, refuge and bodhicitta verses at the beginning, and closing verses of dedication and auspiciousness, again of varying degrees of elaboration. In the core sequence of all forms of the practice, practitioners dissolve ordinary reality into voidness or emptiness, imaginatively create and identify with the central deities, imaginatively create the surrounding maṇḍala, offer prayers, offerings and praises to the deities of the maṇḍala, repeat the mantras of the principal deities, and call on them in turn to summon back their lost life-energy (the *tshe 'gugs* or 'life-summoning sequence) and to access the *bcud* (essence) or *bdud rtsi* (Skt. amṛta), the positive life-energy, of the universe which has now in effect been transformed into the maṇḍala (see below). In a full-scale version of the practice, the *bdud rtsi* is brought back and accumulated within five life-vases (one for the central deities, and four more for the other Thod phreng rtsal deities in the four directions) containing consecrated liquids. This central sequence ends with dissolving the visualisation and returning to the ordinary perception of reality.

This core sequence can be seen as a visionary re-creation of the environment of the meditator. In its course the environment is transformed

8 These symbolic representations are not shown in the wall painting. There are a number of additional figures in the wall-painting, including lamas associated with the lineage at the top and guardians associated with the lineage and monastery in the lowest register.

9 The translations are somewhat arbitrary (see e.g. GERKE 2008 for a detailed discussion of these terms, which occur in a variety of other contexts).

from a location of potential weakness and vulnerability, full of threatening human and non-human entities to which life-energy has been lost, into a source of support and nurturance, the dwelling-place of the great positive forces represented by the Tantric deities of the maṇḍala.

The practitioner's positive relationship with the deities and maṇḍala is brought about through repetition of a series of mantras and ritual actions within the context of a relatively standard Tibetan Vajrayāna liturgical context, framed by refuge and bodhicitta verses and the dissolution of ordinary reality at the commencement, and the reconstitution of ordinary reality, verses of dedication of merit and auspiciousness at the end. The central process can be carried out for oneself or for others, in shorter and longer forms, in a solitary retreat or as part of a group ritual. The 'Chi med srog thig cycle provides the materials for these various kinds of practice, as well as a variety of supplementary practices and explanatory material, which are augmented through the oral teachings of the lama giving the practice. These supplementary practices include dietary practices (*bcud len*) and physical exercises (*'phrul 'khor*).

When the practice is performed for others, for example at an annual monastic festival which may be attended by hundreds of lay people from the surrounding communities, the positive life-energy is transferred into liquids and pills that are empowered by the practitioners and ingested by the recipients.

These longevity practices within contemporary Tibetan society are of considerable interest, both in their own right and in terms of their possible effectiveness, and I have explored these issues elsewhere (SAMUEL 2008b, 2009, 2010a, 2010b). In the remainder of this paper, I will discuss the history of these practices in India and Tibet. Before moving on to historical issues, it is worth noting two further details of the ritual procedures.

First, while the specific life forces invoked and strengthened vary somewhat between longevity ritual practices, they normally include the *bla*, the separable 'soul' or 'protective energy'. This appears to have been an early, pre-Buddhist component of Tibetan thought, and to parallel the various souls and spirit-substances lost and recovered in 'shamanic' practices in Tibet and the Himalayas, as also elsewhere in the world (cf. SAMUEL 1993: 186-7, 263-4, 268).¹⁰

10 As noted above, the 'Chi med srog thig works in terms of four life forces, the *tshe* (life-duration), *bla* (protective energy), *srog* (life-energy or life-force) and *dbugs* (breath). Other practices use different sets of life forces. For example, the Tshe grub dgongs 'dus of Nyag bla Padma bDud 'dul, another Amitāyus practice from the late 19th century that is also linked to the Mārātika story, refers only to *bla tshe* and *srog* (PADMA bDUD 'DUL, n.d., vol.3, 587-591).

Second, the ritual speaks repeatedly of drawing in the positive essences of the universe, referred to variously as *bdud rtsi* and *bcud*. These are both significant terms. *Bdud rtsi* corresponds to Sanskrit *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality produced when the gods and *dāityas* churned the ocean at the beginning of time (e.g. JOHNSON 2009: 16). *Bcud* corresponds to Sanskrit *rasa*, an important and multivalent Indian concept that can here best be rendered as something like ‘juice’ or ‘essence’. The Sanskrit term *rasāyana* is usually translated ‘alchemy’ and refers to a series of pharmaceutical, physiological and meditational practices aimed primarily at the attainment of longevity and ultimately immortality (see e.g. WHITE 1996). The Tibetan translation of *rasāyana* is *bcud len* (‘taking/receiving the *bcud*’), and is applied to a specific component of longevity practice, in which practitioners progressively cut down on ordinary food, living instead on small numbers of special pills or from breathing alone (see e.g. GYATSO 1995: 183–191 for a practice of this kind).

We will return to both the *bla* and the question of alchemy below. First, however, I consider the central figure of Amitāyus.

4. Amitābha and Amitāyus in India

In contemporary Tibetan thought, as I have noted above, Amitāyus (Tshe dpag med) and Amitābha (’Od dpag med or Snang ba mtha’ yas) are conflated, so that Amitāyus is regarded as a specialised form of manifestation of Amitābha. This is in conformity with a general logic by which all Tantric deities are manifestations of the Dharmakāya or ultimate nature of Buddhahood, and may be represented visually through a vertical series of images, in which an image of Amitāyus may have a small Amitābha above it, who may in turn have a small image of Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri in *yab yum* form (the main rNying ma pa representation of the Dharmakāya) above it. In East Asia, too, Amitāyus and Amitābha tend to be conflated. It is not so clear whether Amitāyus and Amitābha were regarded as equivalent in the early Indian material, and the fact that several of the major sources have survived only or mainly in Chinese translation makes it hard to be sure; both names are frequently rendered by the same Chinese syllables. The first dateable texts that refer to Amitābha/Amitāyus were translated into Chinese in the mid to late 2nd century CE by Lokakṣema, and are generally assumed to have been composed in India within the previous century or so. These are the so-called *Larger Sukhāvativyūhasūtra* and the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra* (*Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra* for short; HARRISON 1990, 1993).

Both discuss Amitābha/Amitāyus at some length, but the focus is very different in the two texts. The focus in the *Larger Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* is on the story of the how the Pure land of Sukhāvātī came into being through the vows of the Buddha Amitābha/Amitāyus in a former life, and on the need to seek rebirth in Sukhāvātī through self-purification and the avoidance of evil actions. The work parallels other early *sūtras* of around the same period, that describe the Pure Lands of other Buddhas (Akṣobhya, Bhaiṣajyaguru) and appear to imply elaborate meditative visualisations of these Buddhas in their Pure Lands. The *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra* refers to this process of visualisation of Amitāyus in his Pure Land, but more as an image of the unreality of the apparent world than as a practice that the text itself advocates. The *sūtra* seems to take it for granted that this is a well-known practice (see e.g. HARRISON 1990: 31-6), aimed both at attaining contact with and receiving teachings from Amitāyus and subsequently being reborn in Sukhāvātī. There is no mention in either text, however, of extending one's present life. The 'limitless life' implied by Amitāyus's name refers to the life of beings within Sukhāvātī, not those who worship him in the present world.

A second group of texts occurs in Chinese translations from the 5th century onwards: the so-called *Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* and the *Amitāyurdhyānasūtra*,¹¹ and a group of texts relating to the deity Aparimitāyus, who may be better regarded as a distinct figure from Amitāyus/Amitābha, at least in the Indian context (PAYNE 1997, 2007). The first two of these are again concerned with rebirth in Sukhāvātī. This is brought about through reciting the name of Amitābha in the first case, and through a detailed contemplation of the realm of Sukhāvātī in the second. The Aparimitāyus texts are somewhat different, and include the recitation of a dhāraṇī aimed at extending one's life-span.

As far as I know, this is the first known instance of a deity from the Amitāyus/Amitābha/Aparimitāyus group being employed in rituals to attain longevity. Their date is unclear, although according to Payne one of these texts, the *Aparimitāyurjñānaḥṛdayadhāraṇī* (T. 370), was translated into Chinese in the early 6th century. The use of dhāraṇīs goes back for several centuries before that in India, so one cannot really say when the use of the Aparimitāyus dhāraṇī for long life practices began, or how widely it was practised in India. It is certainly possible that, as Payne argues, our view of these deities has been influenced by the significance of the rebirth in Sukhāvātī theme in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, and the consequent

11 This text only survives in Chinese and there is doubt regarding the existence of an Indian original; the Sanskrit name by which it is generally known is a reconstruction.

privileging in the Western scholarly tradition of the texts that emphasise this theme at the expense of other texts (PAYNE 2007).¹²

It is noticeable that Vāgīśvarakīrti's *Mṛtyuwañcanopadeśa*, a 10th- or 11th-century Indian text that surveys a wide range of techniques for averting death (WALTER 2000, SCHNEIDER 2006), does not mention the Aparimitāyus dhāraṇī or other Amitāyus/Amitābha practices. This may suggest that Amitāyus/Amitābha were not widely used for death-averting rituals, though it is also true that Vāgīśvarakīrti was an important figure in the propagation of the cult of White Tārā. Thus it is not surprising that Vāgīśvarakīrti's discussion of deity practices in the *Mṛtyuwañcanopadeśa* (verses 4.9-4.42, cf. SCHNEIDER 2006: 155-161, 229-234) concentrates on the practice of White Tārā (SCHNEIDER 2006).¹³

Vāgīśvarakīrti's *Mṛtyuwañcanopadeśa* became one of the principal Tibetan sources for ideas about how to delay or cheat death ('*chi bslu*; MENGELE 2010). Indeed, many of them do seem to contain a strong element of cheating or deceit; one meditates on being a yogin, and since it is wrong to kill a yogin, death will not come to one; or one somehow manipulates the count of one's breathing, or suspends and blocks the inner winds of the body in various ways, or simply refuses to recognise the discursive perception of death. Others involve the use of virtuous actions of various kinds to counter death; or the use of alchemical compounds including mercury, or various other material aids. '*Chi bslu* can also be translated as 'ransoming death,' and Mengele suggests, following the lama Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, that the Indic practices became merged with indigenous Tibetan ransom rituals.

The most significant practices associated with Vāgīśvarakīrti were however those of White Tārā. Vāgīśvarakīrti was held to have received a personal revelation from White Tārā, and he became the primary source for White Tārā practices in Tibet. The most important Tibetan lineages of these practices are traced back to him. They were transmitted to Tibet through the important early 11th-century teacher Atiśa and the translator

12 At the same time, the rebirth in Sukhāvātī theme was not just an East Asian development. It is clearly present in the Indian material, and was also taken up quite widely in Tibet (see KAPSTEIN 2004 for a summary).

13 Vāgīśvarakīrti mentions a number of other deities, but the emphasis is clearly on White Tārā. These other deities include Amṛtakuṇḍalin, who gives general protection from danger; the Five Tathāgatas, who convey enlightenment, which implies not dying before the end of *saṃsāra*; Avalokita/Lokeśvara; the five consorts of the Tathāgatas; one's personal *iṣṭadevatā*; and Heruka. The last appears to be a reference to a 'cheating death' practice included in the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* (GRAY 2007: 315-6).

Ba ri Lo tsā ba (cf. BEYER 1973: 11-12, 387, 474 n.42), becoming an important part of the ritual property of the bKa' gdams pa and bKa' brgyud pa traditions.

5. Tantra and Power over Long Life in India

The basic structure of these White Tārā practices is about inner purification and external protection from death and other calamities. The practitioners identify with White Tārā, and recite her mantra while visualising it as rotating around their heart centres. White light, followed by lights in the colours of the five elements, radiate out from the mantra, purifying and healing diseases and obstacles to long life, and forming a concentric series of protective tents or enclosures, surrounded by an outer circle of protection (see e.g. BEYER 1973: 381-3; MULLIN 1983: 97-99).

Tibetan Amitāyus longevity practices, however, operate in a different way, and their focus is not so much on healing and protection as on drawing back the lost life-energy (*tshe*, *bla* and so on) and on ingesting the positive essence of the transfigured universe (*bdud rtsi/amṛta*, *bcud/rasa*). The aim of the ritual is not to cheat or ransom death, as with the White Tārā tradition, but to attain the *siddhi* of long life. In Indian terms, they seem to derive from a quite different tradition, that of alchemy (*rasāyana*; see e.g. White 1996) and the Tantric Siddhas. It is in the context of *rasāyana* that we find the whole concept of the *siddhi* of power over life first developing in South Asia. The Tantric Siddhas had close links to this context, and Padmasambhava himself is a figure whose literary representation links him very directly to the whole milieu of the Tantric Siddhas (see below, and e.g. LINROTHE 2006 for the Siddha milieu). This suggests that it would be useful to discuss the question of immortality in the Indian and Tibetan context rather more generally.

Here I think it is important to recognise that much of Tibetan Tantric practice derived from a social context in India that was by no means purely Buddhist. It involved extensive interaction between Buddhist Tantric practitioners and others whose allegiance might be described as Śaivite or Śākta, or in some cases Jaina or even Muslim. Most significant here perhaps are the so-called Nāth Yogins, a tradition which is still extant in contemporary India, and which traces itself back to a series of founding gurus, in particular Matsyendranāth and Goraknāth, who also appear in Tibetan Buddhist tradition, as two of the set of eight-four tantric siddhas. The Nāths, as is again well-known, have their own set of 84 Tantric Siddhas, paralleling the Buddhist list transmitted to Tibet, and the Jainas have a similar list.

Nāth practice gives considerable emphasis to the attainment of the *śiddhi* of longevity. This makes rather more sense in the Nāth context, since the Nāths as a Brahmanical-derived tradition are concerned with identity with an eternally-existent entity (see e.g. SCHAEFFER 2002). By contrast, Buddhists tend to have to do a certain amount of fancy footwork to justify the attainment of immortality, generally in terms of ensuring that one can continue to serve sentient beings as a teacher; this is one point at least of Padmasambhava's attainment of power over long life. In the Indian context, all these practices are tied up with various kinds of practices that tend in general terms to be described as alchemical. Here alchemy includes both the use of herbal and mineral formulae – particularly mercury-based – to extend life and aid in attaining immortality, and in 'inner' practices involving controlling the flow of *prāṇa* through the inner physiology of *nāḍīs* (channels) and *cakras* (see also SAMUEL 2011). The result might be regarded, in Joe Alter's phrase, as a body of 'experimental techniques dealing with embodied life and longevity' (ALTER 2005: 18).

In my recent *Origins of Yoga and Tantra* (SAMUEL 2008b: 278-282) I explored the possibility, following here in the footsteps of JEAN FILLIOZAT (1969) and DAVID GORDON WHITE (1996), of a Chinese connection for these practices. The Chinese also used mercury-based preparations for the attainment of long life – in fact, since India had no indigenous source of mercury, the mercury used by Indian alchemists came from China – and they had internal yogic practices very similar to those of China. These are witnessed in the textual tradition at a much earlier date for China than for India. The use of sexual practices for the attainment of long life is also witnessed much earlier in the Chinese textual tradition, and the Chinese practice of *bigu* or 'avoiding grains' – living on a special pure herbal diet – also has strong resemblances to what is known in modern Tibetan contexts as *bcud len* practice (see above).¹⁴

It will probably never be possible to trace the sequence of historical events here in full, and it is clear that whatever ideas went from one location to the other were drastically reworked in local terms. Whatever meaning one attaches to the Chinese connection, however, it is striking that at a particular point in time – one could say from the late seventh to late eighth centuries – a whole body of new practices suddenly comes into view in the Indian textual tradition, among Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. These new practices pick up on and develop earlier material which one

14 For grain-avoidance practices (*bigu*) in China, see e.g. SCHIPPER 1993: 167-170; SHAWN 2006. For an English translation of an instruction for Tibetan *bcud len* practice, see GYATSO 1995: 183-191.

might well call proto-Tantric, in that they include major features of the full Tantric ritual context (*maṇḍalas*, deity visualisation, mantras, *dhāraṇīs*) but which do not include the new, fully-developed internal yogic practices, or the specifically sexual yogic exercises that accompany them.

There were sexual elements in early Tantric contexts, but the new practices are very different; instead of being about the production of powerful (because highly polluting) substances to feed dangerous female spirits for dubious magical practices, the new practices are connected with the control of internal flows of *prāṇa*, a flow which might also be interpreted as to do with the directing and channelling of emotion (in the Buddhist Tantric context, as is well known, *prāṇa* and *bodhicitta*, the altruistic motivation for the attainment of Buddhahood, are closely connected). It is this body of material that is further developed in the Indian context to form the basis of the so-called 'Anuttarayoga' practices of Tibetan Tantra (SAMUEL 2008b: 271-290).

6. The *Tshe sgrub* Practices of Amitāyus in Tibet

The origins of the specifically alchemical imagery of the Amitāyus *tshe sgrub* practices, and in particular the idea of drawing in the positive essences of the universe, are more difficult to trace. Robert Mayer and Cathy Cantwell have suggested that elements of this idea can be found in Mahāyoga and Anuyoga texts preserved in the *rNying ma'i rGyud 'bum*. Whether these texts are translations of Indian material or are early Tibetan texts written on Indian models is uncertain. If they are Indian, they could date as early as the eighth or ninth centuries. Whatever their origins, they predated and would almost certainly have been known to the great rNying ma pa *gter ston* or 'treasure-revealer' Nyang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer (1124-1192), the author or discoverer of the first full-scale Amitāyus *tshe sgrub* practices so far known to me.¹⁵

At any rate the Amitāyus practices appear to represent a new and different model of how to achieve long life and good health through Tantric practice from that represented by White Tārā or Uṣṇīṣavijaya. The Amitāyus practices are explicitly conceived as a method for the attainment of the Tantric *siddhi* or magical power of control over the life-span. It is tempting to suggest that the development of these practices at the

15 ROBERT MAYER and CATHY CANTWELL (personal communication). MAYER has also suggested that earlier versions of similar ideas may be found in an Indian Buddhist context in the so-called Kriyā tantras.

time of Nyang ral was in part a response to the popularity of the White Tārā practices possessed by the early bKa' gdams pa and bKa' brgyud pa, and perhaps also to the medical tradition transmitted as part of the Kālacakra Tantra (see WALLACE 2004: 163-183; SAMUEL 2011). At any rate, the Amitāyus *tshe sgrub* practices present, as we have seen, a somewhat different model of achieving longevity, centred not so much around averting death, purification of obstacles and erection of protective barriers but around the recovery of lost life-energies and the ingestion of the positive essences of a transformed universe. As already suggested, one might detect here influence from indigenous Tibetan ransom-rituals aimed at the recovery of the lost *bla* (cf. NORBU 1995: 90-97; KARMAY 1998).

Amitāyus was clearly associated with long life in the Indian context, as we have seen, but his emergence in the 12th century as an important figure in Tibetan longevity practices may also reflect the significance of Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara in the wider Tibetan context (cf. NEUMAIER 2007).

The connection of Amitāyus *tshe sgrub* practices with the Māratika story also appears to go back at least to Nyang ral. In fact, it is the *Zangs gling ma*, Nyang ral's well-known *gter ma* biography of Padmasambhava (NYANG 1989, 1993), which gives the first known version of the Maratika story. Nyang ral's own *tshe sgrub* ritual, which is included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, the vast compendium of *gter ma* practices compiled in the 19th century under the direction of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813-1899), is also based around Padmasambhava and Mandāravā. Consider first the description of Padmasambhava's and Mandāravā's attainment at Maratika in the *Zangs gling ma* biography:

Loden Chosey then contemplated, "By Secret Mantra, I will now accomplish the *vidyādhara* level of longevity beyond birth and death [*da ngas gsang sngags kyi sgo nas skye shi med pa tshe yi rig 'dzin zbig bsgrub la*]. I must cause all the people of Uddiyana and India to enter the Buddhadharmā." In order to practice the Secret Mantra, one must have a genuine spiritual consort [*mtshan ldan kyi rig ma zbig dgos pas*], so he went to the country of Sahor. Here Arshadhara, the king of Sahor, had a daughter called Mandarava Flower, a sixteen-year old maiden endowed with the qualifying marks. Master Padma magnetized her and took her along as his *mudra*, a spiritual consort and support in practice. South of Mount Potala, the palace of noble Avalokiteshvara, lies the cave known as Maratika. It faces south, and a rain of flowers constantly falls. Enveloped in a dome of rainbows, the scent of incense permeates the air. It has a grove of sandalwood trees and is blessed by the Lords of the Three Families. The master and his consort went to this place and, disclosing the *maṇḍalas* of Buddha Amitāyus, they performed the practice of *vidyādhara* longevity [*tshe yi rig 'dzin bsgrubs pas*]. After three months, they had the vision of Amitāyus. He placed the nectar-filled vase of immortal life upon the heads of Master Padma and his consort and, by pouring the nectar into their mouths,

their bodies became vajra bodies beyond birth and death. He blessed Master Padma to be the daka Hayagrīva and the consort to be Vajra Varāhī. Thus they reached the attainment of *vidyādhara* life [*rig 'dzin tshe'i dngos grub grub par gyur to*]. (NYANG 1993: 45.)¹⁶

Clearly what is being described here is not a practice for cheating or ransoming death but the attainment of the *siddhi* of power over long life, associated with the ancient Indian magical beings known as the *vidyādharas* or 'wisdom-holders'. These *vidyādharas* are immortal, mythical beings with magical powers who are part of the common stock of Indian story and legend (e.g. WHITE 1996: 323-334). What is also striking here, in view of its importance in later practices, including the 'Chi med srog thig, is the key role of Amitāyus's nectar-filled vase.

Nyang ral's Amitāyus *tshé sgrub* practice¹⁷ quite closely reflects the imagery of the Zangs-gling-ma account. While the details of this practice, which derives from Nyang-ral's personal *gter-ma* revelations, differ from these of the 'Chi med srog thig, we can already identify many of the same elements. Thus the central figures are Padmasambhava (here known as Guru mTsho skyes rdo rje) and Mandāravā, with Amitāyus in union with

16 *de nas blo ldan mchog sred kyi thugs dngongs la: da ngas gsang sngags kyi sgo nas skye shi med pa tshé yi rig 'dzin zhiḡ bsgrub la: rgya gar dang u rgyan gyi yul gyi 'gro ba thams cad chos la bcud dgos snyam pa'i thugs dngongs skyes so: de yang gsang sngags kyi sgrub par byed pa la: mtshan ldan kyi rig ma zhiḡ dgos pas: za hor gyi yul du byon nas: za hor gyi rgyal po gtsug lag 'dzin bya ba'i bu mo me tog mandhā ra ba zhes bya ba: lo bcu drug lon pa'i gnad chen ma: mtshan dang ldan pa zhiḡ yod pa de dbang du bsduḡ te: sgrub rten gyi phyag rgya mor khrid nas: 'phags pa spyān ras gzigs kyi pho brang ri po ta la'i lho phyogs: brag phug mā ra ti ka zhes bya ba: kha lhor lta ba: dus gsum du me tog gi char 'bebs na: 'ja' tshon gyi gur 'thibs pa: spos kyi ngad ldan ba: tsan dan gyi tshal yod pa: rigs gsum mgon pos byin gyis brlabs pa'i gnas der byon nas: mgon po tshé dpag med kyi dkyil 'khor zhal phyés te tshé yi rig 'dzin bsgrubs pas: zla ba gsum nas sangs rgyas snang ba mtha' yas tshé dpag med kyis zhal gzigs: 'chi med tshé yi bum pa bdud rtsis bkang ba yab yum gyi spyi bor bzhag: zhal du blugs pas sku skye shi med pa rdo rje'i lus su gyur to: yab dpa' bo rta mgrin du byin gyis brlabs: yum rdo rje phag mor byin gyis brlabs: rig 'dzin tshé'i dngos grub grub par gyur to: (NYANG 1989: 21-22)*

17 See Nyang *gter gu ru mtsho skyes rdo rje'i tshé sgrub 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bum pa dang bskur bcas bklag chog tu bsdebs pa bdud rtsi'i chu rgyum ces bya ba*, KONG-SPRUL 1976-1980, vol.29, 196-247. Some of the *Rin-chen gter-mdzod* practices appear to diverge considerably from the earliest available versions of the same practices, presumably reflecting reworkings by later lamas (CATHY CANTWELL, personal communication). In this case, I have not yet been able to access an earlier text, so I am relying on Kong-sprul. However, he notes in his colophon that he has used a text by rGya ston Kun dga' brtson 'grus and has edited it slightly (*cung zad gsal bar bsdebs pa*). Kun dga' brtson 'grus lived about a century after Nyang ral, so that Kong sprul's version probably represents an early stage in the evolution of the practices, whether identical to Nyang ral's or not.

his consort Māmakī above them. They are surrounded by male-female Buddhas in the four directions, and the practice includes the *tshe 'gugs* and *bdud rtsi*, though not the *bla* or the detailed listing of life forces. It also incorporates the use of the *mda' dar* or ritual arrow, which is an important ritual implement in more recent *tshe sgrub* practices, including the 'Chi med srog thig itself.

The main *tshe 'gugs* sequence is of considerable interest (225.vi-230.vi). In this the deities of the maṇḍala are first asked one by one to convey the long life empowerment:

Deity who is a *vidyādhara* of longevity
 Convey the *siddhi* of longevity to me
 So that I can achieve realization following you
 May I attain the deathless Vajra-body.¹⁸

The deities are then again invoked in turn for the return of deteriorated life:

You who are holding the vase of longevity,
 Filled with the *amṛta* of immortality,
 Perform the empowerment of Vajra-life.
 For I the yogin and my followers,
 If life and splendour are deteriorated, may they be restored.
 Even if they become deteriorated,
 Summon back our life from the hands of Mara and Yama!
 Summon it back, summon it back, summon life back!
 Draw it back, draw it back, draw life back!
 Bestow the *siddhi* of Vajra-life.¹⁹

One should be careful about speculating too far beyond the evidence here, but the summoning back of deteriorated life-energy in this second sequence of the *tshe 'gugs* has a strong feeling of an adapted popular soul or life recovery ritual, in which *tshe* is acting as a proxy for the more

18 *khyed ni tshe yi rig 'dzin lha: khyed kyi rjes su bdag sgrub kyis: tshe yi dngos grub bdag la stsol: 'chi med rdo rje'i sku thob mdzod: (226.1-11).*

19 *phyag na tshe yi bum pa bsname: 'chi med bdud rtsis bkang nas ni: rdo rje tshe dbang grub pa'i las mdzod cig: rnal 'byor bdag cag 'khor bcas kyi: tshe dpal nyams ni ma nyams te: gal te nyams par gyur na ni: bdud dang gshin rje'i lag nas tshe khug cig: khug cig khug cig tshe khug cig: drongs shig drongs shig tshe drongs shig: rdo rje tshe yi dngos grub stsal du gsol: (227.vi-228.11).*

indigenous concept of *bla*. Certainly the *tshe 'gugs* does not seem to fit entirely smoothly into the long life *siddhi* context.

The *tshe 'gugs* remains a central part of later Amitāyus *tshe sgrub* practices, including the 'Chi med srog thig,²⁰ and one can perhaps see the incorporation of the life-forces, including the *bla*, as part of a process of creating a more coherent and systematic understanding of the meaning of the *tshe 'gugs* sequence. The life-forces are important in a number of other Tibetan contexts, including the Chinese-derived system of elemental astrology (*nag rtsis* or *'byung rtsis*, cf. CORNU 1990, TSENG 2005) and it may have been from this source that they were gradually incorporated into the *tshe sgrub* practices.

The Mandāravā story became much more elaborated more in later versions, such as O rgyan gLing pa's *Padma bKa' thang* (c.1350; ORGYAN LINGPA 1978, 1988). In this and subsequent works, Mandāravā became a very significant figure in the Padmasambhava narrative, as one of his two principal consorts alongside the Tibetan Ye shes mTsho rgyal, indicating the significance of this episode and the longevity practices associated with it in Tibetan culture.²¹ The biographical tradition remains explicit throughout that the Māratika episode is about the attainment of the long-life *siddhi*.

In practice, though, as we have noted, a certain blurring of the boundaries seems to have taken place, in which a whole series of different practices have merged together to form the present image of *tshe sgrub*. Thus White Tārā practices today are typically also referred to as *tshe sgrub*,²² while Amitāyus practices have acquired many of the death-averting and postponing aspects originally more closely associated with White Tārā. At the same time, indigenous Tibetan ideas of ransom rituals and the recovery of lost soul-substance, and ideas of the life-forces, with their possible connections to the Chinese-derived astrological tradition, have also become part of the mix. *Tshe sgrub* today is an amalgam of these various approaches.

20 For the much more complex *tshe 'gugs* sequence of the 'Chi med sro thig itself, see DUDJOM RINPOCHE 1979-1985, vol. *pha*, pp. 108-121.

21 For Mandāravā's own biography, dating from around 1900, see SAMTEN LINGPA 1998.

22 The White Tārā practice translated by Beyer, which was authored by sTag brag rin po che (1874-1952), regent for the 14th Dalai Lama, includes the *tshe 'gugs* and *bdud rtsi* sequences, but Amitāyus and his life-vase, situated on White Tārā's head, are activated at these points, so that what one actually has is a number of Amitāyus sequences incorporated into a White Tārā practice (BEYER 1973: 381, 384, 390-394).

7. Conclusion

The above is no more of a sketch of the possible history of the *tshé sgrub* practices, and it is clear that there is much more to be discovered through further, more detailed study of the textual material, particularly including the large number of specific practices that have been preserved. However, I hope that I have presented enough to indicate that this is an area where very significant and intriguing transformations in Tantric practice and meaning have taken place over the centuries, in which imported Tantric and already-existing Tibetan practices were progressively merged and reconfigured to produce what is now a central and important aspect of Tantric practice in Tibet.

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Ritual Expertise and Imperial Sovereignty

Some Remarks on Tantric Ritual Pragmatics in Medieval China

MARTIN LEHNERT

The ritual expertise generally associated with tantric scriptures was part of Mahāyāna praxis and since the early medieval period accommodated by local and Daoist cults as well. The “apocryphal” *Guanding-jing* 灌頂經 (T 1331, *Consecration Scripture*, d. 5th century CE) for example conceived the ceremony of ritual unction, *guanding* 灌頂, in terms of consecration, similar to the *abhiṣeka*-investiture of a prince into state-affairs. Michel Strickmann has pointed out that parts of this scripture were influenced by Daoist initiation protocols, suggesting an interchangeability of Daoist and Buddhist ritual practices.¹ Another example is the appropriation of mantric speech: Around the early 6th century, the Daoist Lingbao 靈寶 tradition had invented a sort of mock-Sanskrit, the so-called “Hidden Language of the Great Brahma”, *dafan yinyu* 大梵陰語. As is the case with Buddhist mantric speech, it operated through linguistic indeterminacy, based on graphs chosen by Buddhist translators to transcribe Sanskrit terms and spells. The result was a ritual hierolalia believed to be a divine language transmitted down to the human realm.² Referring to topics such as mantric speech, ritual evocation of deities, invocation of thaumaturgical powers, a large number of “non-Buddhist” Chinese texts bears resemblance to tantric scriptures, at least as far as ritual usage is concerned. Taking the

1 MICHEL STRICKMANN, “The Consecration Sūtra: a Buddhist Book of Spells,” in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. ROBERT E. BUSWELL JR. (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press 1990), 75-118.

2 STEVEN BOKENKAMP, “The Yao Boduo Stele as Evidence for the ‘Dao-Buddhism’ of the Early Lingbao Scriptures,” *Cahiers d’Extrême Asie* 9 (1997): 56-67.

pragmatic dimension into consideration, Michel Strickmann concluded that Daoist praxis is the spiritual heir of tantric ritualism up to the present.³

I. Ritual Pragmatics

A ritual does not communicate or represent information in a referential way; it is rather the very act, by which a certain intention is supposed to be achieved. As an act it is related to pragmatics, i.e. the way in which specific contexts determine its purpose and meaning. The pragmatics of tantric rituals presuppose a belief in technical knowledge of “accomplishments” (Ch. *chengjiu* 成就, Sk. *siddhi*) shared and exchanged by various agents.⁴ The investigation of ritual pragmatics therefore requires knowledge of the related belief systems and their particular socio-historical contexts, besides the identity of the performer, purpose, place and time of the performance, to name but a few underspecified parameters difficult to determine. It also presupposes defining models, insinuating family resemblance in specific mental features that in our case may be called “tantric”. Therefore, it is the analyst’s theoretical model of “tantra” which enables one to identify ritual pragmatics by taking into account the self-representation of particular belief systems. David Gordon White for example draws upon a rather holistic definition:

Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.⁵

3 MICHEL STRICKMANN, *Mantras et Mandarins. Le Bouddhisme Tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Gallimard 1996), 118-126, 236-241, 411.

4 Note for instance the inclusivist stance as well as the absence of any sectarian distinctions in chapter 16 of the *Susiddhikara* (d. 726 CE), *Fenbie chengjiu fa pin* 分別成就法品 (T 893.18.614, “Distiguishing the Rites of Accomplishment”), tr. ROLF GIEBEL, *Two Esoteric Sutras: the Adamantine Pinnacle Sutra, the Susiddhikara Sutra, Translated from the Chinese* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001), 191-94. The variety of Amoghavajra’s (705-774 CE) ritual manuals as well as their purpose-oriented technical appeal escape the confines of an allegedly single lineage of transmission. Correspondingly, the *siddha* culture created a field of exchange and mutual appropriation of ritual knowledge, shaping Buddhist and non-Buddhist tantric traditions in medieval India; see RONALD M. DAVIDSON, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism. A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 233-35.

5 DAVID GORDON WHITE, “Introduction. Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. DAVID GORDON WHITE (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000), 9.

Providing an etic model of religious belief, such a definition is related to the phenomena it helps to determine, and thereby insinuates the possibility of generalizing and comparing various emic representations. It underpins a specific notion of *tantra* and its use as a model of a belief system without being able to establish historicity, i.e. its historical status in the medieval Chinese context: The linguistic fact that the Chinese designation *mijiao* 密教, “secret teachings”, associated with the scholarly construction of tantric Buddhism, did not denote any historical tradition, merely refers to the semantic status of this particular term. It does not inform us about the historical status of any particular praxis. The employment of the term *mijiao* in traditional Buddhist historiography as an apologetic classification based on soteriologic accounts of transmission,⁶ neither validates assumptions regarding the identity of individual rituals as “tantric”, nor falsifies the theoretical value of etic classifications such as for example esoteric or tantric Buddhism.⁷

These difficulties do not force us to subscribe to the historian’s untenable proposition that a historical phenomenon can be understood and represented on its own terms; they caution against premises on which the relation between a particular social phenomenon and its representation is established: If reference can be explicated as a relation between models of representation and structures in reality, one could think of representations as forming a structure that is isomorphic to structures in reality. That, however, poses the problem of how specific mental features of representations, such as difference, identity, etc. could possibly represent structures in reality. The alternative approach would be to define the model by the reference relation. In that case, falsehood would be precluded insofar as the model is determined by the intended relation and therefore the theory put to be true by definition.⁸ The emic/etic-distinction then becomes a self-referential circle of reification which is in danger of conflating mythical and apologetic accounts of meaning with historical ones, and of hypostatizing linguistic distinctions as social functions.

6 See ROBERT SHARF, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press 2002), 263-278; Richard D. McBride, “Is there really Esoteric Buddhism?” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27 (2004): 329-356.

7 See CHARLES ORZECZ’s criticism of “preinterpretative decisions” and the construction of a working definition of esoteric Buddhism; CHARLES ORZECZ, “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga,’ the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religion* 34 (2006): 32-45, 68-71.

8 CHRISTOPHER GAUKER, “The Illusion of Semantic Reference,” <http://homepages.uc.edu/~7Egaukercp/papers.html>, pdf document. (Version of March 21, 2006): 4-6.

A weak but nevertheless workable approach could be to build on a “particularistic” skepticism in using the terms *tantra* or “tantric” as emic designations for a specific group of translated texts which in Indic languages were called *tantras*, dealing with ritual pragmatics referring to *śiddhi*, *homa*, *abhiseka* etc., as well as the metatextually related scriptures of Chinese origin, for example ritual manuals, commentaries, and other forms of architexts and hypertexts. Taking into account the apparent lack of a Chinese equivalent of the term *tantra*, the following *caveats* have to be mentioned:

- (1) The texts in question do not allow us to observe and to critically assess their reference to social reality.
- (2) As long as the text is not a strictly process-determined expression of a given institution, such as for example a legal decree or an order, it communicates an account of meaning of which the speaker reference as well as the semantic reference are underspecified.
- (3) In as much as texts are neither media nor institutions, it is not very easy to see how they might constitute or be part of a social function – or rather: how to determine the social function apart from it being a discourse.
- (4) The notion of discourse is problematic, insofar as it presupposes public space, communication media, and a social boundary defining the limits of acceptable speech and truth claims. Because of 1. and 2., such aspects are difficult to determine.

To acknowledge these restrictions does not mean to deny that there was a social reality related to the production of the texts in question, and in particular of tantric ritual manuals. Moreover, they render reducing tantric texts to linguistic acts legitimate, the function of which refers to transmission by which at least two diatopic and diachronic situations of enunciation are related.⁹ As means of communication, texts and their production refer to social reality though their relations to social reality in many cases remain indeterminate.

⁹ KONRAD EHLICH, “Text und sprachliches Handeln. Die Entstehung von Texten aus dem Bedürfnis nach Überlieferung,” in *Schrift und Gedächtnis: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* [I.], ed. JAN and ALEIDA ASSMANN, CHRISTOF HARDEMAIER (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1983), 24-43.

2. Communication and Social Function

In order to question the social dimension of a text, one could refer to Niklas Luhmann's notion of communication as a form of expression by which social order is realized. It allows us to differentiate religious systems from other social systems – not in terms of referential or expressive contents, or mental experiences, but as a definite mode of communication.¹⁰

Luhmann defined religion as a system of meaning which operates by communicating the incommunicable and by pretending to observe what it posits as unobservable; he further characterized religious accounts of meaning as being driven by a resistance vis-à-vis critical scrutiny: Tantric texts refuse any attempt to determine and to put under scrutiny the thaumaturgic functions they claim to fulfill, the ritual use of symbols and gestures they prescribe, or the mantric speech acts believed to actualize a transcendental truth.

Following Luhmann, communication means exchange of distinctions possibly generating distinctions in social reality: Tantric texts communicate distinctions in terms of sacral hierarchy, for example by introducing and advocating consecration rites (Sk. *abhiṣeka*) and grades of accomplishment (Sk. *siddhi*) accessible to chosen hierophants.¹¹

The implemented rhetorics can be reduced to (1.) secrecy, (2.) the paradox, and (3.) analysis of function. These three modes of communication constitute pragmatics proper to religious systems of meaning which in turn may serve to produce distinctions in social reality:¹²

- (1) Secrecy was related to a set of rules and modalities of transmission that had to be observed, but not necessarily to specific contents kept hidden: Secrecy precedes content, because one may conceive a secret lacking any content to be hidden; without disclosing the secret one cannot decide whether the secret is a hidden content

10 See NIKLAS LUHMANN, *Die Religion der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2002), 39-44.

11 See for instance the *Susiddhikara*, chapter 16, *Fenbie chengjiu fa pin* 分別成就法品 (T 893.18.614, “Distinguishing the Rites of Accomplishment”) and chapter 31, *Chu yiqie zhang da guanding mantuluo fa pin* 除一切障大灌頂曼荼羅法品 (T 893.18.623-24, “Rites in the Great Consecration Maṇḍala for Eliminating all Obstructions”); English translation by ROLF GIEBEL, *Two Esoteric Sutras: the Adamantine Pinnacle Sutra, the Susiddhikara Sutra, Translated from the Chinese* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001), 191-94, 253-57.

12 For a general account of these three modes of religious communication see NIKLAS LUHMANN, *Die Religion der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. 2002), 168-173.

or a disguise without content. But a secret can be perceived as such, due to a secretive way to act on the part of those cleared for access to the secret; secrecy therefore is reducible to a making of make-believes, which reminds us of a language game discriminating those who do not see from those who claim to see, a distinction of the unobservable introduced by reference to the claim itself: “I see something you do not see...”¹³

Employing secrecy as a mode of communicating distinctions, texts can produce language games of which the pragmatic function is to produce social distinctions in terms of exclusion and inclusion, testified to for example in the *abhiṣeka* ritual. Thereby, secrecy becomes a mode of self-representation, the basic aim of which is authentication.¹⁴

- (2) The paradox operates through distinctions by which on the one hand divine order was conceived of as meaningfully interfering with imperial order, while on the other hand such interference is put as indeterminable, as being beyond the reach of common human knowledge: Ritual performance for example, in order to supersede the truth-value of evidence, has to preclude the possibility of applying the distinction between lie and truth. Iterating *mantras*, in Chinese called *zhenyan* 真言, “words of truth”, consequently does not mean to “do truth” but to sublimate the antithesis of truth and lie.¹⁵ Therefore, without further justification, absence of evidence can be put as evidence; the absolute can be identified and personified as the Vairocana Buddha; his transcendent utterance can be conceived of as self-reification of the absolute, the universal purpose of which is sublation, to be realized in the field of religious praxis, the *dharmadhātu*. At the very last, a solipsistic soteriology is construed without a reason why: religious practice becomes reducible to the very problem it pretends to solve in history.

13 See the discussion on pragmatics of secrecy in GILLES DELEUZE and FELIX GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. BRIAN MASSUMI (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1987), 286-87, 299.

14 MARTIN LEHNERT, “Myth and Secrecy in Tang-period Tantric Buddhism,” in *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, ed. BERNHARD SCHEID and MARK TEEUWEN (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 78-104.

15 MARTIN LEHNERT, “... dennoch konnte der Sinn nicht vollständig erfaßt werden.’ – Vajrabodhi (671-741) zum Status seiner chinesischen Übersetzung des Vajraśekhara-sūtra,” in *Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*, vol. 19.III (Münster: Ugarit 2008), 279-283.

- (3) Analysis of function may serve as a strategy of justification indicative of prevalent norms regarding criteria of plausibility and social acceptability. It applies when there is no consensus concerning the truth value of competing belief systems: While secrecy and the paradox remain viable modes of meaningful communication to those who believe, a belief system also has to deal with criticism that puts into question its acceptability. Lacking recognition and support for its truth claims from external authorities, a belief system not only implements rhetorics addressing specific demands and convictions of potential patrons, but also seeks to validate its truth claim in terms of ritual aesthetics, material evidence and social relevance. By reducing self-descriptions and sectarian distinctions to promises of efficacy and claims of superiority, it signals a readiness for being appropriated by those from outside the system.¹⁶ Such “skill-in-means”-oriented functionalism is fundamentally acknowledged for example in the *Da Piluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 (T 848; Sk. *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi-sūtra*, *The Ultimate Awakening of the Great Vairocana*, d. 725 CE):

Mind of awakening is the cause, compassion is the root, skill in means is the final ultimate.¹⁷

Apotropaic rituals of state protection and mass ordinations concern the royal family, officials and military commanders; they appropriate the court as a field of symbolic interaction by implementing language games that provide common ground for mutual recognition, build on hierarchies of exclusion and inclusion. The distinction of exclusion the *abhiṣeka* produces is as simple as it is fundamental: excluded are not only those who oppose the belief system; excluded are all those who are not explicitly included into the process of transmission by ritual consecration.

Employing these modes of communication, the belief system depends on pragmatics by which justification is reduced to relevance and interpersonal recognition, to the social sphere of technique and expertise.

16 See for example the chapters on the *sāntika*, *pauṣṭika* and *ābhicāruka* rites in the *Susiddhikara* (T 893.18.612-14), tr. ROLF GIEBEL, *Two Esoteric Sutras: the Adamantine Pinnacle Sutra, the Susiddhikara Sutra, Translated from the Chinese* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001), 181-89.

17 T 848.18.1b29-c1.

3. Expertise, Sovereignty, and Recognition

Tantric pragmatics can be conceived in terms of communicating distinctions of social relevance, which is why they appear to be political: Not necessarily regarding contents, truth claims, what was believed to be an account of salvific meaning – but in relation to the distinctions in the *uses* of tantric texts introduced in order to shape imperial order. Distinctions are realized when recognition of authority for example between the emperor and a teacher of ritual knowledge influenced textual production. The *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (T 2154; *Record of Śākyamuni's Teachings from the Era Opened Prime*; d. 730 CE) relates that Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735 CE), the translator of the *Susiddhikara*, *Subahupariṣṭha* and the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi*, was not allowed to continue his work after he had presented his first translation to emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 713-756 CE), the *Xukongzang pusa neng man zhu yuan zui sheng xin tuoluoni qiwen chi fa* 虛空藏菩薩能滿諸願最勝心陀羅尼求聞持法 (T 1145; *Technique for Seeking to Hear and Hold the Dhāraṇī of the Supreme Mind, and of Fulfilling all Vows belonging to the Bodhisattva Akaśagarbha*, d. 716 CE), and that his manuscripts were confiscated subsequently.¹⁸ Six years later, in order to be allowed to continue his translation work, Śubhakarasiṃha depended on Yixing's 一行 (685-727 CE) advocacy, a monk and influential scholar with eminent genealogical background, who has been assigned to become his disciple. Being respected by the emperor, Yixing was put in charge to supervise the process of transmission and to formulate a doctrinal expression within the limits of acceptable Mahāyāna accounts of meaning.

Two decades later, the Buddhist scholar-monk Vajrabodhi (671-741 CE) and his eminent disciple Amoghavajra (705-774 CE) claimed that textual transmission to China was shaped by loss of material evidence and authenticity, and that translations at best could supplement that loss. Authenticity had to be testified to by proper ritual performance. Thereby, Amoghavajra not only reduced the significance of text-based hermeneutics but was able to establish himself as a ritual expert sovereign to the confines of textual transmission. Apparently, textual frames of reference were no longer deemed sufficient for justification.¹⁹ During the second half of the eighth

18 T 2154.55.572a12-15; cf. CHOU I-LIANG, "Tantrism in China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 (1945): 265 note 78, for possible reasons of Xuanzong's negative response cf. "Appendix L", 320.

19 MARTIN LEHNERT, "... dennoch konnte der Sinn nicht vollständig erfaßt werden." – Vajrabodhi (671-741) zum Status seiner chinesischen Übersetzung des Vajraśekhara-sūtra,"

century, at the court of the emperors Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756-762 CE) and Daizong 代宗 (r. 762-779 CE), the pragmatics of textual production and ritual performance pushed the *ācārya*'s precarious relation to imperial sovereignty one step further: By imperial decree, Amoghavajra's authority was based on ritual manuals he was commissioned to implement on specific occasions. The actual power of the emperor interfered with Amoghavajra's ritual expertise, superseding the sphere of traditional authority proper to Chinese scholar-monks, which was mainly grounded in institutions of textual transmission. Amoghavajra emphasized ritual knowledge that was neither openly accessible nor self-evident, based on promises of efficacy and relevance. Its pragmatic appeal helped to establish a sort of instrumental authority, the self-description of which is well documented in Yuanzhao's 圓照 (719-800 CE) collection of Amoghavajra's memorials and correspondence with three succeeding emperors:

The sramana Pu-k'ung (*i.e.* Amoghavajra) says: An imperial servant arrived bearing [your] sage instructions, ordering me to pray for rain (...) I heard the command and obeyed, and I am your humble servant. (...) Heaven is high yet heeds the lowly, the grief of farmers. This may be called the emperor's brilliance. Now, when the edict was promulgated, I forthwith went to the *bodhimāṇḍa* and concentrated my resources and united my mind. In order for me to accomplish the will of heaven I must rely on the fine and subtle teachings which have been bequeathed by all the Buddhas.²⁰

Such rhetorics can be characterized as peculiar to a type of authority which implicitly pretends to be in possession of power superior to the emperor, yet – as there was no choice in front of an emperor – represents itself as subservient agent ready to be instrumentalized. Amoghavajra assumed that the emperor possibly was in need of his instrumental role and expertise and therefore not as sovereign as the *cakravartin* he might wish (?) or was supposed to become:

I have dedicated my life to the Buddhist cause. ... I have prayed with the strength of the all-embracing [bodhisattva] vow that I would encounter the triumphant appearance of a *cakravartin*. ... [During the early part of the rebellion] your majesty's noble plans were carried out by you alone, yet the Teaching mysteriously contributed [toward victory]; (...) when you rectified your

in *Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*, vol. 19.III (Münster: Ugarit 2008), 274-283.

20 T 2120.52.841a3-8; tr. in CHARLES ORZECZ, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 195.

rule by granting official titles, you went up to the *bodhimaṇḍa* for *abhiṣeka*. (...) I perform the *homa* rites at the half moon in order that the thirty-seven divinities [of the *Vajradhātu* mandala] may protect your earth, my brilliant king [*ming-wang, vidyārāja*] (...)²¹

Amoghavajra consecrated emperor Suzong as a *cakravartin*, ritually actualizing a mythical ideal of kingship which obliged the emperor to protect the *dharma* by state sponsored activities in support of Buddhist institutions. Emperor Daizong ordered his ministers and military commanders to receive *abhiṣeka* from Amoghavajra, whose state protection rituals epitomized the mutual recognition between the Son of Heaven and the *ācārya*:²² the former was granted sanctity while the latter gained factual power. As a result, rituals became a medium of recognition, and authority an issue of ritual pragmatics and technical expertise.

Beyond the rhetorics of persuasion quoted above, the historical status of such recognition between an emperor and his ritual expert remains largely indeterminate, though, in the following, some conjectures on the relation between imperial sovereignty and ritual expertise should be addressed. The basic question concerns the grounds of plausibility on which the emperor gave credit to his ritual expert. Was it for political reasons, so as to compensate for a lack of factual power and legitimacy? Possibly not, because the facticity of his sovereign power was the only possible and traditionally acknowledged evidence of his legitimacy.²³ Why would he ground his legitimacy in Buddhist ritual and vest his sovereignty with rites introduced by foreign monks? The court considered his orders as sacrosanct, and if not, legal and military measures could be taken anytime by the emperor himself. On the other hand – as historical documents seem to indicate – rebel armies as well as subversive officials were not that intimidated by rituals either. What then was the relevance of tantric rituals

21 T 2120.52.828a3-14; tr. in CHARLES ORZECZ, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 196.

22 CHOU I-LIANG, "Tantrism in China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 (1945), 295-97.

23 Consider for example the apparent lack of theoretical or pragmatic solutions for a regulation of imperial sovereignty and legitimacy in periods of crisis, such as for example the formation of power in transition between two dynasties, usurpation, and rebellion; the "heaven's mandate" was conceived as a *post facto* property of the historically "successful" vanquisher and his patrilinear successors, thereby precluding any institutionalized contradiction of moral legitimacy as against the rule of imperial law and factual power. Cf. PETER GREINER, "Der Herrscher und das Gesetz – Gemeinsamkeiten im konfuzianischen und legistischen Staatsdenken," in *Religion und Philosophie in Ostasien. Festschrift für Heinz Steininger zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. GERT NAUNDORF, KARL-HEINZ POHL and HANS-HERMANN SCHMIDT (Würzburg: Königshausen + Neumann 1985), 423.

in the face of imperial sovereignty? What did that promise of empowerment mean to an emperor? Was it “simply” a matter of imperial aesthetic configuration and liturgy?

Let us first consider the function of the ritual expert: The expert is defined by his knowledge in implementing ritual techniques and by an instrumental role he has assigned to himself. Technique is a means to shape reality by formalized procedures operating through ideal units of reduced choice. Accordingly, rituals can be understood as suggestions of reality, believed to be appropriate measures taken in a given situation. Situations are conditions of reduced choice which in turn determine power relations and the implementation of techniques.²⁴ It therefore lies within the competence of the expert to choose and to implement an appropriate technique. His authority is based on the notion of expertise as providing technical measures in order to resolve antagonism, insinuating an ideal of “expertocracy” legitimized by one fundamental promise, namely to control what is perceived as a threat to (imperial? social?) order by means of technical and moral rationality – against the diversity of competing interests and power struggles, which the emperor is advised to stay clear of. In this regard the call for expert knowledge would imply agendas of depoliticization in support of autocratic sovereignty (which of course does not mean expertise conceived in terms of a non-political kind of knowledge).

In a medieval Chinese context, however, apotropaic rituals of state protection most probably did not imply a political consciousness, saying that subjects constitute a society in which they represent themselves in terms of ideology, collective identities, according to their individual interests or struggles for recognition and power. Apart from the traditional idea of *tianxia* 天下 and *datong* 大同, ecumenical notions of an inclusivist unity “under heaven”, there was no definite concept of society either – society understood as a functionally interdependent system established by associations of individuals as in contrast to the state apparatus and the sovereign. The Tang emperor, a Son of Heaven, was neither a despot nor a secular sovereign whose legitimacy is supposed to be grounded in constitutional codes and institutions. In this sense, understanding of sovereignty was pre-political, the paradox of autocracy being that imperial power had to be shared among sophisticated officials, military advisors and ritual experts subject to the emperor’s rule. Therefore, in order to be recognized as legitimized by the heaven’s mandate, sovereignty *ipso facto* meant shared factual power, justified *post facto* by acknowledged accounts of universal and moral order.

24 Cf. NIKLAS LUHMANN, *Macht* (Stuttgart: Lucius&Lucius 2003), 7-13; 71.

We can only assume that in the Mid- and Late Tang, such accounts of universal order lacked plausibility insofar as social structures became more and more complex or dislocated, in particular after the An-Lushan-revolt in 756 CE and a subsequent Tibetan-Uighur military threat, which almost led to the demise of the Tang in 765 CE.²⁵ If the prevalence of tantric rituals at the imperial court during the second half of the eighth century and Amoghavajra's career as an "ācārya of the state" (Ch. *guoshi* 國師) is interpreted in the light of these historical circumstances, one might be tempted to think of sovereignty as a concept imbued with notions of thau-maturgical empowerment and control including divine order, heavenly forces of destiny, mapped in *mandalas* and manipulated by ritual performance. This would indicate a departure from what tradition considered to be the proper function of ritual aesthetics, namely to mediate the realization (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of imperial sovereignty in positive terms. By contrast, Amoghavajra's rites appropriated imperial sovereignty by epitomizing what the emperor could only wish to represent, thereby pointing to a definite lack (which is why they cannot be reduced to an aesthetic expression of wishful thinking and make-beliefs):

- (1) For Amoghavajra, it was a matter of actual power and imperial recognition to be in the privileged position to ritually epitomize sovereignty.
- (2) For the imperial court, Amoghavajra made a significant distinction by his ritual performance: namely that sovereignty could no longer be grounded in legal measures, moral wisdom and universal order alone. It had to claim and to prove its *technical* control over specific situations as well, based on the *pragmatic* awareness that things may turn out in quite unexpected and random ways.

Nowadays, as techniques tend to emphasize less the symbolic, such pragmatic awareness appears to be a triviality; it nevertheless implies that justification and legitimacy can be understood as dependent on a technical understanding of (ritual) knowledge. This technical stance, however, does not indicate a suspension of moral order: Pragmatics become a moral subject as soon as one has to decide why and for what purpose a particular ritual should be applied: the *Susiddhikara* for example gives detailed accounts of moral precepts conditioning the implementation of mantric

25 C. A. PETERSON, "Court and Province in Mid- and Late T'ang," in *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 3, part 1, ed. DENIS TWITCHETT and JOHN K. FAIRBANK (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 482-92.

speech and the appropriateness of rituals.²⁶ Although there was no word for contingency (neither is its allegedly ontic status self-evident), tantric rituals referred to a pragmatic pre-understanding of reality conveyed by specific linguistic and performative features proper to the operability of specific forces. Therefore, disregarding secularist notions of “technique” and distinctions such as “super-natural”, “supra-mundane” etc., ritual expertise can be conceptualized as a means of avoidance of eventuality (*Kontingenzenvermeidung*). Rituals were performative representations of an awareness that human knowledge basically refers to historical contingency as in contrast to any definite account of universal order. The above-mentioned technical stance therefore implies the proposition that ritual pragmatics referred to the historical experience and reality of imperial sovereignty seen as contingent.

In medieval China, the “imperial metaphor” was put into perspective as tantric rituals turned the intended relation between universal order and ritual enactment upside down. The “inner-worldly” intention subordinated the “other-worldly” reference (if such a distinction applies) as the emperor appointed ritual experts claiming to instrumentalize divine force according to *his* needs of state protection: And therefore, as a consequence, the account of meaning ascribed to ritual pragmatics at the imperial court was not, as David Gordon White’s (2000) holistic definition suggests, based on the principle that the universe is the concrete manifestation of divine order,²⁷ but rather the unspoken doubt that such a universal principle exists. Possibly, in the particular context of Amoghavajra’s ritual praxis, it forestalled the notion that imperial sovereignty had to be grounded in expert knowledge as it was legitimized by autonomic human action only.

26 See for example chapter 7 of the *Susiddhikara*, *Chijie pin* 持戒品 (T 893.18.606-608, “Observation of the Precepts”), tr. ROLF GIEBEL, *Two Esoteric Sutras: the Adamantine Pinnacle Sutra, the Susiddhikara Sutra, Translated from the Chinese* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001), 145-54.

27 DAVID GORDON WHITE, “Introduction. Tantra in Practice: Mapping a Tradition,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. DAVID GORDON WHITE (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000), 9.

Abbreviations

Ch. Chinese

Sk. Sanskrit

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, *et al.* 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924-32. Taishō number is listed first, followed by volume number, page, register (a, b, c), and if applies, line number.

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- . "... dennoch konnte der Sinn nicht vollständig erfaßt werden.' – Vajrabodhi (671-741) zum Status seiner chinesischen Übersetzung des Vajrasākhara-sūtra," in *Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*, vol. 19.III (Münster: Ugarit 2008), 269-285.

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- T 848 *Da Piluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 (*Mahāvairocanaḥśambodhi-sūtra*), Śubhakarasiṃha and Yixing 一行 (tr.).
- T 2120 *Daizong chao zeng sikong dabianzheng guangzhi sanzang heshang biao zhi ji* 代宗朝贈司空大辨正廣智三藏和上表制集, Yuanzhao 圓照 (comp.).
- T 2154 *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄, Zhisheng 智昇 (comp.).
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The Trouble with Tantra in China

Reflections on Method and History¹

CHARLES D. ORZEC

Terminological conundrums

Michel Strickmann's insightful, groundbreaking, and richly detailed work on tantrism in China has been criticized for his poorly defined use of the term tantra.² Although the term tantra is an increasingly rich signifier in modern European and American settings, the transliterated term "tantra" appears only once in the Chinese canon before modern era. This sole mention of *tandaluo* 壇怛囉 appears as a section heading in the *Gubhyatantra*, a text said to have been translated by Amoghavajra.³ Thus, it is evident that the term "tantra" was not in common use in traditional China. There are certainly terms that carry some of the connotations of the term tantra, including *Dajiao wang* 大教王 "Great Teaching King," but these terms cover somewhat different and just as slippery semantic fields. This situation raises some pressing questions. First, what is meant when we speak of tantra or esoteric Buddhism in China, and how does our usage (and its

1 Portions of this essay were presented at a Religious Studies department colloquium at the University of North Carolina Greensboro in October of 2008, and at the School for Asian and African Studies of the University of London in December of 2008. My thanks to colleagues at both places for helpful suggestions.

2 *Mantras et mandarins: Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1996), *Chinese Magical Medicine*, Edited by BERNARD FAURE (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

3 *Tandaluo* 壇怛囉 (tantra) occurs in the *Ruixiye jing* 蕤呬耶經 T 897, at line 770b5. The text is attributed to Amoghavajra and is also known as the *Yuxigye jing* 玉呬耶經 and the *Juxitandaluo* 瞿醯壇怛囉 or *Gubhyatantra*. The attribution may be false, as the text is found only in Japanese manuscript and is not in the Korean or any of the pre-modern sinic canons, nor is it in catalogues or in Amoghavajra's own list of his works. However, the work is a ritual compendium similar to the *Subhāhuparipṛccha* and the *Susiddhikara* and it is not out of the question that it may date from Amoghavajra's time.

history) shape our scholarship? Second, what became of the tantras translated under Song dynasty government auspices at the end of the tenth and during the eleventh century?

What are the pitfalls of using the term *tantra* in the study of premodern Chinese materials? What of its derivative forms “tantric” and “tantrism”? What of the common alternate, “esoteric Buddhism”? Hugh Urban has cogently argued that “tantrism” – in contrast to texts labeled tantras – came into being as an imagined category like the category Hinduism, and like Hinduism, tantrism is a category produced in the dialectical encounter between Indians and Europeans.⁴ Urban does not argue that there were no *tantras* before the colonial period nor does he argue that there are no premodern discourses concerning texts called tantras. Rather, in his brief examination of Abhinavagupta (ca. 950–1050), author of the *Tantrāloka* (Light on the tantras) and *Tantrasāra* (Essence of the tantras), he points out that Abhinavagupta does not treat the tantras as a “singular, comprehensive category that embraces most of the traditions modern interpreters identify by the term.”⁵ Urban cautions against the elision of modern discourses with a variety of premodern discourses involving the word *tantra*, the tendency to accept uncritically the recent construct “tantrism” and project it onto a variety of texts from different periods in South Asian history to create anachronistically a “tantric tradition” with Hindu and Buddhist variants.⁶

A variety of tantras translated from Indic and other languages circulated in East Asia, and Buddhist discourses concerning types of tantras date at least as early as the eighth century when Buddhaghya proposed

4 HUGH B. URBAN, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 27. For Urban, “Tantra is a ... product of the mirroring and misrepresentation at work between both East and West. It is a dialectical category – similar to what Walter Benjamin has called a *dialectical image* – born out of the mirroring and mimesis that goes on between Western and Indian minds. Neither simply the result of an indigenous evolution nor a mere Orientalist fabrication, Tantra is a shifting amalgam of fantasies, fears, and wish fulfillments, at once native and Other” (3). “Categories like Tantra are never *simply* the creation of Western scholarly imagination; they are far more complex, joint creations, the ambiguous result of the representation and counter-representation at work between Indian and Western imaginations, reflecting the interests both of practitioners and interpreters” (272).

5 The closest Abhinavagupta gets, according to Urban, is his remark that “The essence of all the tantras, present in the right and left traditions, which has been unified in the Kaula, [is to be discovered] in the Trika.” URBAN, *Tantra*, 34.

6 For example, see STRICKMANN, *Mantras et mandarins*, “les agama du śivaïsme médiéval et les tantra du bouddhisme médiéval représentent simplement différentes versions, différentes rédactions d’une seule et même chose.” 24. Despite Urban I do see some logic in Strickmann’s statement.

a three-fold classification in his *Commentary on the Mahāvairocanābhīśambodhi Tantra*.⁷ But we should also note that many of the texts widely reckoned to be ‘tantras,’ like the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, do not even have the term tantra in their titles. This does not mean that we cannot use the term for analytical purposes. It does mean that when we use it we need to be explicit about how we are using it, in what context, and for what purpose.

Exactly how contemporary scholars define the distinctiveness of the tantras is subject to some debate. Some scholars have adopted a monothetic definition that settles on one characteristic as essential. Thus, some scholars have proposed visualization of oneself in the body of the divinity (Sanskrit *ahamkāra*) as the sine qua non of the movement. For instance, Michel Strickmann argued that “le rituel du bouddhisme tantrique est l’union avec une icône.”⁸ Tsuda Shin’ichi used the same criteria to posit a “critical” disjunction between Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tantrism, with the former culminating in the *Mahāvairocanābhīśambodhi-sūtra* and the latter commencing with the *Vajraśekhara-sarvatathāgata-satya-saṃgrahamaḥāyāna-pratyutpannābhīśambuddhamahātāntrarāja-sūtra*.⁹ Certainly texts with a *bhāvanā* or visualization section inserted into otherwise unremarkable *vidhis* appear in Chinese records during the seventh century. But this definition is not without problems, chief among them, that visualization is common in the Mahāyāna. Ronald Davidson, moving in a more polythetic¹⁰ and historical direction, has argued that the Buddhist tantras emerged out of Indian samanta feudalism and are structured around the metaphor of the *rājādhirāja*, and the systematic use of *abhiṣeka*, *maṇḍala*, *homa*, and injunctions to secrecy.¹¹ He sees the earliest evidence for a dis-

7 Buddhaguhya’s commentary on the *Mahāvairocanābhīśambodhi-vikurvati-adhiṣṭhāna-tantra* is preserved in Tibetan. He distinguishes three types of Buddhist tantras, *kriyā*, *yoga*, and dual (*ubhaya*). For a translation see HODGE, *The Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra with Buddhaguhya’s Commentary* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 43-46. Jacob Dalton has noted that several taxonomies emerged in the eighth and ninth centuries, though none of them were the “standard” four-fold one so often cited as normative today. See his “A Crisis of Doxography” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28 (2005): 115-181.

8 STRICKMANN, *Mantras et mandarins*, p. 203.

9 TSUDA, “A Critical Tantrism” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko* 36 (1978): 167-231. In East Asia the former text is designated a *sūtra* (*jīng* 經).

10 Definitions that employ a variety of overlapping characteristics are often termed “polythetic” definitions. These reflect the influence of Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblances.”

11 RONALD M. DAVIDSON, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 114, 117. Chapter four

tinctive, and self-conscious movement appearing in Atikūṭa's seventh-century *Tuoluoni ji jing* 陀羅尼集經 (*Dhāraṇī-saṅgraha-sūtra* T 901 654 C.E.).¹² But traditionally, scholars have argued that the tantras must have had a considerable period of development before the first extant evidence we have of them, and thus must have emerged before the seventh century. This position – one essentially maintained by Strickmann – points to a proto-tantra or proto-esoteric Buddhism focused on *dhāraṇī* emerging within the Mahāyāna in the first few centuries C.E.¹³

While there is broad agreement that the systems introduced in the mid-Tang (eighth century) connected with the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi tantra*, the *Susiddhikara*, and the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṅgraha* represented a body practice and ideology developed in South Asia founded on the Mahāyāna but with a distinct identity, some prefer to call this tantra, others esoteric Buddhism.¹⁴ Esoteric Buddhism seems particularly apt as a moniker for East Asian phenomena because it corresponds to an indigenous term, *mijiao* 密教 (Japanese *mikkyō*) that appears to translate the Indic term *guhya* or “secret.” Yet, when examined closely, the apparently simple translation *guhya* > *mijiao* > esoteric Buddhism is fraught with problems. Not the least of these is the notion that on-the-ground usage is the ultimate arbiter of what esoteric Buddhism is.¹⁵ For some scholars

discusses the concept of *rājādhirāja*. ALEXIS SANDERSON has illuminated the close relationship between Śaivism in this setting and the development of Buddhist tantras. For his most recent work see “The Śaiva Age – The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period,” in SHINGO EINO, ed., *Genesis and Development of Tantrism* (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, 2009), 41-349.

- 12 See RONALD DAVIDSON's essay “Observations on the Abhiṣeka Rites in the Buddhōṣṇīṣa System: Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇī-saṅgraha*”, p. 77-97 in this volume, and his paper “Secrecy, Furtiveness and Exclusion in Buddhist Tantrism,” IABS conference, Atlanta, GA, 2008.
- 13 Representative of this position and its understanding in traditional and modern East Asian Scholarship is CHOU I-LIANG [Zhou Yiliang], “Tantrism in China” (Cambridge: Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 8 1945): 241-332.
- 14 The line between Mahāyāna and tantra is drawn differently by different researchers. For instance, Tsuda Shin'ichi (cited above) argued that Mahāyāna Buddhism culminated in the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi* and tantra commenced with the *Vajraśekhara-sarvatathāgata-satyasaṅgraha-mahāyāna-pratyutpannābhisaṃbuddhamahātāntrarāja-sūtra*. What the Chinese did with these materials is another matter. Thus, there is a difference between the tradition promulgated by Śubhākarasiṃha and that of Vajrabodhi/Amoghavajra. Further, it is clear that while there are continuities between Tang and Early Song translations, new developments in India had taken place and these are reflected in the new translations. And this does not even begin to consider purely Chinese, Korean, or Japanese developments and innovations.
- 15 A. M. Hocart has a perceptive critique of approaches that take such usage as the exclusive definitional criteria, as does Griffith Foulk. See A. M. HOCART, “The Purpose of Ritual” in *The Life-Giving Myth and Other Essays* (London and New York: Routledge,

the term esoteric Buddhism refers to a stream developing in the Mahāyāna prior to and distinct from the tantras (the latter incorporate materials from the siddha traditions). For others, esoteric Buddhism is largely synonymous with tantra. For yet others, esoteric Buddhism is a generic term covering both a distinctive late Mahāyāna stream and the tantras proper. A key area of contention has been whether there was a distinctive esoteric Buddhism that developed *gradually* in the Mahāyāna during the first few centuries of the Common Era, a stream closely connected with *dhāraṇī* practice and focused on the magical attainment of worldly benefits. Robert Sharf and Richard M. McBride have questioned this gradualist model, arguing that esoteric Buddhism earlier than the eighth century and possibly up to the tenth century are anachronistic projections originating in later sectarian settings.¹⁶ Ronald Davidson splits the difference, arguing that esoteric Buddhism did not exist as a distinct movement very much prior to the sixth century and that it emerged *rapidly* on the basis of previous Mahāyāna developments (*dhāraṇī*, etc.).¹⁷

Wherever one comes down with regard to these arguments it is clear that we must pay careful attention to the actual context of usage and the semantic matrix of sinic terms like *mimi* 秘密, *mijiao* 密教, *mikkyō*, etc., and alert our readers to the way we intend to use terms. A variety of issues make this especially important, and these must be born in mind in order to minimize possible misunderstandings. For instance, key terms have been used in a great variety of ways, both in the past and by modern scholars. Usage of terms may differ according to purpose and context (ritual, exegesis, lineage construction, sectarian affiliation, etc.). For instance, in

2004), pp. 46-52. GRIFFITH T. FOULK, essentially makes the same point and adds that “it is absurd to argue that because medieval Chinese Buddhists never drew a distinction between lineages as semi-mythological entities and schools as historical ones we should refrain from imposing that distinction on them.” See his “The Ch’an *Tsung* in Medieval China: School, Lineage, or What?” *Pacific World*, n.s., 8 (1992): 20.

16 See ROBERT SHARF, “On Esoteric Buddhism in China” in *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), pp. 263-278, RICHARD D. MCBRIDE, “Is There Really ‘Esoteric’ Buddhism?” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27 (2004): 329-56, and my own exploration of the issue in “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga,’ the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 34 (2006), esp. pp. 41-52.

17 This position, much like recent work in evolutionary biology, does not argue for the rapid appearance of something out of nothing. Rather, it argues that the tantras were a new synthesis that pulled in elements of the Mahāyāna (*dhāraṇī* etc.) that had a long developmental history. For a recent critique of *dhāraṇī* that makes these assumptions see Davidson, *Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature I: Revisiting the Meaning of the Term Dhāraṇī*,” 97-107.

many Mahāyāna settings the term “esoteric” can simply mean “the best” as Richard McBride has pointed out.¹⁸ In other cases it refers to a distinctive teaching marked by *abhiṣeka*, etc.¹⁹ Worse yet, it is not uncommon to find practitioners arguing both that esoteric Buddhism is a part of the Mahāyāna and that it is distinct or “special.” New usages did not always replace old ones. Often we find multiple usages coexisting in the same milieu. Further, we need to be vigilant because esoteric hermeneutics sometimes resulted in hegemonic reinterpretation. For instance, Kūkai argued to the Nara clerical establishment that his esoteric Buddhism could make sense of the *dhāraṇī* that appeared in old Mahāyāna scriptures.²⁰ To complicate matters some treatments of esoteric Buddhism in China persist in applying the late Japanese Shingon hermeneutic distinguishing “pure” (*seijun mikkyō* 正純密教 or *junmitsu* 純密) from “miscellaneous” Esotericism (*zōbu mikkyō* 雜部密教 or *zōmitsu* 雜密) without mention of its provenance.²¹ As I see it, any use of such taxonomies requires careful explanation by the researcher. Finally, and perhaps too often overlooked, *the idea of the esoteric* itself is quite potent and widespread. Even in the presence of *abhiṣeka*, lineage transmission, etc., it is common to find esoteric deities, ritual sequences, ideas, and so on circulated, appropriated, and integrated into other systems. Richard Payne suggests that we think of this through the use of the metaphor of “penumbra.”²² Thus we could talk about institutional esoteric Buddhism and its “penumbra.” Indeed, the penumbra might in many settings be the predominant phenomena.

Whichever position one takes, one is still left with the question of when it may be analytically and heuristically sensible to talk about “esoteric

18 McBRIDE, “Is There Really ‘Esoteric’ Buddhism?” 331-336.

19 See ORZEC, “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga’” p. 48-51.

20 For this see ABÉ RYŪICHI. *The Weaving of Mantra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 242, 259.

21 The terms do not appear as paired doctrinal or textual classifiers in the Chinese canon and may be as late as the Edo period. For an analysis see ABÉ, *The Weaving of Mantra*, pp. 152-154. A good example of such discussions is available in English in MINORU KIYOTA’s *Shingon Buddhism: Theory and Practice* (Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1978), pp. 5-17, where the “pure” category is aligned with Mahāyāna doctrinal literature while the “miscellaneous” elements are aligned with “popular beliefs.” Also STRICKMANN, *Mantras et mandarins*, pp. 127-133, and SHARF, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 265-267. So too, many scholars have been drawn to and have uncritically accepted the relatively late Tibetan four-fold doxological and evolutionary taxonomy of Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and Anuttarayoga tantras. For an analysis see DALTON, “A Crisis of Doxography:” p. 118, pp. 152-161; and MATTHEW KAPSTEIN, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 15-17.

22 RICHARD K. PAYNE, personal communication, August 6, 2008.

Buddhism.” Here one can draw parallels to discussions of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism. Indeed, it is sometimes desirable to talk of Chan prior to the mid-Tang, or Pure Land prior to its classic formulation. So too, it can be useful to discuss esoteric Buddhism *avant la lettre*.

Esoteric Buddhism: Three types

In a recent article for the *Journal of Chinese Religions* I argued that when I look at what became of the texts and practices of ‘esoteric Buddhism’ when they were imported to China I see three analytically distinct kinds of phenomena:²³

1. In the “Great Teaching of Yoga” promoted by Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra we encounter the full range of cultic, material, and sociological attributes – access to the teachings through progressively restricted *abhiṣeka* and so forth – clearly based on a South Asian template, in this case the *Sarvatahāgatattvasaṃgraha*. Despite his sticking close to the South Asian “program” Amoghavajra adapted the program in various ways – from the revamping of Chinese apocrypha like the *Scripture for Humane Kings* to innovations in language such as the “wheel-body” scheme.
2. Adaptation, appropriation and transformation are the overriding realities, and once in circulation in a culture, texts and practices are adapted and combined under the sway of the indigenous cultural logic and institutions. Distinctively Chinese innovations include the use of the *Susiddhimahākara-tantra* to integrate the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* and the *Sarvatahāgatattvasaṃgraha* and the production of a host of ritual manuals during the ninth century.²⁴
3. Texts, icons, ritual elements, hermeneutical approaches, and so forth that were part of coherent Esoteric systems in South Asia were, as often as not, disassembled in East Asia, and their elements incorporated into already established intellectual and ritual systems, predominantly those of the Huayan

23 ORZECH, “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga,’” pp. 70–71. For purposes of this article I paraphrase and clarify my statements there.

24 Such manuals apply the technology of the ‘Yoga’ to supercharge earlier ritual technologies such as the those of the *Amitāyur dhyāna sūtra*, and the *Yulanpen sūtra* (this last resulting in the creation of a new ritual for the aid of “hungry ghosts,” the “Release of the Flaming Mouths” (*fang yankou* 放焰口). For the first see ORZECH, “A Tang Esoteric Manual for Rebirth in the Pure Land” in RICHARD K. PAYNE, ed., *Path of No Path: Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism Honoring Roger Corless* (Institute of Buddhist Studies and Numata Center for Buddhist Research and Translation, Berkeley, 2009), pp. 31–55. For the second see HUN Y. LYE, “Feeding Ghosts : A Study of the *Yujie Yankou Rite*” (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Virginia, 2003).

and Chan varieties, but also as far afield as in Daoism and folk traditions.²⁵ In these cases I prefer to avoid designating them “Esoteric.” Rather we are tracing the impact of the texts and practices of Esoteric Buddhism in *other systems*. Such phenomena, inspired by “the idea of the Esoteric,” has had an enormous impact in Chinese religious life, and we are only now beginning to trace its outlines.

What became of the Tenth-century Song translations?

I now turn to consider my second question: what became of the tantras translated under Song dynasty government auspices at the end of the tenth and during the eleventh century? Unlike imports from the eighth century and earlier, these texts included innovations connected to the image of the siddha, and some of them contain language and practices overtly violent and sexual. Most scholars would have little hesitation in calling at least some of these ‘tantra,’ though even in the case of the *Guhyasamāja* and the *Hevajra* the term is absent from the Chinese.²⁶

Among the scholarly commonplaces in the study of the Song translations is that these works did not circulate in China.²⁷ This, despite the fact that the early Northern Song spent enormous prestige and cash to find the latest texts, translate them and then to produce the first xylographed printed canon. The texts were circulated widely to Korea, Vietnam, Xixia, etc. This narrative supplements two further well-known narratives, that the development of these texts represented the decadence of late Buddhism in India, and that the high point of Buddhism in China was the Tang and

25 The above-mentioned “Release of the Flaming Mouths” (*fang yankou* 放焰口), already an amalgam of Chinese Buddhist rites for the welfare of ancestors and esoteric technology, was also emulated in Daoism. For an analysis see ORZECH, “*Fang yankou* and *pudu*: Translation, Metaphor, and Religious Identity” *Daoist Identity: History, Lineage, and Ritual* edited by LIVIA KOHN and HAROLD ROTH (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002: 213-34).

26 CHARLES WILLEMEN’S *The Chinese Hevajratantra*, Orientalia Gandensia VIII (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit Te Gent, 1983) remains the definitive study.

27 The topic has been treated by JAN YUN-HUA [Ran Yunhua], “Buddhist Relations between India and Sung China” *History of Religions* 6 (August 1966): 24-42 and 6 (November, 1966): 135-168, HUANG CHI-CHIANG [Huang Qijiang] “Imperial Rulership and Buddhism in the Early Northern Sung” in *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*, edited by FREDERICK P. BRANDAUER and CHUN-CHIEH HUANG (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1994): 144-187, and TANSEN SEN, “The Revival and Failure of Buddhist Translations During the Song Dynasty” *T’oung Pao* 88 (2002): 27-80.

that the Song saw decline, ossification, and retreat in the face of resurgent Confucian traditions. As recent work on Buddhism in South Asia and on Song Buddhism has shown, uncritical acceptance of these commonplaces has distorted our picture of the period. The balance of this essay probes the received understanding of the reception of these texts by examining the political and ideological context of the translation efforts, and by examining three ‘cases’ related to the translation and circulation of these texts under the Song.

Linji eclipses India’s Buddhas

The first three Song emperors sought to consolidate their rule not only on the basis of military superiority, but also on the basis of civilizing virtue (*wen* 文). Taking the culture heroes of the ancient Zhou 周 as models, and looking to Tang emperor Xuanzong’s reign some two hundred and fifty years earlier as a benchmark, they set about generously patronizing religion (including both Daoism and Buddhism), literature, and the arts in an effort to recover lost cultural heritage. Indeed, as Glen Dudbridge has observed, the imperial library in the early Northern Song was smaller than that of Xuanzong’s time, and was filled with works of more recent times. In other words, a significant portion of the literary patrimony of earlier times was lost.²⁸ In pursuit of recovery, the second emperor Taizong (reigned 976-997) ramped up support for literary production and imperial infrastructure for it with an enlarged library and new projects, both religious and secular. During little more than a century the first Song emperors set about trying to recover lost books and to rebuild the imperial library holdings. They compiled and printed encyclopedia (*Taiping guangji*, *Taiping yulan*), printed the previous seventeen dynastic histories (994-1063), underwrote the major Chan “lamp” collections (1004 / 1009; 1036), collected, translated and printed the entire Buddhist canon (983) and issued updates, and began the collection of the Daoist canon (1020).

More than general dynastic largess, the creation of canonical collections signaled wide-ranging imperial oversight of the production and circulation of knowledge. Further, the acquisition of the Buddhist scriptures was an integral part of a vision of a great continental empire centered on the Song. Taizu 太祖, the first emperor (reigned 960-976), initiated the task with the dispatch of 157 monks to India to collect texts – texts that

28 GLEN DUDBRIDGE, *Lost Books of Medieval China* (London: The British Library, 2000), pp. 1-4.

would become the fuel for the imperially sponsored translation institute. Shortly thereafter the Court received four Indian monks who came to form the core of the translation team. They were Devaśāntika 天息災 (from 978 called 法賢, d. 1000), Dānapāla 施護 (d. 1018), Dharmadeva 法天 (d. 1001), and Fahu 法護.²⁹ Having undertaken the expansion of the imperial library, Taizong in 982 constructed a special building for the translation of scriptures comprising three offices and support structures in the western sector of the Taiping xingguo 太平興國 temple. For one hundred years the Institute for Canonical Translation 譯經院 (*Yijing yuan*, soon renamed the Institute for the Propagation of the Teaching *Chuanfa yuan* 傳法院), turned out new translations of recently imported Indic works.³⁰ In addition to translating newly imported scriptures, an imperial dragnet scoured monastery libraries for Sanskrit manuscripts that had not yet been translated.

Taking advantage of new technology the canon would be printed. Yet another special building, the Institute for Printing the Canon 印經院 (*Yinjing yuan*), was erected on the same grounds and dedicated to the printing of a complete edition of the Buddhist scriptures. Printing had commenced in Chengdu in 972 and the first full edition – referred to as the Kaibao canon after the reign period in which it appeared – was complete in 130,000 woodblocks by 983. After the shift of the work to the capital periodic updates appeared as new translations were produced.

The circumstances of the production of translations in the *Yijing yuan* were remarkable:

In the Eastern Hall facing West, powder is used to set out an altar to the sages with openings [consisting of] four gates, each with an Indian monk presiding over it and reciting esoteric spells for seven days and nights. Then, a wooden altar is set up and surmounted with a circle having the syllables of the sages and worthies. [This is] called the *Mahādharma maṇḍala* 大法曼荼羅. The sages and worthies are invoked and ablutions are performed using the *argha* [vessel]. Incense, flowers, lamps, water, and fruits are presented as offerings. Bowing and circumambulating [take place]. Prayers for protection from evil are offered in order to extirpate demons and obstructions.³¹

Much like a modern museum, the Institute was located at the metropolitan center and served as the repository and destination for a collection

29 This Fahu returned to India in short order and is not to be confused with a second monk, Dharmapāla 法護 (963-1058), who translated the *Hevajratantra*. A solid account of the work of these translators was published by JAN YUN-HUA in “Buddhist Relations between India and Sung China,” pp. 24-42.

30 Founded in 982 the institute was not disbanded until 1082.

31 I follow SEN’s translation of *Fozu tongji* T 2035 43.398b2-b8 with minor emendations.

of manuscripts. The processing of texts at the Institutes resembled a production line more than a monastery, and the presence of esoteric ritual is overshadowed by the government presence of the *Yijing yuan* itself. The monastery had been transformed and was now a museum and a factory for the production of the Buddhist Dharma, a place for the collection, selection, and translation of texts that were then enshrined in the newly printed Canon and disseminated to official government monastic libraries and given as prestations to other states.³²

Although translations produced at the Institute came from all periods and schools of Buddhism in India, much of what was translated in the *Yijing yuan* was esoteric or tantric. The range of such texts included major works such as the new full translation of the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* (Dānapāla T 882), the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Devaśāntika T 1191), the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* (Dānapāla T 885), and the *Hevajra-dākinī-jala-saṃvara-tantra* (Dharmapāla T 892). But it also included substantial ritual manuals for the worship of the likes of Vināyaka (Dharmabhadra T 1272) and Mārīcī (Devaśāntika T 1257) as well as numerous short *dhāraṇī* texts. Some of these texts included material drawn from the *siddha* traditions and employed the imagery of the cremation ground in rites to subdue enemies, attract sexual partners, and so forth. Although this was considerably more risqué than earlier Esoteric materials it was entirely in keeping with what was going on elsewhere on the continent.

During this time Zanning 贊寧 (919-1001) was the leader of the Buddhist community in the early Northern Song.³³ A proponent of an inclusive version of Chan, Zanning was an advocate for doing everything to acquire,

32 As Huang notes, Taizong used the establishment of printing at the Institute to “circulate widely the work it had produced.” Taizong awarded printed canons to revered or important visitors. A set was given to the Japanese monk Chōnen 菴然 (938-1016) as well as Korean envoys on behalf of their king. See HUANG, p. 152 and note 45. These events are related in *Fozu tongji* T 2035 49.399a16-400c. Sets of the Canon were requested by the Uigurs, the Vietnamese, and the Xi Xia. The Tanguts requested a sixth set in 1073, the Vietnamese requested another version in 1098-99, and so on. See Sen, pp. 40-41. Both the Khitan and the Koreans cut their own canons and were in competition with the Song in these inter-state prestations. On the development of the Canon see LEWIS R. LANCASTER, “The Rock Cut Canon in China: Findings at Fang-Shan,” in TADEUSZ SKORUPSKI, ed., *The Buddhist Heritage* (Tring: The Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1989), 144-156, and LEWIS R. LANCASTER and SUNG-BAE PARK, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). This latter with updates is available at http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/.

33 For a brief introduction to Zanning see ALBERT WELTER, “A Buddhist Response to the Confucian Revival: Tsan-ning and the Debate over *Wen* in the Early Sung,” in *Buddhism in the Sung*, edited by PETER GREGORY and DANIEL GETZ, JR. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), pp. 21-61.

translate and disseminate Buddhist scriptures. His understanding of Buddhism can be seen in the following:

Now, as for the Teaching . . . there are three varieties. The first is the Exoteric Teaching (*xianjiao* 顯教), which is the Vinaya, Sūtra, and Abhidharma of all the vehicles . . . The second is the Esoteric Teaching (*mijiao* 密教), which is the method of Yoga: the *abhiṣeka* of the five divisions, the *homa*, the three secrets, and the methods for the mandala . . . The third is the Mind Teaching (*xinjiao* 心教), which is the method of Chan: the direct pointing at the human mind, seeing one's nature and attaining Buddhahood. The first of these is the Wheel of the Teaching (*falun* 法輪), this then is the Exoteric Teaching. It takes Kāśyapa Mātāṅga as the first patriarch. The second is the Wheel of Instruction and Command (*jiaoling lun* 教令輪), this then is the Esoteric Teaching. It regards Vajrabodhi as its first patriarch. The third is the Wheel of Mind (*xinlun* 心輪) . . . this then is the Teaching of Chan. It regards Bodhidharma as the first patriarch. Therefore, those who transmit the Wheel of the Teaching use the sound of the Teaching to transmit the sound of the Teaching (*yi fayin chuan fayin* 以法音傳法音). Those who transmit the Wheel of Instruction and Command use the esoterica to transmit the esoterica (*yi mimi chuan mimi* 以秘密傳秘密), and those who transmit the Wheel of Mind use the mind to transmit the mind (*yi xin chuan xin* 以心傳心). These are the three Wheels of the Three Teachings, whose three patriarchs came from the West to the East. (T 2061 50. 724b16-26)

Zanning's sympathies lay with the branch of Chan that had developed in Wuyue 吳越 (the Fayen branch), and he sought to embrace the various strands of Buddhism emerging from the late Tang. Zanning, like the earlier Chan synthesizer Zongmi, took the position that "the sūtras are the Buddha's words, and Chan is the Buddha's meaning. The mind and speech of the Buddha cannot be at odds."³⁴ I have argued elsewhere that Zanning saw the Esoteric Teaching as serving a crucial military function in defense of the State.³⁵ What is surprising is that despite his promotion of the Esoteric Teaching as one of the three foundational teachings of Buddhism, and despite his promotion of the translation enterprise, nowhere in his work does he mention anything new or distinctive about what was being translated.

What's more, Zanning's position on Chan, on esoteric Buddhism, and on the Institute of Translation was not the only one. Emerging in parallel with the push for a great continental Buddhist ecumene was a movement

34 Quoted in FOULK, "Sung Controversies Concerning the 'Separate Transmission' of Ch'an," in PETER N. GREGORY and DANIEL A. GETZ, JR., eds, *Buddhism in the Sung*, p. 235. The original is T 2015 48.400b10-11.

35 ORZECH, "The Great Teaching of Yoga," pp. 64-68.

which was an increasingly prominent feature of the religious and political landscape of tenth- and eleventh-century China. Dubbed the “Ancient Culture” movement (*guwen* 古文) it would see the emergence of a strongly nativistic and often anti-Buddhist Ruist 儒 (Confucian) ideology.³⁶

It is during this same period that the major Chan “Lamp” chronicles were composed. The prototype of these documents, the *Zutang ji* 祖堂集 *Patriarch’s Hall Anthology* was composed in 952 prior to the establishment of the Song and it reflected a Chan view (from Nan Tang promoting the lineage of Mazu, Xuefeng, and Wendeng) at odds with that of Zanning. During the height of the Song translation and canon projects the government issued the *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 *Record of the Transmission of the Lamp from the Jingde Era*. The work, first composed by Daoyuan 道原, in 1004, was heavily revised by the prominent courtier Yang Yi 楊億. Albert Welter has argued that the original appears to have been written along accommodationist lines similar to those espoused by Zanning, while Yang Yi’s revision favored the anti-accommodationist teachings connected with Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 encapsulated in the slogan (“a teaching outside of the scriptures” *jiawai biechuan* 教外別傳).³⁷ By the time the *Tiansheng guangdeng lu* 天聖廣燈錄 *Expansive Lamp Record from the Tiansheng Era*, edited by Li Zunxu 李遵勳 was issued in 1036 the dominance of the Linji faction at court was complete.

The confluence of a recent defeat at the hands of the Liao and the humiliating terms of the Shanyuan treaty 澶淵 in 1004-1005, the rise to prominence in the court of the Linji branch of Chan and the *Guwen* movement should not, I suggest, be viewed apart from the monumental canon and translation projects going on at the same time. When looked at together, I can’t help but see Linji Chan, often viewed as the most radical form of Chan, as reactionary – a *Guwen* Chan that championed the sayings of home-grown Chinese Buddhas modeled on the ancient Confucian *Analects* and the Zhuangzi over the sayings of foreign Indian Buddhas. So perhaps we should view esoteric Buddhism and government patronage of translation as contributing to the rise of Linji Chan. Perhaps Linji Chan was in part the answer to what some in the Northern Song saw as an increasingly alien Indian Buddhism. Perhaps it was a nativist reply to the Song dream of a Buddhist ecumene.

36 For an overview of the “wen” movement see BOL, “*This Culture of Ours*”: *Intellectual Transitions in Tang and Sung China* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

37 ALBERT WELTER, *The Linji lu and the Creation of Chan Orthodoxy: the Development of Chan’s Records of Sayings Literature* (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 38.

Before moving on I want to point out that the shift in court patronage did not mean that the popularity of esoteric deities, scriptures, or practices, whether on their own account or as elements in other systems, disappeared. Esoteric Buddhism had been a part of the Chinese scene for centuries as evidence from Dunhuang, Sichuan, and the Liao testify. Late Chinese Mahāyāna was already “esotericised” and would remain so.

The Esoteric in the *Xiangfu fabao lu*

The struggle in the Northern Song over the role of Indian Buddhism should have left other traces. What, if anything, do the records of the Institute tell us of contemporary Chinese understandings of new teachings from India?

Jan Yun-hua and more recently Tansen Sen have pointed out that the new Song translations appeared to have stimulated little or no exegetical work, and Sen argues that the lack of commentary is evidence that the new translations had no impact.³⁸ Indeed, the issue of commentary is an important albeit complicated one, as commentaries sometimes play a role in lineage formation.³⁹ More to the point for the current argument is the supposition that the lack of commentary could be laid at the door of prudish Chinese attitudes. The one bit of concrete evidence of such a reaction appears in the *Chronicle of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* (*Fozu tong ji* 佛祖統記) compiled by Zhipan 志磐 in 1269.⁴⁰ It claims to quote an imperial edict of 1017 that begins by defending translation subsidies, but continues with a warning that care must be taken lest the “heterodox and orthodox” should get mixed up. It then states that “blood sacrifices are inimical to the True Vehicle and foul curses are contrary to the exquisite principle. This newly translated *Vināyaka sūtra* in four *juan* is not permitted to be entered into the canon. From now on this [sort of] scripture will not be translated.” [T 2035 49.405c26-406a2]⁴¹ The objections are to “sacrifices of flesh and blood” 葷血之祀 and to “abominable curses” 厭詛之辭 (judged to be con-

38 Though some of the translations did stimulate considerable Imperial preface writing and some commentary the newer cemetery texts apparently did not.

39 I treat this issue at more length in “Looking for Bhairava: Exploring the Circulation of Esoteric Texts Produced by the Song Institute for Canonical Translation” *Pacific World*, (Third Series, number 8, Fall 2006): 139-166.

40 For Zhipan see JAN YUN-HUA, “Buddhist Historiography in Sung China,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 114 (1964): 371-372.

41 I have yet to find any contemporary corroboration for this edict and it might have more to do with Zhipan’s milieu than with that of the Institute. A “*Vināyaka sūtra*” (T 1272) in four *juan* is indeed found in the canon. It was translated by Dharmabhadra.

trary to the “True Vehicle” 真乘 and to its’ “exquisite principle” 尤乖於妙理). These are plausible objections to common elements of the cemetery cult. But elements of cemetery practice including the use of human bones in ferocious homa offerings and the revival of corpses dates at least as early as Śubhākarasiṃha’s 善無畏 (Shanwuwei, 637-735) 726 translation of the *Subāhupariṣṭcchā* 蘇婆呼童子請問經.⁴² However, unlike earlier translations where the import of the passages appear to have been rendered discretely, some Song translations were transparent and seem to revel in gory cemetery sorcery.⁴³ We must tread carefully before we assume that our own or even later Chinese attitudes and mores concerning what is or is not transgressive apply during the Song. Sex could be found in certain Buddhist ritual texts from at least the Tang, and though it is clear that certain passages were rendered obliquely such obfuscation also occurred in South Asia, and is one way to render passages meant for initiates.⁴⁴ So too, ritual violence and its iconographic representation is not unknown in esoteric texts and practices, as is evident from the use of homas of subjugation.⁴⁵ Transgression, in short, is a “cultural system.”⁴⁶

The actual records of the ongoing work of the Institute for Canonical Translation are contained in a variety of sources, but none conveys the flavor and atmosphere of the undertaking better than the *Catalogue of the Dharma Treasure Compiled in the Dazhong Xiangfu Period* 大中祥符法寶

42 See for instance T 895 *juan* seven from 18.726c29-727c22, or Ratnacinta’s late seventh-century translation of the *Scripture of the Amoghapāsa dhāraṇī* 不空罽索陀羅尼自在王咒經 T 20.1097 which includes straightforward instructions for spells for resurrecting corpses to help find buried treasure (425b22) and spells for entering the bedchambers of Asura women (425c24-426b1).

43 This is certainly the case for the text on the worship of Vajrabhairava (T 1242). See for instance, 21.204a23ff, 207a18ff, etc. CHARLES WILLEMEN notes in his translation and study of The Chinese *Hevajratāntra* that Dharmapāla “rendered the Indian original in a very tactful, deliberately abstruse way, but remaining true to the actual proceedings of the Indian original.” See *The Chinese Hevajratāntra*, p. 29.

44 Secrecy and its opposite – deliberate and flagrant transgressiveness – are well-known tropes in the tantras. As DAVIDSON has observed, secrecy coupled with titillation may have been the most effective strategy for the propagation of a religious system. *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 245-247.

45 The iconography of the vidyārājas and their role in homas for subjugation was a prominent selling point of Tang esoteric Buddhism. For this see ORZECH, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom*, 160-162, and chapter six “Lords of Light” pp. 169-205.

46 Though in some cases texts proclaim and perform their own transgressiveness. A good example is the opening scene of the *Buddhakapāla-yoginī-tāntra-rāja* during which the Buddha dies during intercourse with his consort, scandalizing and confounding the assembled audience. For a discussion of this text see DAVIDSON, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, pp. 247-252.

錄.⁴⁷ The bulk of the work, presented in 1013 and covering the first prolific decades of the Institute consists of periodic dated reports of translations completed, summaries of contents of the works, names of members of the translation teams, and requests for entry into the canon and circulation. It reads much like any bureaucratic progress report.

I wish to make two points about what appears in the *Catalogue*. First, despite all of the recent discussion concerning the viability of the term “esoteric Buddhism” in modern or traditional discourses, the bibliographical taxonomy of the *Catalogue* is stunningly simple. Texts are designated as belonging to three sūtra categories: “The Hīnayāna Scriptural Collection,” 小乘經藏 “the Mahāyāna Scriptural Collection,” 大乘經藏 and “the Esoteric Portion of the Mahāyāna Scriptural Collection.” 大乘經藏秘密部.⁴⁸ There are also occasional uses of other subsidiary classifiers, such as “Yoga” 瑜伽, “Lineage / School of the Five Secrets” 五密宗, and even the “Section on Subjugation” 降伏部 (*xiangfu bu*).⁴⁹ Other doxological categories that would signal an awareness of the cult of the cremation ground – a prominent element in later tantras – are absent from this work. For example, The *Catalogue* dutifully records Dānapāla’s 1002 translation of the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* 佛說一切如來金剛三業最上祕密大教王經 (T 885) and summarizes its contents. But aside from a mention of *yoginī* 明妃 it says nothing about its iconography.⁵⁰ What’s more, when we examine what the *Catalogue* classifies as “Esoteric” we find everything from simple *dhāraṇī* texts to the *Guhyasamāja-tantra*. Apparently, those who compiled the *Catalogue* regarded all *dhāraṇī* texts as “esoteric.”

Second, the *Catalogue* is as interesting for what it does not record as for what it does record. The precision of the *Catalogue* coupled with records of canons produced from the Song printings in Liao, Korea, and elsewhere makes evident glaring omissions. The omissions include texts such as Devaśāntika’s translation of the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa 大方廣菩薩藏文殊師利根本儀軌經 (T 1191 translated between 983 and 1000), Dharmabhadra’s translation of a text dedicated to *Vajrabhairava* (T 1242 translated

47 This catalogue is an essential resource for the study of the period. Issued in 1013, the *Catalogue* was compiled under the leadership of Zhao Anren 趙安仁 (958-1018). It is found in *Zhonghua da zang jing* 中華大藏經 volume 73 (H1675), pp. 414-523. It is now available in electronic facsimile at <http://www.fjd.com/soft/>.

48 See, for example, *Zhonghua da zang jing*, volume 73, p. 420 which has all three classifications.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 456

50 *Zhonghua da zang jing*, volume 73, p. 472. Indeed, the *Guhyasamāja* is rendered in a way that without a mandala for reference and the explanation of an ācārya there is little that would set it apart from previously translated works.

between 989 and 999), as well as the same translator's *Vināyaka sūtra* 金剛薩埵說頻那夜迦天成就儀軌經 (T 1272 also between 989 and 999). What are we to make of the omissions? Are they mere oversights? Do they reflect official suppression? Or are they indicative of special treatment – scriptures that are reproduced but kept off of the official books? Or is it a bit of both? One might justifiably conclude then, that the newly translated scriptures made little headway. Is there any evidence at all for their circulation and use during the Song?

Something Slithery

We get a tantalizing glimpse of circulation through the eyes of the Japanese Tendai monk Jōjin 成尋 (1011-1081) who documented his journey to Tiantaishan and Wutaishan in 1072-1073 in *San Tendai Godai san ki* 參天台五臺山記.⁵¹ After spending some three months on Tiantai Jōjin was forced to take a route through the capital to procure travel clearance for his pilgrimage to Wutaishan. As a result, a large portion of the diary chronicles his sojourn in the capital. While there, Jōjin spent considerable time at the Institute for the Propagation of the Teaching (the successor to the Institute for Canonical Translation) and his record preserves information concerning the new translations and xylographic texts produced there.⁵² Jōjin mentions temples connected with eight vidyārājas and even individual deities such as Trailokyavijaya. But the most striking account describes a temple on the imperial palace grounds. Jōjin's morning visit to the complex was cut short and he made a special arrangement to return that afternoon. He observed that,

all [the palaces] are elevated on stone mounds like mountains. Permission [to enter] is dependent on official authorization. Persons lacking such are stopped When one arrives at the environs of the imperial hall those lacking permits are stopped. All the great masters were individually screened The imperial

51 It is found in *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書 (Tokyo: Bussho Kankōkai hensen. Fukkokuban 1978-1983): Vol. 15, pp. 321-490. The record covers 169 double pages. ROBERT BORGAN has a useful introduction to Jōjin's diary in "San Tendai Godai san ki as a Source for the Study of Sung History," in *Bulletin of Sung Yuan Studies* 19 (1987): 1-16. CHARLOTTE VON VERSCHUER has an excellent treatment in "Le voyage de Jōjin au mont Tiantai," *T'oung Pao* 77.1-3, (1991): 1-48.

52 Jōjin's home monastery was Enryakuji 延曆寺 on Mt. Hiei. He arrived in 1072 and sent a cache of printed texts back to Japan in 1073 covering translations made since Chōnen's 齋然 mission in 984. Unfortunately, the list of the texts he sent back to Japan is no longer extant.

palace hall is on the South side and not easily seen. Its halls and towers all have imperial thrones, day beds, etc. Each one has a guard. Who can venture to tell how many people are within the palace [compound]? Right in the middle is the Shangzao 賞棗 palace with unimaginably opulent paintings. Finally we saw Dalun mingwang 大輪明王 (Mahācakra vidyārāja). A snake coiled around each of his two forearms. His right hand grasped a cudgel and the cudgel was surmounted by a skull. A snake was coiled around the cudgel and the skull. On the Buddha's *uṣṇīṣa* was a transformation Buddha. [Also present was] Dali mingwang 大力明王. The left and right of its terrifying three faces were red, while its primary body was black. On the top of its central face was a transformation Buddha. There were two snakes, one coiled around his forearm.⁵³

The deity in question is almost certainly a form of Vajrapāṇi (Mahācakra Vajrapāṇi) and its most plausible source is Devaśāntika's translation of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* 大方廣菩薩藏文殊師利根本儀軌經 (T 1191) (sometime between 983 and 1000).⁵⁴ The second image may have its source in the *Mahābalasūtra* 佛說出生一切如來法眼遍照大力明王經 (T 1243) translated by Dharmapāla in 983. Asked whether there were such deities in Japan Jōjin replied, "there are no [such images]."

Jōjin's description of this temple should give us pause concerning the argument that the newly translated tantras never were followed in practice and remained hidden in a few scriptural repositories holding down the shelves. At least one very elaborate temple on the palace grounds testifies to more than a textual existence.

Māricī and Dou mu

Among the many texts translated by the Institute is the *Great Māricī Bodhisattva sūtra* 大摩里支菩薩經 (T 1257 Sanskrit: *Māricīdhāraṇī(sūtra)*) which corresponds to an extant Sanskrit work as well as to the iconography found in the *Sādhanamālā*.⁵⁵ The *Catalogue of the Dharma Treasure*

53 137a.

54 The deity is described at 876b4-c01, and in several other places (*juan* 11, 12, 15, and 16) but the iconography is inconclusive. Mention of a similar deity also occurs in T 1169 and T 890 translated by Dharmabhadra. T 890 is Dharmabhadra's translation of the *Māyājālamahātāntra*. T 1243 is the *Mahābalasūtra*. It is notable that snake iconography also plays a prominent part in the iconography of Kuṇḍali vidyārāja who sometimes holds a cakra.

55 See the "Taishō index to the Descriptive Catalogue of the Korean Canon" at http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/indexes/index-taisho.html. Māricī's iconography is discussed BENOYTOSH BHATTACHARYA, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography: Mainly Based on the Sādhanamālā and other Cognate Tantric Texts of Rituals*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993; reprint of Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 93-100.

records that the translation was done by a team headed by Devaśāntika in 986-987. The text focuses on various *sādhana* and *homa* to the goddess of the dawn and patroness of the military arts Mārīcī. One of the most striking extant images of Mārīcī is found far from the capital at Beishan, in Sichuan. As the rays of dawn she precedes the sun in her chariot. Her splendor can be blinding and thus her association with the bedazzling and blinding of foes and the power of invisibility. She also has connections to Mahāvairocana and to Ursa major – the big dipper.

The carvings at Beishan were begun by Wei Junjing 韋君靖 in the late ninth century. Wei had risen from the local militia and was put in charge of a large portion of central Sichuan. Over the next decade Wei commissioned the carving of the cliff-side ringing his Yongchang fortress on what is today called Beishan. The carving continued until 1162. The imagery is a mix of Mahāyāna and esoteric sculpture – depictions of the Pure Land, images of Avalokiteśvara, and also of protectors including Vaiśravaṇa (dressed in heavy armor of the period) *Mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñī* 大孔雀明王, and Mārīcī 摩里支. The Mārīcī image has been dated to the Northern Song period.

Texts concerning Mārīcī had long circulated in China, and the earliest one, the unattributed *Dhāraṇī Scripture of Mārīcīdevī* (*Molizhizhitan tuoloni zhou jing* T 1256) probably dates to the Sui or early Tang. Atikūṭa's *Dhāraṇisaṅgraha* (*Tuoloni ji jing* T 901 869) is more detailed but repeats one of her key attractions: invisibility, and therefore invulnerability.⁵⁶ Atikūṭa's text also notes her *vāhana* is a boar. As is the case in many *dhāraṇī* scriptures, the deity is invoked for a variety of difficulties ranging from government oppression, to bandits, to floods, fires, *dākinīs*, etc.⁵⁷ Mārīcī's cult gained in importance during the ascendancy of the "yoga" teaching of Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra in the mid-Tang.⁵⁸ Again, her importance for protection, for the military, and her association with the dipper are evident, as are her associations with the radiance of the sun and moon. New ritual elements appear to bring her cult in line with standard practice in the Yoga tradition. Nonetheless, her iconography in all of the seventh- and eighth-century texts is minimal. Her standard description is that found in Atikūṭa's collection, viz, an image made of something precious, the left arm bent at the elbow the hand touching the breast and

56 T 901 869c8-10.

57 T 901 869c29-870a11.

58 Texts involved here are T 1254, 1255 A & B, 1256, 1259.

making a fist grasping a fan. The right arm is stretched out with fingers down.⁵⁹ Few other details are available.

In contrast to the vagueness of the Tang dynasty and earlier texts, the Song dynasty translation of *Devaśāntika* presents an elaborate iconography and ritual program. This text presents a range of images – two armed, four armed, six armed, and eight armed, some in dance posture, some standing straight, some sitting. She commonly has three faces, and one of these is wrathful and porcine. In some she sticks out her tongue and her face has a slight smile. Her gown can be deep blue, or red, or white. She is crowned, and the crown contains a *stūpa* or an image of *Mahāvairocana*. She is in a chariot pulled by boars, and two of her hands hold a needle and thread to sew up the eyes of enemies. In most descriptions she grasps a branch of the *Aśoka* tree. In others she grasps a sword, a staff, a *vajra*, a severed head (of *Rāhu*), a wheel, a bow, arrows. The text details a variety of methods including the already familiar forms of protection, invisibility, and so forth, as well as offensive and necromantic rites based on the traditions of the *śītavana* using cremation shrouds, human bones, flesh and blood for the painting of *paṭa*. It is immediately evident in looking at the Beishan *Māricī* that the artist was working from this more abundant iconographic tradition. The boars are present, as is the hand at the breast (though not holding a fan). But every element of *Māricī*'s iconography here including her faces, implements, smile, chariot, boar vehicle, etc., can be found in *Devaśāntika*'s translation. Although we cannot completely rule out the possibility of some other source for this image, her presence is a striking argument for the circulation of *Devaśāntika*'s translation.

But there is more evidence of circulation – Daoist evidence. Already in the eighth-century T 1255B *Māricī* precedes the sun and moon and is referred to as Celestial Mother (*Tian mu*).⁶⁰ This is one of the titles of the Daoist Dipper Mother (*Doumu*) and, while many texts of this period use this term to translate “goddess” (*devī*) we need to remember that believers are apt to see more meaning in common usage than linguists. Given what follows I think we should be cautious.

In 2005 during a trip to Yunnan I was walking around the town of Xizhou just north of the popular tourist destination Dali. Across from a recently renovated outdoor opera theatre and a large tree famous for its

59 Three Tang texts are attributed to *Amoghavajra* (T 1254, 1255, and 1258). For a treatment of the pre-Song texts see DAVID AVALON HALL, “Marishiten: Buddhism and the Warrior Goddess,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1990), chapters three and four.

60 T 1255B 260b16-17.

nesting egrets is a temple with a maze of small side temples and courtyards. The temple sports several plaques commemorating renovations during the Qing dynasty. I came in to the first courtyard and was nearly face to face with a magnificent image of Vaiśravaṇa. Quickly snapping a picture I was roundly scolded by the temple caretaker. But one of the side altars is what is relevant here. I walked in and on the altar was a near life-size image of what appeared to be the goddess Zhunti (Cundī), holding her characteristic sun/moon attributes. Then I noticed the boar image at her feet and six little pigs to her side, each with a cup of tea in front of it. Mārīcī? No. Doumu – the Daoist “Dipper Mother.”

Now, it is interesting to know that before the Song there is no Doumu and her earliest appearance is in texts dating to the Southern Song. Mārīcī’s connection to the dipper in South Asia could not but have made her more intriguing in China. There is a *Beidou jing* 北斗經 in the Taishō canon that Franke dated to the Yuan and that played a role in state legitimation.⁶¹ The same scripture, used to prolong life, was translated into Tibetan and Uigur and has been found in multiple copies in Dunhuang. As Christine Mollier has recently shown, it is likely that the ancestor of this Buddhist dipper text goes back at least to Yixing in the Tang and that it owes much of its inspiration to Daoist dipper cults.⁶² Indeed, the names of the stars in the *Beidou jing* turn up regularly in Daoist dipper texts and Yixing cites his source as the “Method of the Immortal Ge for Worshipping the Great Dipper” 葛仙公禮北斗法.⁶³ I think what we see is a fortuitous coincidence of systems and interests. Be that as it may, Daoist / Buddhist borrowing, and cross-dressing in this case was perhaps inevitable.

There are a variety of texts concerning Dou mu in the *Daozang*, the earliest including the *Doumu da sheng yuan jun benming yan sheng xin jing* (Dz 621) 太上玄靈斗母大聖元君本命延生心經 are of late Song vintage, the rest from the Yuan and Ming.⁶⁴ The relationship between Doumu and Mārīcī is hardly secret. Thus, the *Xiantian Doumu zou gao xuan ke* (Dz 1452 先天斗母奏告玄科) specifically calls Doumu Mārīcī and notes her association with

61 HERBERT FRANKE, “The Taoist Elements in the Buddhist Great Bear Sutra (Pei-tou ching),” *Asia Major* 3.1 (1990): 75-111.

62 CHRISTINE MOLLIER, *Buddhism and Taoism Face to Face: Scripture, Ritual, and Iconographic Exchange in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), pp. 141-146. Her argument perhaps underemphasizes the South Asian dimension to these astral cults.

63 MOLLIER, 139-140.

64 Schipper dates this tentatively to the Southern Song (1127-1279). See KRISTOFER SCHIPPER and FRANCISCUS VERELLEN, eds., *The Daoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004): 2. 952.

India!⁶⁵ These texts pick up on her solar, military, and stellar associations, and her connection to the dipper links her with longevity cults. The collection *Daofa hui yuan* (Dz 1220, of Ming dynasty provenance) contains a text titled *The Hidden Book of the Thunder Crystal of the Prior Heavens* 先天雷晶隱書 (*Xian tian lei jing yin shu*, *juan* 83-87) which gives an iconographic description of Mārīcī and her “heart mantra.”⁶⁶ Joshua Capitanio has noted that the mantra finds its closest analogue in Amoghavajra’s brief text on Mārīcī (T 1258).⁶⁷ Her iconography, however, is decidedly not from the Tang period text and must postdate Devaśāntika’s translation, as it details her three faced eight armed version with bows, arrows, and boar chariot (loosely based on T 1257 21.269a25ff., 272c22 ff., etc.). Despite the obvious source of the inspiration, and despite many points of convergence (iconography, dipper, mantra) *The Hidden Book of the Thunder Crystal of the Prior Heavens* – like many other Daoist texts that borrow Buddhist elements – is thoroughly Daoist in its structure, imagery, and metaphors. In other words, Mārīcī has been fully assimilated to a Daoist milieu. She represents an excellent example not only of the circulation of the text of Devaśāntika or of icons drawn from it, but also of the impact of the texts and practices of Esoteric Buddhism in other systems.

Abbreviations

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, *et al.* 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai 大正一切經刊刻會, 1924-32. Taishō number is listed first followed by volume number, page, register (a, b, c), and when appropriate, line number.

65 Dz 1452, 34.769a. The text is possibly of Yuan (1279-368) vintage. See SCHIPPER and VERELLEN, 2. 1234.

66 The text is attributed to Wang Wenqing 王文卿 and is part of a corpus of texts connected with the Five Thunder tradition (五雷法). It may be as early as the Southern Song. See SCHIPPER and VERELLEN, *The Taoist Canon*, 2. 1107-1108.

67 JOSHUA CAPITANIO, “Esoteric Buddhist Elements in Daoist Ritual Manuals of the Song, Yuan, and Ming,” CHARLES D. ORZECH, RICHARD K. PAYNE, and HENRIK H. SØRENSEN, eds., *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011) 533. The correspondence between the mantra here and the one in Amoghavajra’s text is not exact and the text labels another mantra than the one so labelled in the Buddhist text as her “heart mantra.” The key passages are on 83:2b.

Dz *Daozang* 道藏 is cited according to Schipper, Kristopher and Franciscus Verellen, eds.. *The Daoist Canon: A Historical Companion to the Daozang* 3 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

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PART III

Japan

Taimitsu Rituals in Medieval Japan

Sectarian Competition and the Dynamics of Tantric Performance¹

LUCIA DOLCE

Taimitsu 台密, the esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai lineages, is one of the two major traditions of Tantric Buddhism in Japan, the other being the Shingon school. Despite its historical importance, Taimitsu remains largely unknown to scholars, including those of Japanese Buddhism. The ritual dimension of Taimitsu has received even less scholarly attention. Before examining the dynamics of medieval Taimitsu practice it is thus necessary to consider the reasons for such a peculiar development in the understanding of Japanese Tantras.

Scholarly analysis of Japanese Tantrism has uncovered only a tiny part of the variety and richness of the doctrinal systems and ritual practices created in Japan. This is somewhat paradoxical when one considers the paramount influence of Tantric modes of thought on Japanese Buddhism and Japanese culture in general, compared to other countries of the East Asian Buddhist sphere, as well as the influence that Japanese emic categories of analysis have exerted on the study of East Asian Tantras. Different factors have contributed to such an anomaly. One is related to the modern history of Buddhism. Modern Japanese Buddhist ideologues have attempted to present Japanese Buddhism as a world religion along the model set by Protestant Christianity, that is, one focused on doctrine rather than ritual. The Tantric traditions posed a fundamental problem to the formulation of Buddhism as an intellectual path, in that Tantrism had constructed its historical significance on ritual performance and ritual efficacy, and its textual body in large part consisted of liturgical literature. Its modern interpreters have tried to overcome this difficulty by emphasising the philosophical

¹ Research for this study was made possible by a research leave grant from the UK Arts & Humanities Research Council.

aspects of Tantrism, and downplaying its ritual dimension. By doing so, however, they have failed to unfold the doctrinal developments and innovations that were effected by ritual elaborations. In the case of Taimitsu this situation has been exacerbated by the fact that Taimitsu developed within a school that was equally concerned with the philosophical system of Chinese Tiantai, a non-esoteric form of Buddhism. It is the latter, rather than the Tantric component, that has dominated the modern construction of Tendai.

The study of medieval rituals has also been affected by other problems intrinsic to the history of Japanese Buddhism. Firstly, the division of Japanese Buddhism into discrete schools has put the focus on the origin of each school and this has undermined the study of their historical development. The received representation of these schools is that of monolithic entities that have perpetuated the doctrinal stances and ritual practices of their founders through the centuries. Consequently, little attention has been paid to the medieval expressions of Tantric Buddhism, whether in the Shingon or Tendai school, for the medieval interpretations do not represent the beginnings of these schools or their modern practices. Secondly, the rituals that have received attention are those that formed the doctrinal basis of Japanese Tantrism, in particular the initiation into the practices of the Womb and Diamond *maṇḍalas*. These were, and still are, part of the training of a Tantric specialist, and today are much the same in the two major Tantric schools, following a process of ritual standardization that was completed in the Tokugawa period. Here lies another inconsistency in the received approach to Japanese Tantrism. Ritual diversification (rather than doctrinal or ideological stance) is often adduced as the origin of the split into the endless number of branches and sub-lineages that characterised pre-modern Japanese Tantrism. Yet hardly any of such ritual changes has been examined. Finally, largely unexplored in their historical, doctrinal and performative development are the rituals devoted to individual figures of the Tantric pantheon (*bessonhō* 別尊法). These are often regarded as minor liturgies, because their purpose is the attainment of immediate worldly benefits, rather than the practitioner's enlightenment, and in this sense they do not conform to the outcome prescribed by a philosophical approach to Tantric practice. Yet they constituted the greatest number of Tantric liturgies newly created in the medieval period. Furthermore, while the rites of the two *maṇḍalas* were only rarely performed, from the eleventh century onwards the core activity of the Tantric lineages at major temples as well as in private halls consisted of *besson* rituals.

This study addresses some issues in the definition and legitimization of Taimitsu as a distinct Tantric tradition by focussing on the medieval ritual world. In particular, it explores how sectarian agendas were at work

in the construction and presentation of rituals, and how the dynamics of ritual performance affected the differentiation and reciprocal influence between Tantric lineages. The assumption followed in this study is that ritual actions translate into authority for a specific monk and his lineage, and shape his doctrinal standing. Yet the process by which ritual authority is claimed and instituted is characterised by tensions and contradictions. To identify the modalities by which Taimitsu sectarian legitimation was negotiated, this paper draws attention to two key sources that have hitherto remained unexplored: the ritual anthologies compiled throughout the medieval period; and a set of specific rituals for public benefit which were constructed as the great secret rituals (*daihibō* 大秘法) of the Taimitsu lineages.

The Divisions of Japanese Tantrism: Taimitsu Lineages

The term Taimitsu designates the Tantric practices of the school initiated by Saichō on Mt. Hiei, Tendai. However, the lack of a centralised institution that represented the different loci where Tendai esoteric Buddhism was practiced poses difficulties in defining Taimitsu as a single, homogeneous tradition. At the time of maximum development of Japanese Tantrism, namely from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, which for the purpose of this paper I consider the medieval period, the term indicated at least two competing lineages: Sanmon 山門 (lineage of the mountain) and Jimon 寺門 (lineage of the temple). The two lineages went back to the two major Taimitsu scholiasts of the early Heian period, Ennin 円仁 (794–864) and Enchin 圓珍 (814–891) respectively, although the split between their disciples became definitive only at the end of the tenth century. The Jimon lineage, based at Onjōji 園城寺, or Miidera 三井寺, was institutionally much smaller but played a distinctive role within Japanese Tantrism. Medieval documents in fact describe contemporary Japanese Tantrism being constituted of Tōji (i.e. Kūkai's lineages), Sanmon and Jimon lineages. Although sharing several doctrinal and ritual elements, the two main Taimitsu lineages constructed specific liturgies in competition with each other. The *Shidō juhō nikki*, a fourteenth-century outline of the formation of Taimitsu lineages, for instance, points at the Onjōji-specific ritual of the Yellow Fudō. According to this document, the ritual was initiated by Enchin, and transmitted from generation to generation to a single practitioner, the head

of the lineage (*monshū* 門主). He alone had access to Enchin's interpretation of this form of the King of Knowledge as a 'living deity' (*shōjin* 生身).²

Further ramifications occurred within the Sanmon lineage, while the Jimon lineage seems to have remained more compact. From the mid-Heian period two major divisions of Sanmon are identifiable: Kawa 川, founded by Kakuchō 覚超 (960–1034) and Tani 谷, founded by Kōgei 皇慶 (977–1049). The Kawa branch extinguished itself in the course of one generation. By contrast, the Tani branch flourished through the centuries, splitting into further sub-branches.³ Such divisions occurred in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and eventually formed the so-called thirteen lineages of Taimitsu.⁴ (Fig. 1) It is not clear when these thirteen branches started being identified as representative of Taimitsu, for they do not comprise the entirety of the Taimitsu network. Some sub-lineages are in fact not counted among these thirteen.

Considering that these sub-lineages were in large part offshoots of one of the major lines of Sanmon, one may question the significance of such demarcations and how clear-cut the distinction between one branch and another was in reality. First of all, the sub-lineages present a confusing case of taxonomic accretion. A perusal of contemporary sources reveals that a specific dharma-line might have been referred to either by the name of its founder (or the toponym of the temple where he lived), or by the name of his teacher, or indeed by that of his disciple, even when the latter was at the same time considered to be the founder of a different sub-branch. Thus the Kawa branch was often referred to as Ryōgen's lineage because its initiator, Kakuchō, was a direct disciple of the eminent restorer of Tendai, Ryōgen 良源. In the Tani branch, Chōen 長宴 (1016–81), direct disciple of Kōgei, was considered the founder of the Ōhara 大原 lineage, which took its name from Chōen's sobriquet Ōhara ajari 大原阿闍梨, derived from the area to the north-west of Mt. Hiei where he lived.⁵ This lineage, however, would be better known as the Sanmai 三昧 lineage, after the title of Chōen's direct

2 *Shidō jubō nikki*, T. 77:137c. *Shidō jubō nikki* was compiled by Gengō 源豪 in 1391, and records the oral transmissions of his master Gongō 嚴豪. See ŌKUBO RYŌSHUN, "Taimitsu shoryū no keisei," in *Asia bunka no shisō to girei*, FUKUI FUMIMASA HAKASE KOKI TAISHOKU KINEN RONBUNSHŪ KANKŌKAI eds., Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2005, pp. 783–798.

3 Cf. *Asabashō*, "Denbō kanjō nikki," T. *zuzō* 9: 844–846. A detailed analysis of Taimitsu sub-lineages is in INADA SOKEN, "Taimitsu shoryū shikō," *Eizan gaku* 6 (1932), pp. 1–38, and "Taimitsu shoryūshi shikō (shōzen)," *Eizan gaku* 8 (1933), pp. 1–82.

4 See the diagram in FUKUDA GYŌEI, *Tendaigaku gairon*, Tokyo: Nakayama shobō busshorin, 1995, p. 487 (included here) and, for more detailed charts of each lineage, *Mikkyō daijiten* 6: 30–32.

5 In this paper I use the most common pronunciation of the name, Chōen, as in *Mikkyō daijiten* and *Nihon bukkyō jinmei jiten*. Tendai literature however gives it as Jōen. Cf. KIUCHI

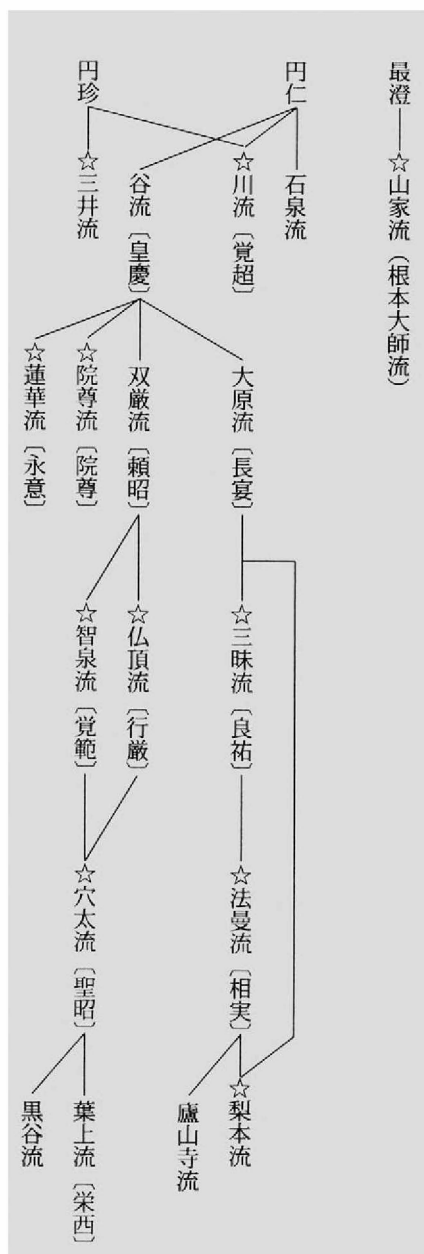


Figure 1: Chart of the medieval divisions of Taimitsu. The sub-lineages marked by a star, together with two other sub-lineages not given here, form the so-called Thirteen Lineages of Taimitsu.

disciple, Sanmai ajari Ryōyū 良祐 (1159–1231). Ryōyū was thus seen as the initiator of a new lineage, and yet regarded as the continuator of the Tani branch. Such multiplicity of designations suggests the evolution of the Taimitsu lineages within the span of one generation, but it also points to the ambiguity of intra-sectarian distinctiveness.

Another factor, characteristic of both Japanese Tantric schools, Shingon and Tendai, accentuated the loose meaning of lineage. Tantric practitioners sought and received several initiations from masters belonging to competing lineages, not only within the same school, in this case Tendai, but also of the opposite school, Shingon. Kōgei, for instance, cited above as the founder of the Tani branch of Taimitsu, received initiations from Kyōun 景雲 of the Tōji line of Shingon, under whom he studied in Kyūshū. Often of aristocratic background, an individual Tantric specialist might have also had siblings belonging to competing schools. A case in point is Sōjitsu 相実, a versatile scholar-monk regarded as the founder of the Hōman 法曼 lineage of Taimitsu. A direct disciple of Ryōyū 良祐 of the Sanmai lineage, and thus inheritor of the orthodox line of the Tani branch, he also received an advanced consecration distinctive of the Kawa branch (*risagō kanjō* 離作業灌頂), several initiations into rituals of the Hirosawa branch of Shingon from the well-known Ejū 恵什 of Ninnaji, and transmission of secret texts of the Ono 小野 lineages of Shingon. Sōjitsu was the third son of the Councillor Fujiwara no Akizane, and thus the brother of Jichihan 実範 (1089–1144), a renowned scholar-monk and founder of the Nakanokawa 中川 branch of Shingon.⁶ The personal circumstances of a practitioner thus assured his contacts with competing lineages, and allowed him knowledge of competing interpretations. In such a context, the meaning of lineage cannot be understood as founded on exclusivist affiliation.

Gyōō, *Tendai mikkyō no seiritsu*, Tokyo: Hokushindō 1990, and the publications of the Tendai school such as *Tendai mikkyō nyūmon*.

6 MARC BUIJNSTERS, “Jichihan and the Restoration and Innovation of Buddhist Practice,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 26/1-2, 1999, pp. 39-82, p. 40. Interestingly, Jichihan’s doctrinal positions would be criticised by another Hōmanryū monk, Shura.

Constructing Ritual Knowledge: The Medieval Liturgical Anthologies

One of the characteristics of the medieval Tantric world was the production of extensive ritual anthologies. Compiled between the eleventh and the fourteenth century, these are particularly relevant sources to explore the development of Tantric Buddhism. They document the remarkable creativity of medieval ritualists and provide evidence to reconsider in historical terms the received view of the differences between the two major Japanese Tantric schools and among their sub-divisions. The collection of liturgical knowledge corresponded to the formation of branches and sub-lineages, and the production of anthologies grew in number according to the splitting up of the dharma-lines, at first giving the impression that such compilative effort was aimed at defining the sectarian identity of discrete groups. Yet the composition of these liturgical corpora highlights an ambiguous dynamic between the aspiration to exclusive knowledge and the need to circulate knowledge. Let us consider a few examples.

The sectarian agendas embedded in the constitution of the anthologies are already clear in the first substantial attempt to put together the ritual hermeneutics of the Tendai lineages, *Shijūjōketsu* (Instructions in forty books). This is a record of the oral transmissions bequeathed by Kōgei to his disciple Chōen. In fact, historically the compilation would assume canonical status and serve as a reference manual for the three main branches of Taimitsu, Sanmai, Anō 穴太 and Hōman.⁷ Kōgei was a crucial figure in the development of Taimitsu rituals and thus *Shijūjōketsu* plays a significant role in attesting the changes in ritual understanding at the beginning of medieval history. The anthology presents the specificity of Taimitsu versus Shingon in its very structure. It follows a tripartite division under the rubrics of “Womb” (*taizō* 胎藏), “Diamond” (*kongōkai* 金剛界) and “Accomplishment” (*soshitsuji* 蘇悉地), reflecting the doctrinal system developed by Ennin and Enchin, where the non-duality of the two maṇḍalic realities, Womb and Diamond, was subsumed in a third element,

7 The edition included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (T. 75: 425-460) consisting of 15 fascicles, is a later arrangement by the initiator of the Hōman lineage, Sōjitsu (1081-1165). *Bussō kaisetsu daijiten* also cites a version in 20 volumes. The titles of its rubrics suggest that the two editions might have been different. The only study of this anthology is a pre-war article by SHISHIO ENSHIN, “Tani ajari Kōgei no mikkyō ni suite *Shijūjōketsu* o chūshin ni,” *Nihon bukkyō gakkai nenpō* 21, 1956, pp. 117-134. Reprinted in *Mikkyō taikēi*, ed. by MIYASAKA YŪSHŌ et al., 12 vols., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1995, vol. 7 (*Nihon no mikkyō* 4), pp. 119-136.

identified by the category of *soshitsuji*.⁸ The practices for individual deities, on the other hand, are not yet arranged according to the taxonomy that we will find in later compilations.

Similar sectarian stances are expressed in a later compilation, considered today as the most important medieval anthology of Taimitsu rituals, *Asabashō*.⁹ Its title comes from three seed-letters, A, SA and VAM, which identify the three sections of the Womb *maṇḍala*, respectively, buddha, lotus and *vajra*. The anthology thus seems to point already in the title to the prominence of the Womb *maṇḍala* in the Taimitsu construction of Buddhism. *Asabashō* was compiled between 1242 and 1281 by Shōchō 承澄 (1205–1282) of an Anō sub-lineage called Ogawa 小川. Contrary to previous anthologies, *Asabashō* is complemented by extensive iconographic material, which is useful for the reconstruction of the performative elements of each ritual. For this reason, while it has been marginalised in the study of Tantric doctrine and practice, it has attracted the attention of art historians, who have drawn from it for their analyses of Tantric deities.

Asabashō is paradigmatic of the process of construction of ritual knowledge that characterised the medieval period, and it is therefore useful to take a close look at some of its features. First of all, its organization provides a chart of the ritual world of Taimitsu. The anthology may be divided in sections, according to the type of ritual dealt with. The first part, which corresponds to the first forty-four fascicles of the *Taishō* edition, concerns the practices of the two *maṇḍalas* and the rituals of consecration (*kanjō* 灌頂). It includes extensive personal instructions of different masters, and their variations according to lineage. From the following sections onwards the attention is focused on rituals directed to individual deities. The section on buddhas starts with the Buddha Yakushi, highlighting the importance

8 For a brief outline of the threefold system see LUCIA DOLCE, “Taimitsu: The Esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai School,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia: A Handbook for Scholars*, CHARLES ORZECZ general ed., Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 757–758.

9 The edition included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (*T. zuzō* 8–9) comprises 227 fascicles, based on three manuscripts (Eizan bunko, Bishamondō and Sensōji), and is slightly different in the arrangement of some material (the journals of some performance, for instance) from the edition included in *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, which counts 233 fascicles. In the present study citations are from the *Taishō* edition. Despite being an invaluable historical source, research on *Asabashō* has been limited to its author and existent manuscripts. See KIRIHATA TAKESHI, “Asabashō: sono seiritsu to senja Shōchō,” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 70, 1969, pp. 182–205; BERNARD FRANK, “Les grandes sommes iconographiques des époques de Heian et de Kamakura,” *Annuaire du Collège de France 1986–1987*, pp. 555–598, pp. 593–597; MATSUMOTO KŌICHI, “Asabashō no shosha okusho ni tsuite: Shiga Jōbodaiinzō ni miru kyōgaku no denju to shūseki,” in *Enryakuji to chūsei shakai*, Kawane Yoshiyasu and FUKUDA EIJIRO ed., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2004, pp. 385–417.

that this deity had in the Tendai tradition. This is followed by two other categories of buddhas: *buddhoṣṇīsa*, or *butchō* 佛頂 and Butsumo 佛母 (buddha-mother, also referred to as Buddha-eye, Butsugen 佛眼). While the latter may be singled out only in Taimitsu sources, the first, the personification of the protuberance on the crown of a buddha's head (*uṣṇīsa*), appears as a distinct category in both Taimitsu and Shingon anthologies, documenting its cultic importance in Japan. This category is embodied in differently named buddha-figures, all depicted as *cakravartin* holding a golden wheel (*kinrinnō* 金輪王): Daibutchō 大佛頂, Ichiji kinrin 一字金輪, Shijōkō 熾盛光 and Sonshō 尊勝王.¹⁰ I shall return to Shijōkō. Next, the anthology covers liturgies centred on *sūtras*; on bodhisattvas, starting from the bodhisattva Kannon; on the kings of knowledge (*myōō* 明王), for which it uses the archaic name of “irate and adamantite” (*funnu kongō* 忿怒金剛), and other deities. The last fascicles of *Asabashō* concern various ritual procedures (*sabō* 作法), rites of empowerment (*kaji* 加持), the interpretation of the *siddham* script and biographical accounts. The taxonomic arrangement of *Asabashō* is slightly different from that of *Kakuzenshō*, the major medieval Shingon anthology.¹¹ Furthermore, some figures in the categories of deities, such as the two-bodied Bishamon (*sōshin Bishamon* 双身毘沙門), are specific to Taimitsu, and are not found in Shingon material. Yet altogether the two anthologies show that by the early thirteenth century the ritual pantheon of Japanese Tantrism had been defined.

The relatively small space that *Asabashō* gives to the advanced initiatory liturgies, compared to that devoted to rituals for individual deities, reveals the importance that the latter type of ritual carried in the economy of Tantric Buddhism. Indeed the rituals for individual deities, performed to attain specific practical benefits rather than to train esoteric specialists, functioned as the socio-political interface of the Tantric lineages, through which patronage and power were negotiated. In the anthology, the material related to each of these liturgies is organized in ten sections: first the

10 Shijōkō, as we shall see, is a Taimitsu-specific form. The other buddhas are included in *Kakuzenshō*, the contemporary Shingon anthology compiled by Kakuzen 覺禪 (1143–ca. 1219), albeit in a different hierarchical arrangement: Daibutchō, Sonshō and Ichiji kinrin. On the *buddhoṣṇīsa* and some of its textual sources see also RONALD DAVIDSON'S article in the present volume.

11 *Kakuzenshō* lists the rituals in the following order: Rituals centred on buddhas; *buddhoṣṇīsa*; *sūtras*; Kannon and other bodhisattvas; kings of knowledge; and other deities. This taxonomy seems to have also informed the hierarchical arrangement of scriptures in the Tantric section of the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. It should be noted that earlier Shingon anthologies, such as *Zuzōshō*, also use the name *funnu kongō* for the kings of knowledge.

doctrinal underpinning and the history of the ritual is presented, then practical information on the modalities of performance is given, followed by the accounts of preceding performances, successful or not. It is important to note that in this way the anthology supplies important material related to doctrinal questions, including works that no longer exist today.¹²

The anthologies may be seen as the repository of the ritual capital of a lineage, and in this sense are classified under the lineage to which their compiler belonged. Yet the particular nature of both compilations and compilers often makes such sectarian characterization problematic. Shōchō had received transmissions of lineages belonging to both the Tani and Kawa streams. Further, in his work he drew from two previous liturgical collections, *Gyōrinshō* (82 fascicles) and *Jikkanshō* (10 fascicles), compiled by Jōnen 靜然 of Mudōji 無道寺.¹³ Thus *Asabashō* did not represent only the Anō transmission, as is usually assumed from the main affiliation of its compiler, but a large part of the Taimitsu doctrine and practice that circulated in the thirteenth century. While it may be possible that ritual diversification prompted and legitimised the division of the Japanese Tantric schools into branches and sub-branches, it is also true that the ritual anthologies show an inclusive approach in their attempt at reproducing and organising ritual knowledge. Such an effort to grasp what was performed in the Tantric world beyond one's specific circle may be symptomatic of the need to identify reciprocal peculiarities, as the first step to build one's sectarian identity more solidly. At the same time, it also suggests an extraordinary possibility of exchanges between ritualists, and the degree of openness of the sectarian world, which stands in contrast to the logic of secrecy that Tantric lineages are often seen to abide by. *Shijūjōketsu* or *Asabashō* not only collected rituals performed by different Taimitsu lineages, but also embedded Shingon interpretations in their presentation of these rituals. This proves that a range of Shingon oral transmissions were available to competing lineages, whether or not they claimed Kūkai's ancestry. The diversified training that Tantric monks underwent undoubtedly was one of the factors that contributed to the apparent idiosyncrasy of the anthologies. Let us take the case of *Shijūjōketsu*. As I have noted above, both Kōgei, whose oral instructions this anthology collects, and the later editor of the anthology, Sōjitsu, had received Shingon

12 ŌKUBO RYŌSHUN, "Asabashō," in *Nihon bukkuyō no bunken gaido* (*Nihon no bukkuyō* 3), NIHON BUKKYŌ KENKYŪKAI eds, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001, pp. 3-6.

13 Jōnen's *Jikkanshō*, so-called following the contemporary use of designating ritual works from their size, in this case ten volumes (*kan* 卷), consisted of two different works: a collection written by Jōnen's master Sōjitsu, *Sōshinshō*, in eight volumes, and Jōnen's own *Shozon gyōzō* in two volumes.

transmissions. This may explain the presence of Shingon interpretations in *Shijūjōketsu*. The same applies to Shingon collections. *Zuzōshō*, an early important anthology of the Hirosawa branch of Shingon, incorporated several interpretations by Kakuyū 覺猷 (1053–1140), the famous Tendai cleric better known as Toba sōjō.¹⁴ The author of *Kakuzenshō*, too, extensively borrowed from the “Ōhara master,” i.e. Chōen (the compiler of the *Shijūjōketsu*). A close examination of the content of the ritual collections thus demonstrates that the assumed correspondence between lineage affiliation and exclusive knowledge was far from being reciprocal and unambiguous. Interpersonal relations affected the understanding of a Tantric practitioner and the authority of his lineage. Crucially, sectarian flexibility concerned not only ritual but also doctrinal matters, as *Asabashō* attests by incorporating treatises of major scholar-monks of the Shingon school.¹⁵

The anthologies also allow us to comprehend to what extent rituals that seemed conceived for and legitimised by Taimitsu sectarian agendas were practised by Shingon lineages as well. The Tantric liturgy of the Lotus Sutra (*bokkehō* 法華法) is a case in point. Although it originated in China, it developed in Japan thanks to and along the lines of Taimitsu speculations on the esoteric meaning of the Lotus. I have suggested elsewhere that these sectarian interpretations converged in some medieval visual uses of the Lotus *maṇḍala* as the third element of the Taimitsu system, in which the unity of the Womb and Diamond *maṇḍalas* was subsumed.¹⁶ As

14 *Zuzōshō* (a.k.a as Byōdōbō's *Jikkanshō*) was compiled in 1139–1140. Its authorship was traditionally attributed to Byōdōbō Yōgen 平等房永嚴 (1075–1151), a monk of the Hojuin 保寿院 sub-lineage of the Hirosawa branch, but it was most likely compiled by his fellow monk Ejū 惠什, who later moved to the competing Daigoji dharma-line. See TAMURA RYŪSHŌ, “*Zuzōshō*: seiritsu to naiyō ni kansuru mondai,” *Sōbyō butsuga, Bukkyō geijutsu/Ars Buddhica* 70 (1969), and BERNARD FRANK, *op. cit.*, pp. 556–559. It is relevant for the purpose of this study to note that the anthology was contended by two different lineages, which maintained two different titles for the work to lay claim to it.

The sobriquet of Kakuyū comes from the Toba imperial palace, south of Kyoto, where he resided.

15 An example is the quotation of a commentary by Jichihan, identified by scholars as the *Bodaishinron kaikenshō* 菩提心論開見抄. *Asabashō* cites “a certain treatise compiled by Nanokawa” (i.e. Jichihan) in several passages of the chapter dedicated to another Tendai commentary, the *Bodaishinron kanmon*. Cf. *T. zuzō* 9: 598a, b; 600a–c; 603c. In his study of Jichihan, Satō Tetsuei identified this “certain treatise” as the *Bodaishinron kaikenshō*. Recent textual analysis, however, has suggested that the *Bodaishinron kaikenshō* may be a later work. See TADO TAICHI, “*Bodaishinron kaikenshō* no kentō,” *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 57: 2 (2009), pp. 590–594.

16 LUCIA DOLCE, “Reconsidering the Taxonomy of the ‘Esoteric’: Taimitsu Hermeneutical and Ritual Practices,” In *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, MARK TEEUWEN and BERNARD SCHEID eds., London & New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 130–71.

loaded with (Taimitsu) sectarian connotations as the Lotus liturgy might have been, it is included in all major Shingon anthologies. It occupies several fascicles of *Kakuzenshō*, which comprise personal instructions (*shiki 私記*) of Tantric masters, hence confirming that it was not only recorded but also performed by Shingon lineages.¹⁷ As a matter of fact, according to Raiyu's 頼瑜 (1226–1304) *Shinzoku zakki* the *hokkehō* was one of the major liturgies (*daihō*) of the Shingon school.¹⁸

On the other hand, by surveying how the same ritual was treated in different Taimitsu anthologies, it is possible to discern its evolution in sectarian terms. If one compares the interpretation of the *hokkehō* in *Asabashō* and in the fourteenth-century *Keiranshūyōshū*, one finds that the latter emphasised the tripartite hermeneutical pattern pertaining to Taimitsu. The author of the *Keiranshūyōshū*, Kōshū 光宗, may be considered to represent Anō transmissions as much as Shōchō, the compiler of *Asabashō* (Kōshū belonged to Seizanryū 西山流, a lineage that had split from that of Shōchō). Although *Keiranshūyōshū* is not strictly speaking a ritual collection, the sections that have been preserved are mostly concerned with Tantric rituals, and thus the compilation serves as a record of contemporaneous practices on Mt. Hiei.¹⁹ Its treatment of the *hokkehō* suggests that by the fourteenth century a concern had arisen to claim the distinctiveness of Taimitsu vis à vis Shingon ritual interpretations in terms that resonated with the doctrinal positions of the school.

17 LUCIA DOLCE, *Esoteric Patterns in Nichiren's Thought*, PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2002, pp. 215–218 and 304–5.

18 *Mikkyō daijiten* 3:1536a, which cites *Shinzoku zakki* 13 (not corresponding to the edition included in *Shingonshū zensho* 37). *Shinzoku zakki* was compiled between 1260 and 1284. Another work by Raiyu, *Hishō mondō*, attests that the *hokkehō* was performed by both the Ninnaj and the Daigoji lineages, together with a *Fugen enmeihō*. See T. 79: 365c.

19 Because it is not a ritual collection, *Keiranshūyōshū* is arranged according to a completely different criterion than the ritual anthologies mentioned above. The existing 116 fascicles of the edition included in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* are only one third of the original number, which counted 300 fascicles. (This is based on the manuscript held in the Shinnyo archives of Eizan bunko, but some fascicles from this manuscript were left out from the Taishō edition.) The date of compilation, 1311–1347, refers to the fascicles that have been preserved. On *Keiranshūyōshū* see ALLAN GRAPARD, "Keiranshūyōshū: A Different Perspective on Mt. Hiei in the Medieval Period" in *Re-Visioning "Kamakura" Buddhism*, RICHARD K. PAYNE, ed., Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998, pp. 55–69; NOMOTO KAKUJŌ, "Keiranshūyōshū," in *Nihon bukkyō no bunken gaido* (*Nihon no bukkyō* 3), NIHON BUKKYŌ KENKYŪKAI eds., Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001, pp. 47–50; TANAKA TAKAKO, *Keiranshūyōshū no sekai*, Nagoya: Nagoya daigaku shuppan, 2003.

The Ritual Self-definition of Taimitsu

Two areas of ritual conception better illustrate the process of sectarian definition that medieval Taimitsu ritualists attempted, in the inter-sectarian context (distinction with Shingon lineages) and at the intra-sectarian level (distinction between Sanmon and Jimon).

1. *Advanced initiations*

The first area concerns the rites of advanced consecration. Here one notes a marked differentiation with the Shingon lineages, in that in medieval Taimitsu the consecration into the two *maṇḍalas* was followed by a third initiation, known as the “combinatory consecration” (*gōgyō (dan) kanjō* 合行(壇)灌頂). This initiation ritually embodied the category of *soshitsuji* that was central to the Taimitsu tripartite system, and was one of the solutions to the problems arising from the scriptural basis of this category, the *Suxidi jing*.²⁰ A survey of the ritual collections shows that by the medieval period initiations focused on the *Suxidi jing* were replaced by the combinatory one. This consisted in performing the rite for the two *maṇḍalas* simultaneously, using two ritual platforms on which the *maṇḍalas* were placed, while the mudras and mantras corresponding to each *maṇḍala* were transmitted separately, in alternate order. *Asabashō* dated the combinatory initiation back to Ennin and Enchin, but scholars today surmise that it emerged around the time of Kōgei during the process of transformation of the *soshitsuji* rites.²¹ The combinatory consecration became the distinctive feature of Taimitsu initiations and was carried out throughout the pre-modern period with a number of variations and alternatives. It is not discussed in Shingon anthologies.

On the other hand, the record of advanced initiations also provides grounds for reconsidering the received understanding of the distinctions between Taimitsu and Shingon. One often-mentioned ritual difference between the two schools is the precedence given to one or the other of the two *maṇḍala* initiations in the basic training course of a Tantric master (*shidō kegyō* 四度加行). Shingon places the Diamond *maṇḍala* practices first, followed by those centred on the Womb *maṇḍala*, while Taimitsu

20 LUCIA DOLCE, “Taimitsu: The Esoteric Buddhism of the Tendai School,” pp. 758-759.

21 MISAKI RYŌSHŪ, *Taimitsu no kenkyū*, Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1988, pp. 568-73.

inverts the sequence.²² This has been explained as the importance that Kūkai gave to the scriptural basis of the Diamond *maṇḍala*, in turn reflecting the emphasis that Amoghavajra had placed on it in China. By contrast, Ennin and Enchin are thought to have been more interested in the scriptural sources of the Womb *maṇḍala*, the *Darijing* and its commentary.²³ Even though scant evidence of this tendency may be detected in the writings of the first generation of Taimitsu writers, such alleged demarcation does not take account of Annen's interest in the textual lineage of the Diamond *maṇḍala*, clearly demonstrated by his use of the *Yuqijing*.²⁴ Furthermore, the historical accounts of the development of the two *maṇḍala* initiations prove that the Womb-Diamond sequence was not homogeneously adopted in Taimitsu. According to *Asabashō*, the Kawa branch performed first the Diamond rites and then the Womb rites. The Tani branch followed the sequence Womb-Diamond order.²⁵ It may be surmised that because the Tani interpretation survived in its several ramifications, the sequence Womb-Diamond came to be understood as distinctive of Taimitsu. Yet, historically this was not perceived as a characterizing feature for all Taimitsu lineages.

2. *The four major Taimitsu liturgies (daihō)*

The second area of interest in the discussion of sectarian definition concerns the rituals for individual deities that were classified as “major liturgies” (*daihō*). These were the most important rites of a Tantric lineage, originally performed by imperial order for the protection of the state and the wellbeing of the emperor and members of his family.²⁶ The special status of these rituals was marked by a distinct arrangement of the space of

22 See, for instance MICHAEL SASO, “*Kuden*: The oral hermeneutics of Tendai Tantric Buddhism,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14:2-3 (1987), pp. 235-46.

23 OSABE KAZUO, *Ichigyō zenji no kenkyū*, Tokyo: Hokushindō, 1990.

24 Annen's use of the *Yuqijing* was inherited by medieval ritualists, such as Jien 慈円. See LUCIA DOLCE and SHINYA MANO, “Godai'in Annen,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia: A Handbook for Scholars*, CHARLES ORZECZ general ed., Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 773-775.

25 *Asabashō*, “Gōkanki.” *T. zuzō* 8: p. 778.

26 Dictionary entries indicate that the term may be used both for rituals of self-empowerment conducted within the training of a Tantric master (*gyōhō no daihō* 行法の大法 or *shidai no daihō* 次第の大法) and for rituals aimed at the benefit of others (*tagi no daihō* 他儀の大法). See *Mikkyō daijiten* 3: 1535c-1536a, and SAWA RYŪKEN, ed., *Mikkyō jiten*, p. 366-367. Historically, however, the most common meaning was the second, and hereafter I shall use the term in this sense.

performance, which seems to have been fixed by the mid-medieval period. It consisted of four platforms: a main altar (*daidan* 大壇), devoted to the specific deity to whom the ritual was dedicated, an altar for the *goma* 護摩, an altar for the twelve protective deities (*jūniten* 十二天) and an altar for Kangiten 歡喜天. Such multiplication of ritual platforms corresponded to a remarkable increase in the number of monks deployed during these liturgies, for each of the altars was served by at least four ritualists, and often by multiples of four up to twenty monks, according to some sources. Each Tantric lineage had different sets of “major liturgies,” which however were not established as such from the beginning, and might have been replaced by others with the split of a lineage. There were sets of four, five and even seven major liturgies.²⁷

What are today considered to be the major Taimitsu rituals are four important liturgies which were performed by the Sanmon lineages: *shijōkōhō* 熾盛光法, *shichibutsu Yakushihō* 七佛藥師法, *Fugen enmeihō* 普賢延命法 and *anchinhō* 安鎮法.²⁸ By the mid-medieval period they were recognized as the ritual interface of the Sanmon lineage. The *Monyōki*, another massive Taimitsu medieval compilation, which records the ritual activities of the Shōren'in 青蓮院, starts with these four major liturgies and gives them absolute prominence: more than half of its space is devoted to them, with *shijōkōhō* and *shichibutsu Yakushihō* together occupying more than two-hundred pages of a volume in the Taishō Canon.²⁹ Today the four rituals are performed together, one after the other, at Enryakuji, the headquarters of the Tendai school. They constitute an important ceremony of the yearly liturgical calendar, held in the innermost area of Konpon chūdō and lasting eight days, from 4 to 11 April (*Enryakuji mishihō* 延曆寺御修法). In medieval Japan, however, each of these rituals had its own independent life and performative space. To have a grasp of the range of meanings that each engendered, it is useful to briefly survey their agency and audience, and the historical changes that they underwent. I shall start

27 For example, the thirteenth-century Shingon work cited above, *Shinzoku zakki*, lists the *shōukyōhō* 請雨經法, *kujakuyōhō* 孔雀經法, *shugo kokkakyōhō* 守護國家經法, *fugen enmeihō* 普賢延命法 and *goshichinichi misshihō* 後七日密秘法 as the major liturgies of the Shingon lineages, but adds that the Ninnaji lineage also considered the *hokutōhō* 北斗法 as a major liturgy. See *Mikkyō daijiten* 3: 1536a.

28 *Sanmon anōryū juhō shidai*, *Dai Nihon bukkyō zensho* 2: 248.

29 *Monyōki* (T. *zuzō* 11: 417-723; 12: 1-692) was compiled by Son'en shinnō 尊円親王 (1298-1356), and records the activities of Shōren'in, one of the most important Taimitsu centres headed by imperial princes (*monzeki*), from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The edition available in the *Taishō shinsbū daizōkyō* numbers 184 chapters, including some Edo-period additions.

from the second, and discuss the *shijōkōhō* in detail later as paradigmatic of the sectarian construction of rituals.

Shichibutsu Yakushihō was a calamity-preventing ritual that provided relief from diseases, curses, poison and difficult labour. It became one of the four major Taimitsu liturgies because it enhanced the cult of Yakushi, whom Saichō had established as the main buddha of the Tendai school. The ritual was held for seven nights and seven days. On the main altar were placed seven statues of Yakushi, which were understood as seven manifestations of Yakushi, and could be interpreted as the seven stars of the Big Dipper, placing the ritual in the category of star rituals. One important segment of the performance, called ‘knotting the cords’ (*kessen* 結線), consisted of empowering five cords in the colours of the five elements by means of mantras, and then weaving them together and knotting them again. Doctrinally, it enacted a passage from the *sūtra* that served as one of the textual references for the ritual, where it was presented as an act of devotion to the Seven Yakushi. In the ritual hermeneutics, however, cosmological readings of the five colours made of these actions a “technique of prolonging life.”³⁰ According to *Asabashō*, Ennin first performed the *shichibutsu Yakushihō* for emperor Ninmyō in 850 at Seiryōden, the emperor’s quarters.³¹ Later on, however, it was performed for members of the aristocracy or other ruling elites. Ryōgen, for instance, employed it to auspicate a healthy parturition for the consort of one of the Fujiwara Regents.³² In the Kamakura period a cleric of the Ogawa lineage, Chūkai 忠快 (1159?–1227), performed it several times for the third shogun Sanetomo.³³ The anthologies document these and other changes in the ritual performance and in the ritual meaning as well. Again the *Asabashō* tells us that the rite was originally performed only by the *zasu* of Mt. Hiei, but

30 *Asabashō*, T. zuzō, 8: 333a, 335b-c for the performative sequence, and 331a, where analogies are drawn between the five colours and the five organs that constitute the human body, and the handling of five-colour ritual objects is presented as a way of prolonging life. The *sūtra* to which the ritual segment refers is *Yaoshi liuli guang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經, T. 451, 14: 409-418. An English translation is included in RAOUL BIRNBAUM, *The Healing Buddha*, London: Rider, 1979, pp. 173-217.

31 *Asabashō*, T. zuzō 8: 325c.

32 PAUL GRONER, *Ryōgen and Mount Hiei. Japanese Tendai in the Tenth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002, pp. 87-88.

33 Chūkai worked as a Tantric exorcist (*kitōsō*) for the bakufu, and is credited with introducing major liturgies of the Sanmon lineages to the shogunal court. Earlier in his career he had performed the *shichibutsu Yakushihō* at court, together with the Tendai *zasu* Jien. See HAYAMI TASUKU, “Kamakura seiken to taimitsu shuhō: Chūkai, Ryūben o chūshin to shite,” in his *Heian bukkyō to mappō shisō*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2006, pp. 142-169.

later it started being conducted by other clerics.³⁴ While it was originally used to prevent calamities (*sokusai* 息災), in medieval times it became a ritual to increase benefits (*zōyaku* 增益).

Fugen enmeihō was a propitiatory ritual to increase the lifespan of the ruler, and, by analogy, the life of the country. *Asabashō* records that it was performed for the first time in 1075 by Kakujin 覺尋 (1012-1081), then abbot of Hosshōji 法勝寺, on the commission of emperor Shirakawa. Until the fourteenth century it was often conducted at the imperial palace and at princely residences, and during the Kamakura period it was performed for the wellbeing of the shogun as well. Later performances seem to have been more sporadic. It was held for the first time at Enryakuji in the Meiji period.³⁵ The setting for this ritual was even grander than for the other *daihō* in that eight platforms were used, adding an altar for each of the four Heavenly Kings at the corners of the performing site. This seems to have been a literary reading of the instructions given in the canonical sources of Fugen Enmei, which the anthologies explain in detail.³⁶ The main deity of this liturgy was an esoteric form of the bodhisattva Fugen, depicted with two or twenty arms, and riding four elephants or one elephant with four heads. This form of Fugen was also used in a life-prolonging ritual of the Shingon lineages.³⁷ According to some sources the difference between the two schools lay exactly in the iconographic details of the deity. *Byakuhōkushō* 白寶口抄, a fourteenth-century Shingon collection, for instance, states that Tendai lineages used a two-armed image, following the description of the *sūtra* centred on this deity, while the Tōji lineages employed an image with twenty arms, as prescribed in a secret transmission by Vajrabodhi.³⁸ Yet *Asabashō* records the Taimitsu use of twenty-armed images on two occasions at least: a ritual conducted in 1080 by Kakujin, then Tendai *zasu*, and a performance held in 1186.³⁹ Icons in the holding of Tendai temples also confirm this use.⁴⁰ Historical evidence

34 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 8: 326a.

35 For a list of recorded performances, see TAKE KAKUCHŌ, “Enryakuji mishihō ‘Fugen enmei daihō,’” in his *Hieizan bukkyō no kenkyū*, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2008, pp. 106-21.

36 *Asabashō*, “Fugen enmeihō,” *T. zuzō* 9: 133-144.

37 See, for instance, Raiyu’s *Hishō mondō* as cited in n. 17.

38 *Byakuhōkushō*, “Fugen enmeihō,” *T. zuzō* 6: 379b. This and another passage in the text (*T. zuzō* 6: 377a) also attribute the difference in the number of elephants the deity rides to different lineages. *Byakuhōkushō* was compiled by Ryōson 亮尊 around 1287.

39 *Asabashō*, “Fugen enmeihō nikki,” *T. zuzō* 9: 864-873, 867c and 869a (inscribed in the drawing of the ritual platform).

40 See, for instance, a fourteenth-century painting held at Enryakuji (*Hieizan to Tendai no bijutsu*, Exhibition catalogue, Asahi Shinbun, 1986, p. 172) and the well-known statue

thus shows the fluidity of ritual elements and the difficulty of identifying clear-cut sectarian differences.

Anchinbō was an exorcistic (*chōbuku* 調伏) ritual to pacify the grounds of the imperial palace, which were ritually delimited (*kekkaï* 結界) and transformed into a sacred area. In the analogical understanding assumed in Tantric Buddhism, the ruler's body symbolised the people of Japan, while his palace represented the country. By exorcizing the palace precincts the rite functioned as an exorcism for the entire territory of Japan. The main deity of this liturgy was a form of Fudō with a yellow body, for yellow is the colour of earth in the classical Chinese system of fivefold correlations (*wuxing* 五行). Both statues and *maṇḍala* of this deity were used, as may be evinced from the fact that *Asabashō* records iconographic instructions for both.⁴¹ During the Insei period the rite seem to have evolved, and towards the end of the eleventh century started being used almost exclusively as a propitiatory ritual for the construction of new buildings or the restoration of structures within either the imperial palace or the residences of retired emperors.⁴²

Shijōkōhō: A *Buddhoṣṇīṣa* Ritual to Protect the Country

Of the four major liturgies, *shijōkōhō* deserves more scrutiny because of the central role it played in the process of political as well as intra-sectarian and inter-sectarian legitimation. Taimitsu anthologies repeatedly proclaimed this ritual to be “the secret key of Sanmon and the unrivalled benefit for the country.”⁴³ Thus the ritual was posited as the most efficient rite for the protection of the state, and the monopoly of one lineage, Sanmon, versus the competing lineages, Jimon and Tōji. Furthermore, by choosing a ritual devoted to a *buddhoṣṇīṣa* deity to represent their expertise, Taimitsu ritualists reasserted the distinct doctrinal position of the Tendai school, which, as mentioned above, was based on the *Suxidijing*, a *buddhoṣṇīṣa* text.

Originally performed in China to pray for the emperor's longevity, the *shijōkōhō* was introduced to Japan by Ennin, who performed it for the

from Daisanji, in Oita prefecture, dated to the late tenth or eleventh century (*Saichō to Tendai kokuhō*, Exhibition catalogue, Yomiuri shinbun, 2005, p.159).

41 *Asabashō*, T. zuzō 9: 353-364. It should be noted that Taimitsu ritualists also performed another major ritual devoted to Fudō, the so-called “rite of the five platforms” (*godanbō*).

42 HAYAMI TASUKU, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1975, p. 107.

43 *Gyōrinshō*, T. 76: 93a; *Asabashō*, T. zuzō 8:24c.

first time in 850 as an auspicious rite for emperor Montoku.⁴⁴ This may be seen as the origin of the Taimitsu primacy on the ritual. Ennin presented it as a successful liturgy that he had witnessed during his stay at Qinglongsi 青龍寺, a major centre of Tantric Buddhism in the Tang capital Changan, which Ennin considered to be the privileged site for the protection of the state. The *shijōkōhō* focused on the emperor's personal star (*honmyōshō* 本命星), identified with the Pole Star, and like other star rituals was meant to increase the ruler's life as well as avoid the adverse consequences of the movements of heavenly bodies on the country.⁴⁵ *Asabashō* attests that in the twelfth century the liturgy was indeed popular for inauspicious changes in the heavens. For instance, in 1107, when a solar eclipse was forecast, the retired emperor Shirakawa commissioned the Tendai zasu Ningen 仁源 to stage a performance of the *shijōkōhō*, conducted by twenty celebrants. The eclipse did not occur (or perhaps was not visible in Kyoto), and contemporary sources note the efficaciousness of the ritual.⁴⁶ The *shijōkōhō* was thus conceived as a particular ritual for a specific occasion (*rinji no shūhō* 臨時の修法) and never became part of the yearly rites at the palace.⁴⁷

Medieval sources document that the empowerment of the ruler was enacted by exorcizing the emperor's robes, which an envoy would bring to the ritual site on Mt. Hiei. At times the emperor himself travelled to the place of performance to attend the ritual personally.⁴⁸ Given the status of the person on whose behalf it was held, the celebrant was expected to be the *zasu* of Mt. Hiei or a prelate of high rank. There are also cases in which

44 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 42a-b. Ennin's catalogue of imported material includes a drawing of the altar for the ritual (*shijōkō danzu* 熾盛光壇図). *Nittō shingu shōgyō mokuroku*, *T.* 55: 1084c. See also Annen's *Hakke hiroku*, *T.* 55: 1131c.

45 For a discussion of other star rituals held for this purpose see LUCIA DOLCE, "The worship of celestial bodies in Japan: politics, rituals and icons," in *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, Lucia Dolce ed., special issue of *Culture and Cosmos. A Journal of the History of Astrology and Cultural Astronomy* 10:1-2 (2006), pp. 10-17; and MATSUMOTO IKUYO, "Two Mediaeval Manuscripts on the Worship of the Stars from the Fuji Eikan Collection," in *Ibid.*, pp. 125-144.

46 *Asabashō*, "Shijōkōhō nikkishū," *T. zuzō* 9: 44c. See also HAYAMI, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, pp. 106-7. Ningen had already performed it for twenty-one days in 1094 to counter the ill effects of a solar eclipse.

47 Hayami Tasuku has argued that the ad hoc performance helped maintain its force as a country-protecting rite. By contrast, the main Shingon rite for protection of the country performed by the Daigoji lineages, *daigensuihō* 太元師法, became a cyclical rite (*nenjū gyōji* 年中行事) in the Insei period, and for this reason lost life as nation-protecting rite. Yet one should note that the *daigensuihō* was performed until recent times, against the Western enemies in the Meiji period, and on the occasion of modern battles.

48 *Chūyūki* 中右記, the journal kept by Fujiwara no Munetada, records three such occasions. See HAYAMI, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 132.

retired emperors, in their quality of full-fledged Tantric masters, performed it, either at the imperial palace or in detached residences.⁴⁹ It is clear that, as with the other major liturgies, the *shijōkōhō* was not originally meant for the prosperity of a single individual. However, anthologies and historical records attest that by the mid-Heian period the increase in demand for privately commissioned ceremonies affected the major liturgies as well. Ryōgen performed the *shijōkōhō* at court and for the aristocracy, in particular to cure the illness of the chancellor Fujiwara no Kanemichi.⁵⁰ In the Edo period, sponsorship of the ritual extended to other sources of political power. Tenkai 天海 performed it in Nikkō for the benefit of the shogunate. An exquisite *shijōkō mandala*, today in the possession of Rinnōji, was commissioned to be used as the main object of worship on that occasion.⁵¹ (Fig 2)

Ennin had claimed that the *shijōkōhō* was known only to him and not to Shingon or other Tendai lineages. Indeed in general Shingon lineages did not perform this ritual, maintaining that Kūkai had not transmitted its ritual manual. This does not mean, though, that they did not have knowledge of the ritual and of its procedures. Annen's comprehensive catalogue of imports by the Tantric masters of the early Heian period, *Hakke hiroku*, clearly attests that the canonical ritual manual was also brought to Japan by Eun 惠運 (798-869), a Shingon monk who went to China to study Tantric Buddhism during the last years of Ennin's stay.⁵² Furthermore, some Shingon anthologies do include the *shijōkōhō*. It was thus not the lack of material on how a ritual should be performed that made such a ritual less significant for a certain group, but a rhetorically constructed proper genealogy. The mechanisms that established sectarian distinctiveness based on ritual were rendered even more complex by other external factors. As the scholar dharma-prince Shukaku hosshinnō 守覚法親王 (1150-1202) explained, the Tōji lineages did know the rituals

49 On the dharma-emperor Shirakawa's performance, see HAYAMI, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkuyō*, p. 107 and 132.

50 GRONER, *Ryōgen and Mount Hiei*, pp. 90-92.

51 Colour on silk, Edo period. The name of Tenkai is inscribed in the back of the scroll as "The Provincial Governor (*tandai* 探題) and Chief Prefect (*daisōjō* 大僧正) of the Sanmon lineage, Tenkai." TOCHIGI KENRITSU HAKUBUTSUKAN ed., *Nikkōsan Rinnōji no butsuga*. Utsunomiya: Tochigi kenritsu hakubutsukan, 1996, p. 20.

52 *Eun risshi sho mokuroku*, T. 55: 1090c, and *Hakke hiroku*, T. 55: 1118c. The manual is listed as *Chicheng foding weide guangming zhenyan yigui* 熾盛佛頂威德光明真言儀軌, and it is also mentioned in *Gyōrinshō* as one of the fundamental texts for the ritual. Cf. T. 76: 84a-b.

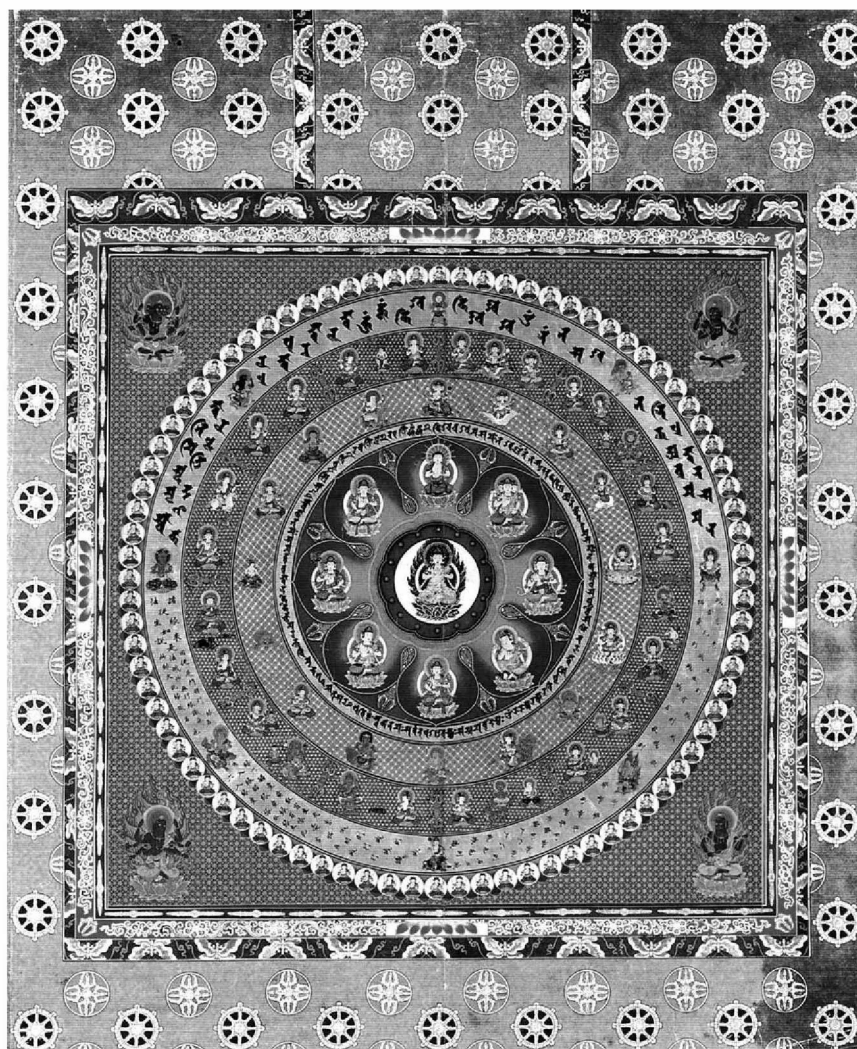


Figure 2: *Shijōkō maṇḍala*. Edo period. Rinnōji, Nikkō.

that were considered major liturgies in Taimitsu, but when it came to imperial commissions, only ritualists from Sanmon and Jimon lineages were requested to perform them.⁵³ This shows that the ritual definition of

⁵³ Tsuiki, T. 78: 617a-618b. See also HAYAMI, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, pp. 126-127. This is also the meaning of a passage of Rayu's *Hishō mondō*, which explicitly states

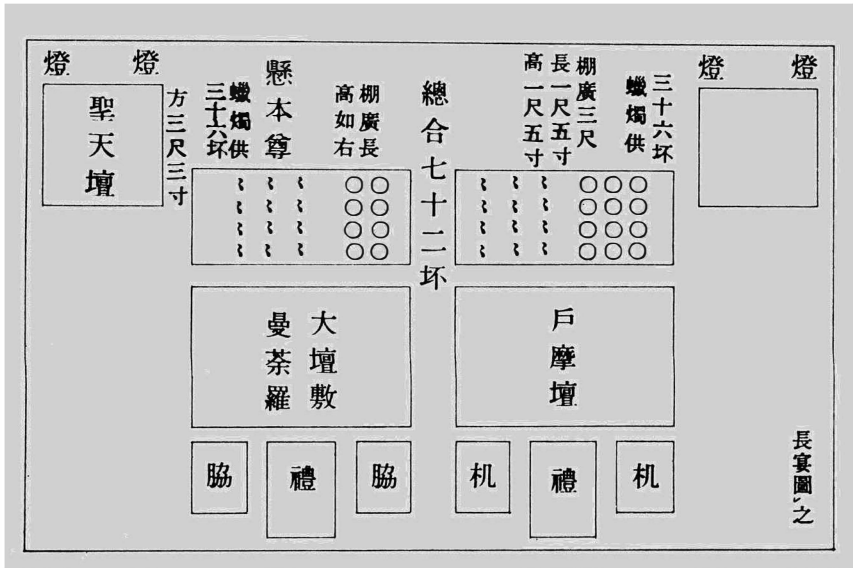


Figure 3: Drawing of the ritual space for the shijōkōhō, by Chōen.
From Asabashō.

sectarian identity also depended on the socio-political acknowledgement of ritual monopoly, in other words, on a component that lay outside the competing group itself. I shall return to this point.

Ritual Icons

Ennin is also credited with having introduced to Japan the icon that was used for this ritual, the *shijōkōhō mandala*. *Asabashō* describes the *mandala* that was installed on Mt. Hiei as having Shijōkō, the Blazing Light Buddha, at the centre, sitting on Mt Sumeru, and surrounded by the ocean.⁵⁴ The drawings of the ritual space provided in *Asabashō*, such as the one in Fig. 3, attributed to Chōen, attest that two *mandala* were used for the liturgy: a *mandala* to spread on the floor (*shiki mandara* 敷き曼荼羅) and a hanging *mandala*.⁵⁵ The latter was a circular *mandala* to place on the northern wall

that the *shijōkōhō* was usually performed by both lineages, Daigoji and Ninnaji, but as a *daihō* it was performed only by Tendai lineages. See *T.* 79: 365c.

54 *Asabashō*, *T. zuzō* 9: 25c. It is called “the fundamental (*konpon*) *mandala* of the Sōjin.”

55 *Asabashō*, “Shijōkōhō nikkishū,” *T. zuzō* 9: 42c.

of the performing area, facing south.⁵⁶ Ritual material discusses different prescriptions on the use of the hanging *maṇḍala*. For instance, according to *Shijūjōketsu*, a hanging *maṇḍala* should not be used at all because the main icon of the ritual was expected to remain secret. Instead an image of Fudō or of another *uśnīṣa* Buddha (*butchōson*) could be used as the main object of veneration (*honzon* 本尊). The floor *maṇḍala*, on the other hand, was to be placed under the platform of the main altar, for it was regarded as a secret object, not to be seen by anyone but the celebrant.⁵⁷ These variations indicate that the relation between ritual specification and the main object of worship was not fixed as is usually assumed – a point that needs to be taken into account when analysing the function of icons in the ritual context.

Ritual anthologies also alert us to the use of different iconographic styles depending on the beneficiary of the ritual. In *Gyōrinshō* it is prescribed that if the liturgy was held for the ruler of the country, and in order to deliver him from illness, the *maṇḍala* should depict all deities in their fully anthropomorphic aspect, and such a *maṇḍala* should be used both as the floor *maṇḍala* and as the main icon. When, on the other hand, the ritual was performed for ordinary people, it sufficed to render the deities placed in the central eight-petalled section of the *maṇḍala* anthropomorphically, and leave out the other deities. In this case, it was also adequate to inscribe the names of the deities in Sanskrit letters.⁵⁸

The logographic *maṇḍala* was also an object of discussion among ritualists. Much attention was given, in particular, to the meaning and form of the seed-syllable placed at the centre, BHRŪṂ. (Fig. 4) *Asabashō* describes BHRŪṂ as the syllable that all accomplishes, a virtue that, one transmission claimed, explained why it was placed at the centre of a secret *maṇḍala*. BHRŪṂ is also the seed-syllable of another *uśnīṣa* deity very important in Taimitsu, the One-syllable Golden Wheel Buddha, or Ichiji kinrin, and the identity of Shijōkō with Ichiji kinrin was stressed in the ritual material, bringing to the fore the wealth of doctrinal references that was deployed to give a sectarian framing to the ritual.⁵⁹ The references to Enchin's *Commentary on the Ichiji kinrin sūtra* are particularly interesting. Enchin held that the three syllables that constitute the Japanese pronunciation of BHRŪṂ (bo/ro/n) corresponded to the three bodies of the Buddha, and therefore the single mantric utterance of BHRŪṂ actualised the equivalence

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 9: 43b-c.

⁵⁷ Cited in *Asabashō*, T. zuzō 9: 26a-b.

⁵⁸ *Gyōrinshō*, T. 76: 93b.

⁵⁹ *Asabashō*, T. zuzō 9: 26a, 27a.

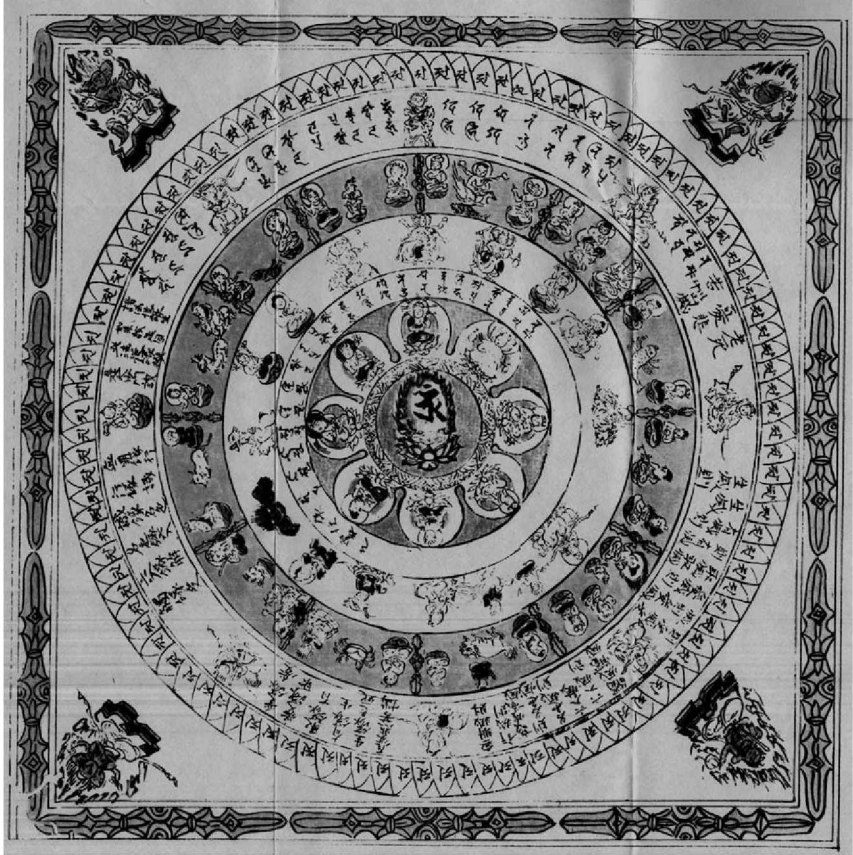


Figure 4: *Shijōkō maṇḍala*. From Asabashō.

of the three bodies in a single body (*sanshin soku ichi* 三身即一). This was an important concept upheld in Tendai. The *uṣṇīṣa* Buddha whose essence was crystallised in this seed-syllable subsumed the meaning of all Buddha-bodies.⁶⁰ In this way, through the identity with Ichiji kinrin, the Buddha

60 *Bodaijōkyō ryaku gishaku*, T. 61: 536. This is Enchin's commentary on an important scripture centred on Ichiji kinrin, known as *Putichang jing* 菩提場經. There were three Chinese translations of this scripture: *Putichang suoshuo yiziding lunwang jing* 菩提場所說一字頂輪王經 (better known as *Putichang suo jing*), translated by Amoghavajra 不空 (T. 19: 193-224); *Yiziding lunwang jing* 一字頂輪王經, translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (T. 19: 224-263); and *Wufoding sanmei tuoluoni jing* 五佛頂三昧陀羅尼經, translated by Bodhiruci 菩提流志 (T. 19: 263-285).

Shijōkō epitomised fundamental principles of Tendai doctrine, enhancing the status of the rite as paradigmatic of a Tendai-type Tantric efficacy.

The Architecture of Performance

Ennin also devised a specific architectural complex to perform the *shijōkōhō*, the Sōjiin 総持院. Initiated by the appointment of emperor Montoku 文徳, it took almost ten years to complete the buildings.⁶¹ Sōjiin was meant to provide the Tendai school with an equivalent of the Shingon'in, the chapel that Kūkai had established at the imperial palace in 834 for the Tantric enthronement of the ruler. In fact the Sōjiin would become the centre of the practice of Tantric Buddhism on Mt. Hiei. Already in the early days of Taimitsu the complex played a role in the intra-sectarian competition between lineages. Ennin had instructed that the abbot of the Sōjiin would be from his lineage only, and it appears that in the decades before the schisms between Sanmon and Jimon the ritual was interrupted when the Tendai *zasu* was not from Ennin's lineage.

The Sōjiin complex was burned down by fire several times and rebuilt. According to the oldest extant map of the area, in the fifteenth century it consisted of three buildings: a stupa (*tahōtō* 多宝塔) at the centre, where the five Buddhas of the Womb *maṇḍala* were installed; a mantra hall (*shingondō* 真言堂), where the *shijōkō maṇḍala* was placed, on the right; and an initiation hall (*kanjōdō* 灌頂堂), containing the Womb and Diamond *maṇḍala*, on the left.⁶² Records of the fire of 1322 document that at that time the stupa had three floors. The map and the records are consistent with the interpretations included in *Keiranshūyōshū*, which describe the Sōjiin as composed of a three-storied south-facing stupa; a Shijōkō hall in the west, enshrining Ichiji kinrin, and a Butsugen hall in the east, which then became the initiation hall. The two halls are said to represent the two forms of Dainichi, respectively, Dainichi of the Diamond *maṇḍala* and Dainichi of the Womb *maṇḍala*, while the five buddhas placed in the stupa are seen as the non-dual total body of accomplishment (*soshitsuji*), the symbolic (*sanmaya* 三昧耶) form of that unifying third element put

61 *Asabashō*, T. zuzō 9: 42a-b.

62 The stupa is now known as the Lotus Dharani Hall (*hokke sōjiin* 法華総持院). After the fire of 1435 the complex does not seem to have been rebuilt any longer, until the early 1980s, when a new pagoda was constructed. Rituals such as the Lotus assembly (*hokke-e* 法華会) and a combinatory *maṇḍala* service (*gōgyō mandaraku* 合行曼陀羅供) are still performed there every month. TAKE KAKUCHŌ, *Hieizan santō shodō enkakushi*, Ōtsu-shi: Eizan gakuin, 1993, pp. 65-69.

forward by Taimitsu thinkers to counter the twofold Shingon paradigm of reality. The triplex architectural structure was thus conceived to serve a sectarian objective and reiterate the tripartite interpretation of Tantric Buddhism that Taimitsu upheld. The compiler of the *Keiranshūyōshū* further applied a three-tiered reading to the central building of the Sōjiin. He identified the three floors of the stupa with the personal star of the emperor, the personal star of officials and courtiers and the personal star of all people, thus presenting the Sōjiin not only as the performing place for the rituals to the emperor, but as the ritual site that benefited the entire country.⁶³

The contribution of the architectural plan of the Sōjiin to the shaping of Taimitsu sectarian identity is further demonstrated by other medieval reinterpretations. *Keiranshūyōshū* offers an interesting comparison of the *shijōkōhō* with another ritual of a competing Tantric tradition. Focusing on the central structure of the Sōjin, the pagoda, it draws an analogy between the *shijōkōhō* and the special ritual for Aizen developed by the Tōji lineage, *nyohō Aizenhō* 如法愛染法. The latter was considered to be the “most important matter” of the Tōji lineage, because its object of worship was a wish-fulfilling jewel, which embodied the Buddha’s relics.⁶⁴ *Keiranshūyōshū* informs us that this special ritual for Aizen was not performed by Tendai lineages, but the special ritual for Butsugen (*nyohō Butsugenhō* 如法仏眼法), which Taimitsu developed, was in fact another name for the rituals to Aizen. This applies also to *shijōkōhō*, which *Keiranshūyōshū* presents as one with the great Aizen ritual of the Tōji lineage, claiming that Aizen’s wish-fulfilling jewel originated from the *samādhi* of the Blazing Light Buddha.⁶⁵ *Keiranshūyōshū* argues that *shijōkōhō* was a ritual centred on a stupa (and thus on relics, as the *Aizenhō*), and that the construction of the Sōjiin proved the truthfulness of these correlations: “The stupa of non-duality was built in the centre, between the hall to the Blazing Light (*shijōkōdō*) placed on the right, and the hall to the Buddha’s Eye placed on the left. The Buddha relics were installed in the stupa and every year the relic assembly (*shari-e* 舍利会) is held here.”⁶⁶ In fact here

63 T. 76: 621c, 858b. These passages also identify the personal star with the seven stars of the Big Dipper, another important imperial symbol.

64 On the *nyohō Aizen* ritual see ROGER GOEPPER, *Aizen-myōō The Esoteric King of Lust: An Iconological Study*, Zurich: Artibus Asiae, 1993, pp. 144–151. Interestingly, the *nyohō Aizen* ritual, like the *shijōkōhō*, originally was a life-prolonging rite. On Aizen and the wish-fulfilling jewel see also LUCIA DOLCE, “Nigenteki genri no gireika: Fudō, Aizen to riki no hizō,” in LUCIA DOLCE and IKUYO MATSUMOTO, eds, *Girei no chikara—chūsei shūkyō no jissen sekai*, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2010, pp. 159–206.

65 T. 76: 578c.

66 T. 76: 578c ad 622a.

the compiler of *Keiranshūyōshū* conflated two rituals conducted for the protection of the state, the assembly for the Buddha's relics, which Ennin had first celebrated at Sōjiin, and the *shijōkōhō*, in this way amplifying the status of the Sōjiin as the place *par excellence* for the performance of rituals of protection that had public importance. At the same time the *Keiranshūyōshū* firmly established the status of the *shijōkōhō* as a counterpart of powerful Tantric rituals celebrated by competing lineages. The comparison between the ritual for Aizen and for Butsugen is not posited arbitrarily, because both deities were based on the same canonical source, the *Yuqijing* – a scripture that was doctrinally important for Taimitsu. Medieval scholiasts were thus aware that textual canonical authority, too, did not function in exclusive terms.

The insistence on the opposite allocation of the space for Ichiji kinrin and Butsugen reflects another distinctive element of Taimitsu practices: the importance of the cult of Butsugen. Butsugen originally was venerated in connection with movements of celestial bodies. In Taimitsu, however, the ritual to this deity became understood as an 'accomplishment liturgy' (*soshitsujihō* 蘇悉地法), like that devoted to the Ichiji kinrin.⁶⁷ The relation between Ichiji kinrin and Butsugen was the focus of different scriptures, such as the *Yuqijing*, and this points at the textual interactions converging in the construction of the setting for the *shijōkō* ritual.⁶⁸ While the architecture of the Sōjiin might have been informed by one of the canonical sources of the *shijōkōhō*, it is clear that the specific shape that the complex took was grounded on multiple scriptural authorities.

The Difficulties of Ritual Competition: The Secret Liturgy of the Jimon Lineages

To roundup the picture of the intra-sectarian strategies at work in medieval Taimitsu it is useful to note that the Jimon lineages devised a new ritual as a counterpart to the *shijōkōhō*. This ritual took its name from a deity of Japanese creation, called Sonjōō 尊星王, considered to be a personification of the Polar Star. Its purpose, too, was the wellbeing and longevity of the emperor. The first mention of the *sonjōōhō* is found in the diary of the aristocrat Fujiwara no Kōzei, *Gonki* 権記, where the ritual is recorded as

67 MISAKI, *Taimitsu no kenkyū*, p. 536.

68 MISAKI, *Taimitsu no kenkyū*, p. 140. In *Yuqijing* Ichiji kinrin is a transformation of Butsumo butsugen. Other sources on Ichiji kinrin, such as *Yiziding lunwang jing* and Enchin's commentary cited in n. 59, explain the relation between these two deities.

sonjōkōhō 尊星光法. Given the similarity in name and function, and since its emergence coincided with the split between Sanmon and Jimon, it has been suggested that the rite was created by Jimon clerics to stand against that of the Sanmon lineages. Tsuda Tetsuei speculates that the most likely creator of the icons to use in the ritual was Yokei 余慶 (919-991), a powerful Jimon monk of the time.⁶⁹

Historical records however document that it was only in the eleventh century that *Sonjōō* started being identified as an ‘exclusive’ deity of the Jimon line. In 945 a *sonjōōhō* was performed by the Tendai *zasu* Gikai 義海, and in 1093 by a cleric of the Ogawa sub-branch called Ryōi 良意, suggesting that at that time the rite did not yet have sectarian connotations as the monopoly of Enchin’s lineage.⁷⁰ By the thirteenth century the ritual was acknowledged as the secret liturgy (*bihō* 秘法) of the Jimon lineage. Yet it was included in Shingon anthologies, such as *Kakuzenshō* and *Byakuhōkushō*, revealing that it was broadly known across lineages. In fact medieval sources discussed whether this liturgy could be called the secret ritual of a single lineage when its secret elements, oral transmissions, mantras and mudras were known in other schools as well. Jimon clerics clearly had a hard task claiming a monopoly on the ritual. *Byakuhōkushō* reports the arguments used by Keihan 慶範 (1155-1221), whom recent research has identified as the author of the *Hōhiki* 宝秘記, the main ritual compilation of the Jimon lineage. Keihan claimed that the *sonjōōhō* was transmitted by Enchin, who had learned it in China. It was not known to others outside the Jimon lineage, and therefore it was this lineage’s secret liturgy. Because it was secret, this ritual surpassed those of all other schools.⁷¹ The argument put forward to legitimize the ritual thus once again made recourse to the authority of the founder of the lineage. Keihan also addressed the question of the similarities between *Sonjōō* and *Myōken* 妙見, another embodiment of the Polar Star which was used by all Tantric lineages. While he did not deny the identity of these two deities,

69 TSUDA TETSUEI, “Jimon no Sonjōō o megutte,” *Museum* 581 (2002), pp. 17-37. See also his “The Images of Stars and Their Significance in Japanese Esoteric Buddhist Art,” in DOLCE ed., *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, p. 145-193.

70 *Tendai zasuki* 37, cited in Hayami, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 96-97.

71 *Byakuhōkushō*, T. zuzō 10, 1160a-b; MISAKI RYŌSHŪ, “Onjōji to sonjōōhō” in his *Mikkyō to shingi shisō*, Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1992, pp. 226-261. *Hōhiki* has recently been published (*Onjōji monjo*, Onjōji eds., 7 vols, Tokyo: Kodansha, vol. 7, 2004), but still awaits to be studied. In 44 volumes, it consists of three sets of oral transmissions and records of performances. It takes its name from the first thirty-three fascicles, compiled by Keihan of Daihōin 大宝院. See SHIMOZAKA MAMORU, “Onjōji denrai no *Hōhiki* ni tsuite,” in *Onjōji monjo* 7, 2004, pp. 444-451.

he maintained their distinctiveness, explaining that the deity that on earth appeared as Myōken and was placed at the four directions of the palace to protect it, in heaven manifested itself as Sonjōō. Hence even though ritualists of other lineages learnt rituals to Myōken, they would not have known the ritual for Sonjōō.⁷² Sanmon anthologies, on the other hand, seem to downplay the status of the *sonjōōhō* arguing that this was not a liturgy proper of the Tantric lineages (*shingonke* 真言家) because it rather followed the procedures of yin-yang masters (*onmyōke* 陰陽家)⁷³ –an argument that opens up a different problem regarding the composition of the major liturgies and the extent to which they incorporated cosmological elements related to heavenly bodies. In order to support their sectarian appropriation of the *sonjōōhō* ritual, Onjōji scholiasts also constructed specific relations between its main deity and ‘Taimitsu’ kami. The first was between Sonjōō and the tutelary kami of Onjōji, Shinra myōjin 新羅明神, who is said in some texts to have come to Japan to protect the performance of the secret ritual for Sonjōō.⁷⁴ Other sources suggested a close relation with the tutelary kami of Mt. Hiei, Sannō 山王, by presenting Sonjōō as the original ground (*bonji* 本地) of the main Sannō deity, Ōmiya 大宮.⁷⁵ In this way Jimon ritualists attempted to extend the territory of influence of ‘their’ deity beyond the Onjōji borders, and to claim a school-wide importance for the ritual. Once again we see that strategies of different order and drawing from different aspects of the ritual, genealogical, performative or mythological, are in place to create the meaning of the ritual in a reflexive and referential fashion.⁷⁶

The *sonjōōhō* played a very important role in the interaction between Onjōji and the court. Emperors Shirakawa and Toba, for instance, sponsored the construction of a dedicated hall (*sonjōōdō*) both at Onjōji and in Shirakawa to perform the ritual for the protection of the state. In the medieval period these rites were often officiated by princely abbots. According

72 *Byakuhōkushō*, T. *zuzō* 10, 1160b.

73 *Asabashō*, “Myōkenhō.” T. *zuzō* 9: 462b-c. On the *shugendō* use of this ritual see GAYNOR SEKIMORI, “Star Rituals and Nikkō Shugendō,” in LUCIA DOLCE ed., *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, pp. 217-250.

74 *Shinra myōjin mondōshō yōgunsō*, included in Suishin 水心’s *Jitokushū* 寺德集. Cited in MISAKI, “Onjōji to sonshōhō,” p. 229-30.

75 *Keiranshūyōshū*, T. 76: 527.

76 On the application of the concept of reflexivity to ritual see the entries “Reflexivity” and “Relationality” in *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, JENS KREINATH, JAN SNOEK and MICHAEL STAUSBERG eds., Leiden: Brill, 2008.

to the *Hōhiki* the ritual was also held to assure safe childbirth to aristocratic women of the Regent house.⁷⁷

Concluding remarks: Ritual Authority and the Ambiguities of Sectarian Identity

The analysis of ritual anthologies and major liturgies of medieval Taimitsu has demonstrated the various levels at which rituals served the sectarian legitimation of Taimitsu. It has also disclosed the difficulty and the ambiguity of a sectarian construct of ritual in a context where there is no single authority or uniform tradition to validate it. A number of issues have emerged from this exploration, which are crucial for understanding the specific dynamics of the development of Japanese Tantras.

The first point concerns the extent to which the claims of unicity, exclusivity and secrecy, by which a ritual could be defined as “sectarian,” were effective strategies for the establishment of an institutional monopoly on a given ritual, or mere rhetorical positions. As we have seen in this study, the claim of exclusive possession and mastery of a ritual was played on two simple assertions: the founder of other lineages did not transmit it, and other lineages did not know it. Once a certain liturgy was appropriated to represent a given lineage, it was also constructed as its secret liturgy. The inclusion in this rubric marked its significance for the lineage itself, in political and at times doctrinal terms, with a process similar to the one that characterised the concept of “secret teachings.” Some elements of the ritual in question might indeed have been secret, in the sense that they were transmitted orally from master to disciple, but they were not necessarily unique to one master. The fact that medieval anthologies repeatedly questioned whether a ritual could be seriously regarded as the secret liturgy of one lineage when it might have been performed in another, perhaps under a different name or for a patron of different status, suggests that medieval Tantric ritualists were aware of the ambiguity underlining the sectarianization of rituals and of their own rhetorical interventions. When Ninnaji dharma-prince Shukaku hōshinnō, a learned scholar and accomplished liturgist, attempted a comparison of the two major Shingon branches according to their ritual differences, he noted that the same ritual was treated differently according to lineages: for one it might have been a

77 MATSUMOTO IKUYO, “Chūgū gosan to mikkyō: *Hōhiki* sonshōōhō mishuhō o megutte,” in *Nihon ni okeru shūkyō tekisuto no shoisō to tōjihō*, ABE YASURŌ ed., Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University, 2008, pp. 81-88.

very important one, for the other just an ordinary ritual. When one lineage selected a ritual to become its most important ritual (*daihō*), that selection was affected by the existence of similar rituals performed in other lineages.⁷⁸

Thus a ritual classified as distinctive of a certain lineage of Tantric Buddhism was not necessarily so from its origin, but was constructed in these terms at a certain point of its history. Several such lineage-specific rituals seem to have originated from rituals that were shared by different lineages. As Hayami Takusu has suggested, the rite of the Seven Yakushi clearly developed from a single-platform ritual to Yakushi that existed both in Taimitsu and Shingon. Once it became a “major liturgy” in Taimitsu, it lost importance in Shingon. This justifies the claim of exclusivity that we find in anthologies such as *Asabashō*. A similar process affected other types of ritual. The *rokuji kanrinhō* 六字河臨法, another important Taimitsu ritual, originally was a popular Shingon liturgy known by the name of *rokuji hō* 六字法. Kōgei, who had learned it from his Shingon teacher, introduced it to Taimitsu circles in the eleventh century. It was given its particular setting along a river (hence the name of *kanrinhō* 河臨法) at the time of Chōen, probably adapting it from a similar ritual performed by yin-yang masters, and then it became an “exclusive” Taimitsu ritual.

The second issue that has come to surface in this study is the difficulty in assessing the impact that the sectarianization of rituals had on the political connections of the Tantric branches. In general, in the medieval period Sanmon and Jimon shared the support of the major political sponsors, the emperor and the court, while the bakufu patronage of esoteric Buddhism mostly privileged Jimon over Sanmon.⁷⁹ Yet the above-mentioned case of Chūkai confirms the performance of Sanmon rituals at the shogunal court. Undoubtedly the political elites of Japan acted as patrons of more than one school, lineage or cleric at the same time. None of the Tantric lineages had a monopoly on the protection of the ruler and the state, and competing rituals that were similar in content and function could be commissioned at the same time.⁸⁰ Political legitimation thus did not follow exclusivist lines. The sectarian distinctiveness of the rituals was not irrelevant, but no exclusive relation between patrons and ritualists was established on the basis of a single liturgy.

78 *Zuiki*, T. 78: 617a-618b.

79 SASAKI KAORU, *Chūsei bukkyō to Kamakura bakufu*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1997.

80 In 1106 for the illness of Emperor Horikawa the retired emperor Shirakawa ordered a ritual to the Big Dipper, a *sonjōōhō* and a *shijōkōhō*. Cf. HAYAMI, *Heian kizoku shakai to bukkyō*, p. 107.

Lastly, the material discussed above engenders a broader consideration on the foundation of ritual authority. The records of continuous changes in ritual performance challenge the often-invoked relation between ritual invariance and authority.⁸¹ The very existence of a large number of liturgical collections speaks for the need to document variants and alterations, small or not, and casts doubts on the assumption that invariance is a crucial constituent of a ritual. Rather than emphasizing that rituals are essentially identical to their prototype, medieval Tantric ritualists were preoccupied with underlying differences in each liturgical element, and even changes in the purpose for which a ritual had been devised. The content of the anthologies demonstrates that change was intrinsic to the process of ritual significance. Medieval practitioners were aware of and acknowledged these changes. Despite the existence of canonical models, and their deployment in rhetorical terms, in the medieval dynamics of performance, gestures, accessories and utterances did not need to be reproduced in a perfect repetition of the original. Yet this did not undermine the legitimacy of the ritual, nor its performative power or socio-institutional efficacy. The liturgical material suggests that invariance was not invoked as the indispensable ground on which authority could be acquired and maintained. On the contrary, the continuing resignification of a Tantric ritual, namely, the shifts in form, function and sponsors, enhanced its possibilities and assured its strategic performativity.

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Conversions of Tantric Buddhist Ritual

The Yoshida Shintō *Jūhachishintō* Ritual

RICHARD K. PAYNE

Précis

When we consider what constitutes tantra, at least in the Buddhist context, it is as a ritual technology that it is most clearly distinguishable from mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhism.¹ The spread of tantra is then perhaps most easily examined by focusing on ritual practices, rather than on the more frequent foci of attention – doctrines and deities. At the eastern edge of the premodern Buddhist world, Japanese religious culture offers an opportunity to observe the spread of tantric ritual. Shingon and Tendai, the Japanese forms of tantric Buddhism, provided a set of ritual exemplars for a newly created Shintō cult called Yuiitsu Shintō (唯一神道), which is also commonly referred to as Yoshida Shintō (吉田神道). While it has been widely recognized that the Yuiitsu rituals were based on those of tantric Buddhism, this paper seeks to explicate in more detail the dynamics by which such a ritual adaptation takes place.

These dynamics are analysed here in two general categories, content and structure. The contents of rituals may be either directly appropriated, adapted, or substituted. The structure refers to the organization of ritual activities, usually organized around a dominant metaphor. The general thesis underlying this exposition is that it is the structure that is the most conservative aspect of ritual change, the least likely or slowest to be altered in the process of adaptation into a new religious context.²

1 See ROBERT H. SHARF, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

2 The same issue of the stability of ritual structure even as ritual is adapted into another religious setting has been examined previously in RICHARD K. PAYNE, "The Tantric

Following a general introduction to the combinatory nature of medieval Japanese religious culture, the ideological and doctrinal developments that set the intellectual context for Yuiitsu Shintō will be discussed. While our interest here is in ritual developments, rather than doctrinal ones, the two exist in a dialectic process with each other – their apparent independence from one another being more the consequence of analysis than of actuality. With this background in place, a specific Yuiitsu ritual, known as the “*Jūhachishintō*” (“eighteen divine actions,” 十八神道) will be examined and compared to the Shingon “*Jūhachidō*” (“eighteen actions,” 十八道), its apparent exemplar.

Introduction

Buddhist tantra has spread throughout what may be called the Buddhist cosmopolis – if not so much as a specific singular lineal institution, then certainly as a set of practices and conceptions, deities and symbolisms, texts and material culture, and as constructions of the human condition, its problematization, and the resolutions offered to that problematic. In East Asia, tantric practices were appropriated by other religions. Rather than clearly defined, mutually exclusive religious traditions, the relation between Buddhist tantra and the religious traditions that it interacted with in its spread into East Asia (and presumably elsewhere) reveals something that may more accurately be described as permeable boundaries.

The Combinatory Character of Japanese Religion

Religions are far from being closed systems. The historical study of religions reveals an actively interactive process, one in which socio-historical changes create the conditions for new developments within any particular religious stream. These new developments may either take the form of integrating something into a religious system, or of rejecting it. As itself part of the same socio-historical process, religious change is not derivative of other socio-historical changes as a classic dialectical materialist analysis would have it. Rather, religious dimensions of society are in constant interaction

Transformation of *Pūjā*: Interpretation and Structure in the Study of Ritual,” in *India and Beyond: Aspects of Literature, Meaning, Ritual and Thought, Essays in Honour of Frits Staal*, ed., DICK VAN DER MEIJ (Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies, 1998).

with other aspects of society – including other religious elements – creating a dialectic interplay between various societal elements.

Such phenomena are well-documented from all societies and throughout history. One label that has been used for such phenomena is “syncretism.”³ This latter term, however, carries implications in contemporary English that have given it a pejorative character – the understanding of syncretism as a forced or artificial reconciliation of disparate or even contradictory beliefs and practices. As such, syncretism is set as a semi-otic opposite to a notion of a pure, unsullied tradition, one carrying the authority of the founder of the tradition. As the marked term, syncretism is of necessity understood as that which diverges from the normative. In other words, in such a conception of religion, there are pure traditions and then there are syncretisms between the pure traditions, and such syncretic creations are of necessity lesser, derivative, impure, heretical. Particularly in a tradition in which adherence to proper doctrine is considered salvific, syncretism is a pejorative category – syncretic doctrines are of necessity false, and will not bring you to salvation.

Rather than attempting to resuscitate the category of syncretism, we will adopt here Allan Grapard’s term, combinatory – though it is not clear to me whether he offered that term specifically as an alternative to syncretic. All religions are by nature combinatory. So when we speak of the combinatory character of Japanese religion, this is not to indicate that being combinative is something unique to Japan, but rather simply a way of talking about the combinatory character of Japanese religion as one instance of a characteristic of interaction found in all religious traditions.

Perhaps the best-known aspect of Japanese combinatory religion is the concept of *honji-suijaku* (“original ground, manifest trace” 本地垂迹). This is the notion that the buddhas are the primal source, or original ground (*honji*), and the kami are their traces manifest (*suijaku*) in this world. This concept is expressed for example in the *Shasekishu* by the image that the light of the buddhas is too bright for living beings in this world of struggle and endurance (*sahā, shaba* 娑婆), and that the buddhas voluntarily dimmed their light, and appear as kami – “softening the light and mingling with dust” (*wakō dōjin* 和光同塵).⁴ Mark Teeuwen locates “one of the earliest explicit statements of the doctrine of *honji suijaku*” in

3 For example, NELLY NAUMANN, *Die einheimische Religion Japans, Teil 2: Synkretistische Lehren und religiöse Entwicklungen von der Kamakura- bis zum Beginn der Edo-Zeit* (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1994).

4 ROBERT F. MORRELL, *Sand and Pebbles (Shasekishu): The Tales of Muju Ichien, A Voice for Pluralism in Kamakura Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

a text by Ōe no Masafusa (1041–1111) that dates from 1070, where it appears to serve as a key to an ongoing process of negotiating the relation between the kami and buddhas. It was at this time that the idea of original ground, manifest trace came to be applied to specific kami.⁵

It is hard to overestimate the importance of this doctrine for the religious history of Japan. Together with the rhetorics of esoteric–exoteric and secret transmission discussed below, it provided the rationale for most of the religious developments of medieval Japan – including the integration of kami and their sacred sites, such as Miwa, into a Buddhist framework.⁶ It is worth noting that contrary to the received view of mainstream Buddhism (the six Nara sects, Tendai and Shingon) in medieval Japan as decadent and otiose, these initiatives were often undertaken by mainstream monks who at the same time were committed to re-invigorating Buddhism through a renewed emphasis on traditional monastic precepts understood to date from the time of Śākyamuni Buddha, that is the vinaya, which “became known as the precepts restoration movement (*kairitsu fukkō* 戒律復興).”⁷

An important part of the combinatory dynamics informing Yoshida Shintō is known as the “Shintō of the Two Shrines” (*ryōbu shintō* 兩部神道), which Andreeva explains as “a multiplicity of theories and practices that envisioned the Great Ise shrines as embodiment of the Two-Realm *Maṇḍala* of Shingon.”⁸ These are the “womb world *maṇḍala*” (*garbhadhātu maṇḍala*, *taizōkai mandara* 胎藏界曼荼羅) and the “vajra world *maṇḍala*” (*vajradhātu maṇḍala*, *kongōkai mandara* 金剛界曼荼羅), which provide the symbolic structuring of Shingon praxis.⁹

Teeuwen and van der Veere identify *ryōbu shintō* as a “new stage in the development of the amalgamation of kami cults and Buddhism in

5 MARK TEEUWEN, “From *Jindō* to Shinto,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29/3–4 (2002): 233–63, 246. The *Nakatomi harae kunge*, which dates from the twelfth century, identifies the kami as providing the only contact between ourselves in this world of struggle and the buddhas. The kami are “the only form in which communication with the buddhas is possible in Japan. Because they are ‘non-dual,’ the buddhas do not appear in our dualistic world, and the kami are our only channel to the salvation embodied by the buddhas” (*ibid.*, 247).

6 ANNA ANDREEVA, “Saidaiji Monks and Esoteric Kami Worship at Ise and Miwa,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33/2 (2006), 349–77.

7 ANDREEVA, “Saidaiji,” 354.

8 ANDREEVA, “Saidaiji,” 366.

9 Each of these two *maṇḍalas* also draws on specific texts foundational for the Shingon tradition, the *taizōkai* being associated with the Mahāvairocana sūtra, and the *kongōkai* with the Vajraśekhara sūtra.

Japan.”¹⁰ The earliest record of the ideology of *ryōbu shintō* is found in the *Nakatomi Harae Kunge*, which dates from around the middle of the twelfth century – predating the coining of the term *ryōbu shintō* itself by Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511) in his *Yuiitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū*.¹¹ The practitioners of the *ryōbu shintō* form of Shingon–Shintō combinatory system formed a network including both Buddhist monks of the Saidaiji lineage associated with Eison (Eizon) as well as Shugendō practitioners. This network served to spread the ideas regarding the intimate identity of buddhas and kami across a wide range of Japanese religious culture.¹²

In addition to the ideology of *honji-suijaku* and its particularized expression in *ryōbu shintō*, a third combinatory dynamic was provided by theorizing about the unity of Shintō, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This was known as *sankyō ichi* (三教一), and derived from Chinese conceptions of the unity of Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.¹³

Yoshida, or Yuiitsu Shintō

This historically important branch of Shintō is largely the creation of Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511). Kanetomo was a member of the Urabe clan, who from the earliest history of Japan had been court diviners and therefore deeply involved in *kami no michi* (神の道) or *jindō* (神道).¹⁴ He worked to systematize Shintō, drawing on the Five Classics of Shintō, works claiming to be ancient, but which appear to date from the end of the

10 MARK J. TEEUWEN and HENDRIK VAN DER VEERE, *Nakatomi Harae Kunge: Purification and Enlightenment in Late-Heian Japan* (Buddhismus-Studien, 1. Munich: iudicum verlag, 1998), 2.

11 MARK TEEUWEN and HENDRIK VAN DER VEERE, “The Purification Formula of the Nakatomi,” in *Religions of Japan in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), ed., GEORGE J. TANABE, JR., 212.

12 Through these networks, an important Shingon–Shintō combinatory practice also developed at Miwa.

13 ENDŌ JUN, “The Early Modern Period: In search of a Shinto identity” in *Shinto: A Short History*, ed., INOUE NOBUTAKA, trans. MARK TEEUWEN and JOHN BREEN (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 110.

14 For a summary history of the Urabe clan origins, see ALLAN G. GRAPARD, “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 47.1 (1992): 27–58. The use of the term *kami no michi* (神の道) rather than *shintō* (神道) here is intended to point suggestively toward the complexity of the history of non-Buddhist Japanese religions. It is not intended as a definitive categorization, as that discussion falls outside of our concerns here. For one of the best discussions of the different meanings of this terminology in relation to Japanese religious history, see TEEUWEN, “From *Jindō* to Shinto: A Concept Takes Shape.”

thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century.¹⁵ As part of his promotion of his own version of Shintō, he reversed the traditional understanding of *honji suijaku* from one in which the kami are the trace manifestations of the buddhas, to one in which it is the buddhas who derive from the kami. Allan Grapard explains that Kanetomo's *Yuiitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū* ("Essentials of Terminology and Doctrine of Yuiitsu Shintō", 唯一神道名法要集), his main "theological" work, has as "a basic contention" the claim

that both Buddhism and Confucianism are second-hand versions of 'Shinto'. The main result of this secretly transmitted contention was that the various kami of the pantheon were no longer seen as manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas, but, rather, as their origins. This contention suddenly deflated all claims for legitimacy on the part of Buddhism as an explanation of the world.¹⁶

This reversal of the relation between buddhas and kami would seem to follow along an intellectual trajectory established earlier. Dating from around the 1170s, the *Mitsunokashiwa denki*, an *engi* ("origin tale") text for a shrine associated with Ise, appears to be the first to present "a radically different perception of the kami, which turns *honji suijaku* order on its head."¹⁷ This reversal would seem then to gradually develop momentum over the next two centuries, through Jihen, and reaching not only an explicit formulation, but comes to play a central role in the ideology of Yuiitsu Shintō.

This way of conceptualizing the relation between kami and buddhas is also found in the writings of Jihen, brother (perhaps adoptive) of Urabe Kenkō (1283?–1350?, author of the well-known *Tsurezuregusa*). Jihen studied Tendai thought on Hieizan, where he would have become familiar with the ideas of a universal buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*), which is key to the single-vehicle (*ekayāna*) interpretation of the Lotus Sutra found in Tendai. In his own turn, however, Jihen promoted an immanentist understanding that gave primacy to the kami, the "notion that all nature is endowed with a divine character, which he called kami-nature (*shinsei* 神性)."¹⁸ In this understanding kami-nature displaces buddha-nature not only ontologically, but also gnostically. With this background, Kanetomo's interpretation, inverting *honji suijaku*, was carried further by Kanetomo's

15 RYUDAKU TSUNODA, WM. THEODORE DE BARY, DONALD KEENE, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1958), I.265.

Yuiitsu is rendered here as "primal," in comparison with Scheid's more literal "one and only" (*eine und einzige*).

16 GRAPARD, "The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo," 45.

17 TEEUWEN, "From *Jindō* to Shinto," 249.

18 GRAPARD, "The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo," 36.

descendants and made use of in the formation of the cult around Tokugawa Ieyasu after his death.¹⁹

Ryōbu shintō forms one of the three categories of Shintō identified by Yoshida Kanetomo at the opening of his *Yuiitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū*. In Kanetomo's own systematization the three lineages of Shintō are "Co-dependent origination of essence and hypostasis" (*Honjaku-engi Shintō* 本迹縁起神道), "Two-fold *maṇḍala* combinations" (*Ryōbu-shūgō Shintō* 兩部習合神道), and "Original and Fundamental" (*Gempon-sōgen Shintō* 元本宗源神道).²⁰ While Kanetomo identifies the last with his own Yuiitsu Shintō, the drawing of such a distinction here is, no doubt, more of a strategic rhetorical claim than an accurate historical description. That said, Kanetomo's explanation of *ryōbu shintō* is informative for the way in which he seeks to privilege Shintō over Buddhism.²¹

The *Yuiitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū* is written as a set of questions and answers. When the question is asked, who established the associations between the two *maṇḍalas* and the two Ise shrines, the reply is:

The four Great Masters Dengyō 伝教 [Saichō 最澄], Kōbō 弘法 [Kūkai 空海], Jikaku 慈覚 [Ennin 円仁], and Chishō 智証 [Enchin 円珍]. What is the reason for this? Each of these masters has authored Shinto scriptures because their complete understanding of the arcane meanings of Shingon enabled them to awaken to the secret meaning of Shinto. They were able to realize that the term Dai-Nippon-koku [Great Japan] was an adequate appellation for the True Residence of Mahāvairocana [Dainichi 大日], and were thereby inspired to compose secret interpretations based on mythology. Every lineage of Esoteric and Exoteric Buddhism has thereafter entered [the realm of] Shinto, [and this led to the composition of] well over five hundred scriptures. That is why that form of Shinto is also called 'Shinto of the Great Masters'.²²

Thus, Kanetomo explains Buddhist insight as the gnoseological prelude to comprehension of the significance of Shintō.

19 KLAUS ANTONI, "Aspekte des shintō-konfuzianischen Synkretismus der frühen Edo-Zeit," in *Rituale und ihre Urheber: Invented Traditions in der japanischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. KLAUS ANTONI (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1997), 180.

20 "Yuiitsu Shintō Myōbō Yōshū," trans., ALLAN GRAPARD, *Monumenta Nipponica*, 47.2 (1992): 137. See also NAUMANN, *Die einheimische Religion Japans*, II: 60-62.

21 At the same time, *ryōbu shintō* was a key element in the development of Kanetomo's ideas, as indicated by TEEUWEN (citing GRAPARD), "The centrality of Ryōbu theory to his [Kanetomo] thought is demonstrated by his statement that the 'Altar of the Origin (Sō)' and the 'Altar of the Source (Gen)' at the Yoshida shrine correspond to the *Kongōkai Mandara* and the *Taizōkai Mandara* respectively, and are called the 'Two *Mandara* of Yuiitsu Shintō'." TEEUWEN, *Watarai Shintō*, 178-9.

22 GRAPARD, tr., "Yuiitsu", 138.

Yuiitsu Shintō became the norm for Shintō, being recognized as such by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1665.²³ By its creation of a system of ranks, which in turn fostered a network of relations between shrines, it succeeded in replacing the Imperial authority with its own.²⁴ During Edo, it became the official version of Shintō and began the creation of yet another hybrid, Confucian Shintō (*juka shintō*).²⁵ While other forms had been more influenced by esoteric Buddhism and Daoism, Confucian (or neo-Confucian) Shintō was “the attempt to reconcile the testimony of the native mythos with Chinese Confucianism.”²⁶

Creation of Yuiitsu Shintō Ritual

Grapard points to two key factors that were essential in order for Kanetomo to create a ritual system for his Yuiitsu (“One and Only”) Shintō, and to present this as originating from the ancient past. The first of these is the practices of secrecy found in medieval Japan. Recently, this culture of secrecy has been given much attention, not only in Japan, but elsewhere as well. There are two functions which are generally recognized to be at work in practices of secrecy. As expressed by Ronald Davidson, “a secret or putative secret shared exclusively among a small body of individuals is a powerful psychological tool for group integration and an equally powerful method of proselytization.”²⁷ In the case of secrecy in Buddhist tantra, what was controlled as secrets was not doctrines, but “the specifics of ritual and meditative procedures.”²⁸ Grapard explains that Kanetomo took advantage of “the secrecy of transmission, which allowed one to fabricate

23 JEAN HERBERT, *Dieux et Sectes Populaires du Japon* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1967), 143.

24 HIROMI MAEDA, “Imperial Authority and Local Shrines: The Yoshida House and the Creation of a Country-Wide Shinto Institution in Early Modern Japan.” Ph.D. dissertation. Harvard University, 2003.

25 KLAUS ANTONI, “Aspekte des shintō-konfuzianischen Synkretismus der frühen Edo-Zeit,” in *Rituale und ihre Urheber: Invented Traditions in der japanischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed., KLAUS ANTONI (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1997).

26 KLAUS KRACHT, *Studien zur Geschichte des Denkens im Japan des 17. bis 19. Jahrhunderts: Chu-Hsi-konfuzianische Geist-Diskurse* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986), 117 [quotation trans. RKP].

27 RONALD M. DAVIDSON, “The Problem of Secrecy in Indian Tantric Buddhism,” in BERNHARD SCHEID and MARK TEEUWEN, *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 63.

28 MARK TEEUWEN, “Introduction: Japan’s Culture of Secrecy from a Comparative Perspective,” in SCHEID and TEEUWEN, *Culture of Secrecy*, 20.

doctrines and pass them on as ageless teachings duly transmitted from master to disciple.”²⁹ In other words, because the recipient accepted the idea that it was in fact possible for these teachings and practices to have been kept secret from general knowledge, their authority as deriving from the ancient past was affirmed. Further, that these teachings and practices were otherwise unknown only served to confirm their authenticity as secret teachings. This authority was further affirmed by the second factor identified by Grapard, the ready-at-hand existence of the rhetoric of exoteric and esoteric as two parts forming a larger whole. Kanetomo asserted that the much more public *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* were the exoteric part of his equally ancient and continuously transmitted Shintō, while the esoteric part was the ritual practices of Yuiitsu Shintō. The societally recognized antiquity of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* (which date from 680 and 797 respectively, but which claim to recount events from a millenium earlier) would have provided a kind of reflective antiquity onto the teachings and practices Kanetomo was claiming were their esoteric complements. As Grapard explains,

The esoteric part, which Kanetomo considered to be the marrow of ‘Shinto’, had been secretly transmitted within his lineage since the time when the ancestral and tutelary kami of the Fujiwara house descended to pacify the world. Kanetomo suggested that the Lord of the Polar Star had transmitted that ‘Shinto’ to Ame-no-koyane-no-mikoto, who in turn, transmitted it to the Urabeline age.³⁰

Thus, taken together, the culture of secrecy and the rhetoric of exoteric–esoteric enabled Kanetomo to claim that the rituals he created “had been transmitted without change from the age of the gods.”³¹ In Grapard’s analysis, however, these

were in fact composed partly of Shingon rituals, partly of Taoist practices, and partly of Confucian rituals. Kanetomo subsequently revealed to the world ‘Shinto’ *mudrā* (Shingon ritual hand-formations), ‘Shinto’ *dharani* (Shingon potent formulas), ‘Shinto’ mysteries of the body, speech, and mind, ‘Shinto’ *goma* 護摩 rituals, ‘Shinto’ *maṇḍalas*, and ‘Shinto’ altars on which essentially Shingon types of rituals were performed and to which Kanetomo added Taoist ritual forms and Confucian interpretations.³²

29 GRAPARD, “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo,” 45.

30 GRAPARD, “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo,” 45.

31 GRAPARD, “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo,” 48.

32 GRAPARD, “The Shinto of Yoshida Kanetomo,” 48.

The Yuiitsu Shintō ritual system basically comprised three rituals. As Bernhard Scheid explains, “The most important ceremonies or ritual cycles of the Yoshida Shintō were known in the Yoshida sources themselves as “sandan gyōji” (rituals of the three altars).”³³ The three rituals are:

- [Sangen] jūhachi shintō (Sequence of the eighteen shintō [of the three primordials])
- Sōgen gyōbō (ceremony of the primordials)
- Yuishintō daigoma (great fire ritual of the Yuishintō)

The strategic adaptation of esoteric Buddhist rituals into a Shintō context had already taken place in the development of Watarai Shintō, that associated with the Outer Shrine at Ise. According to Teeuwen, “Kanetomo’s strategy was exactly the same as that of the Outer Shrine two centuries earlier: the incorporation of new esoteric rituals and obscure Taoist terms.”³⁴

Research on Yoshida Shintō benefits from the collection of Yoshida manuscripts gathered by the heir to the founder of Tenrikyō. This vast collection now resides in the Rare Book Collection of the Tenrikyō library.³⁵ The collection includes a wealth of materials, including didactic works, and also ritual manuals. There are numerous copies of manuals for each kind of Yoshida ritual, including the *Jūhachishintō*. The manual referred to in the following analytic study is one of many.³⁶ On-site examination of several such manuals evidenced that they are all almost entirely the same in content.

33 BERNHARD SCHEID, *Der Eine und Einzige Weg der Götter: Yoshida Kanemoto und die Erfindung des Shinto* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), 171. See also NAUMANN, *Die einheimische Religion Japans*, II: 70–71.

34 MARK TEEUWEN, *Watarai Shintō: An Intellectual History of the Outer Shrine in Ise* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1996), 178.

35 Through the good offices of my former student Ikuo Higashibaba, I was privileged to have access to the Rare Book Collection for a period of two weeks during one summer in the mid-1990s. I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Higashibaba for his assistance, as well as thanking the library staff who worked not only to allow me to view multiple copies of ritual manuals, but also made photocopies available to me of selected works, including the manual discussed here.

36 The particular manual referred to here is catalog number 古 (ko) 42. 117, and is labeled with the number 653617.

Studying the Jūhachishintō: Theoretical Orientation

The examination of a ritual text such as the Yoshida *Jūhachishintō* offers a number of divergent directions of inquiry, such as, for example, historical, social, political, and doctrinal. The specific inquiry that I am interested in pursuing is one framed by ritual studies and cognitive science. More specifically, it is the process by which rituals are adapted and transformed as they move from one domain of praxis³⁷ to another.

For such a purpose it is necessary to examine individual rituals in very close detail. The inverted tree diagram pioneered in ritual studies by Frits Staal allows just such detailed structural, or syntactic, analyses. The hypothesis being explored here is that in the process of adapting a ritual from one religious tradition into another the most conservative element is ritual structure, a principle that may be called the “conservation of structure.” Other ritual elements, deities invoked or evoked, declarations, *mantras*, *mudrās*, and so on are the kinds of elements that can easily be replaced – removing the deities from one tradition’s version of a ritual and replacing them with the deities from another tradition is a relatively simple kind of transformation to make. Such replacements are at the same time, however, relatively superficial – literally, on the surface; deeper, structural aspects of rituals provide the framework for the exchange of such easily replaced elements.

It is this kind of difference between stable structures and replaceable elements that is at the basis of Staal’s use of the terminology of ritual syntax to refer to the stable structure. Thus, just as one can see the same syntactic structure in two sentences:

Jack goes up the hill.
Jill goes to the beach.

By applying the notion of syntax – which reveals the underlying structural similarities between sentences – to rituals, it is possible to discern the structural similarities underlying seemingly different rituals.

37 I am using the term “praxis” here to identify the close, dialectic relation between doctrine and practice, two categories which are often treated as separate from one another in contemporary Western religious studies. The dominant tendency, as identified by CATHERINE BELL, is to privilege doctrine as primary and determinative of practice, which is then seen as secondary, derivative and of less consequence. See CATHERINE BELL, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Syntactic analysis and the technique of inverted tree diagrams are borrowed from linguistics as a means of systematically representing, or of formalizing, the relations between ritual actions. This kind of analysis is essential to moving the study of ritual past the descriptive and interpretive, just as a common, systematic technique for the representation of sentences was essential to the development of linguistics a century ago.³⁸

One of the benefits of the inverted tree diagram that will become evident in the following is that it provides a way of seeing which ritual actions form “phrases,” that is a set of related actions constituting a separate unit of ritual activity.³⁹ Such a cluster may then be represented visually as distinct from the rest of the ritual actions. This is an analytic advantage over a strictly empirical or observational approach, from the perspective of which it is often difficult to discern this aspect of ritual performance, each ritual action simply taking place one after the other (see diagram 4: “Surface Structure” of the *Jūhachishintō*). A second benefit of employing this technique to the analysis of ritual is that it allows for noting the repetition of actions. In this case, for example, there are some of the same actions at the end of the ritual as at the beginning. This symmetry is also marked by an abbreviation of the actions, a combination found in Shingon rituals more generally.

Syntactic Analysis of the “Ritual Performance of the Eighteen Divine Actions of the Three Primordials”

The *Jūhachishintō* can be analysed into four parts: purification, construction, encounter, and dissociation. These can be represented as follows, using R to represent the ritual as a whole, just as S is used in linguistics for the sentence.

38 It is important to note that, despite the fact that many scholars in the humanities have only been exposed to inverted tree diagrams in the context of Chomskyan linguistics, the use of such diagrams is simply a tool that allows for formalization of the ritual activities, and does not entail any theoretical commitment to a Chomskyan theory of generative grammar.

39 Charles Orzech uses the imagery of “boilerplate” to describe these kinds of relatively fixed sets of ritual actions. CHARLES ORZECH, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom: The Scripture for Humane Kings in the Creation of Chinese Buddhism* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 153.

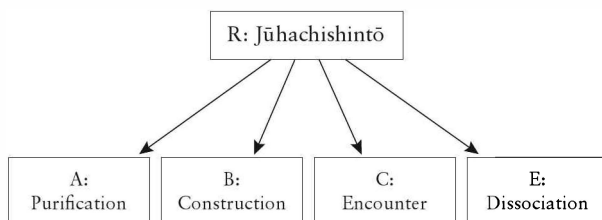


Diagram 1: Basic Structure of the *Jūhachishintō*

The names given to these four steps in the ritual process reflect the nature of the actions involved in each of the stages. Thus, purification is a preliminary stage in which the practitioner and the site of the ritual are purified as preparation for the ritual performance. Construction involves the ritualized (re-)creation of the site upon which the ritual will take place. Encounter occurs when the deities are evoked in the ritual enclosure – that is, made present, or called into being (evoked), rather than addressed or their powers called upon (invoked). Dissociation replicates the previous stages, undoing them, usually in reverse order.

The analysis of the ritual structure is already evidently similar to that of Shingon rituals, which generally have the following fundamental organization:

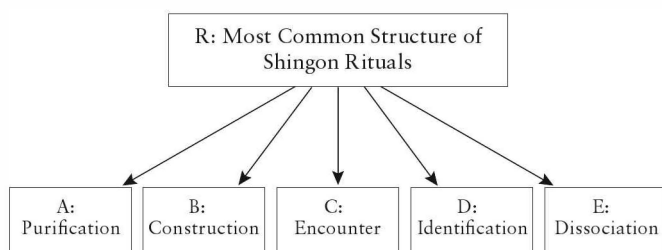


Diagram 2: Five Elements Commonly Found in Shingon Rituals

Both the Yoshida *Jūhachishintō* and the Shingon *Jūhachidō*, however, lack the fourth set of ritual acts, identification, found in many of the more complex Shingon rituals, such as the *goma*. Identification is a key element in tantric Buddhist practice, in which the practitioner visualizes him/herself as identical with the deity evoked in the ritual. Identification (D) is seen in the Shingon and other tantric Buddhist traditions as the means by which the practitioner realizes, that is, both comes to understand and makes real,

their already awakened nature. As important as it is, it is not found in all tantric traditions, nor in all tantric Buddhist rituals.⁴⁰ It does not, therefore, serve as the defining characteristic of tantra, as had been previously proposed by some theorists, such as the late Michel Strickmann.⁴¹ As the first of a series of rituals used for training Shingon priests, the absence of identification in the *Jūhachidō* would seem to indicate the preliminary nature of the ritual in a progressive development. Whether the same is true for the *Jūhachishintō* would need to be determined by further research. It may also be that the Yoshida Shintō tradition's conceptions of the kami is such that identification is not an option. Alternatively, it may be that a Yoshida Shintō equivalent of identification is part of the broader tradition and assumed for the ritual practitioner, rather than being explicitly stated in the *Jūhachishintō* as such. This appears to be the case for the dualist traditions, such as some versions of Śaiva Siddhānta.⁴² For example, the Śaiva Siddhānta *homa* ritual as recorded in the *Somaśambhupaddhati*

40 See for example, RICHARD K. PAYNE, "Shingon Services for the Dead," in GEORGE TANABE, ed., *Religions of Japan in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 159–65, and idem, "The Shingon *Ajikan*: Diagrammatic Analysis of Ritual Syntax," *Religion*, 1999, 215–29.

41 STRICKMANN suggests rituals may be identified as tantric if we accept "a minimal definition of this imprecise but useful term that they center upon the visualization by the officiant of the deity to whom the rite is addressed, with whom the officiant then proceeds to identify himself or otherwise unite" ("Homa in East Asia," in FRITS STAAL, ed., *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* 2 vols. (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), II.418. Also, "l'identification ou union de l'officiant avec la divinité représente la caractéristique la plus important du rite tantrique." Idem, *Mantras et mandarins: Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), 84–5. See also under discussion of rituals of evocation, STEPHAN BEYER, *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1973), 66.

42 DOMINIC GOODALL notes that "Śaiva Siddhānta is a label that is commonly applied both to a pan-Indian dualist Śaiva school, whose scriptures and exegetical treatises are exclusively in Sanskrit, and to a later South Indian school, much of whose authoritative literature is in Tamil. The South Indian School developed from the pan-Indian one and differs from it in that it compromised the tenets of early scriptures of the Śaiva Siddhānta by succumbing increasingly to conformity with Vedism (in particular to the influence of the orthodox school of Advaita Vedānta), and by laying increasing stress on the importance of devotion to God." DOMINIC GOODALL, "Introduction" in *Hindu Scriptures*, ed. DOMINIC GOODALL (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), xxxii. Elsewhere Goodall notes that the characterization of Śaiva Siddhānta as dualist also requires further nuancing, since a variety of "radically different" doctrinal positions can be found in the literature of the school. DOMINIC GOODALL, "Preface," in *The Parākhyatantra: A Scripture of the Śaiva Siddhānta, A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation*. DOMINIC GOODALL, ed. and trans. (Collection Indologie, 98. Pondichéry: Institute Français de Pondichéry and École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004), xxii.

does not employ ritual identification (*ahaṃkāra*, *nyū ga ga nyū*, 入我我入) as such.⁴³ Although the ritual action of identification does not appear *per se*, the requisites for worship demand a relation of identity between the practitioner and Śiva, as evidenced in the expression “One who is not Śiva may not worship Śiva.”⁴⁴

The analysis of the ritual that follows draws upon the ritual manual mentioned above, the “Manual of the Eighteen Divine Actions of the Three Primordials” (*Sangen jūhachishintō shidai*, 三元十八伸道次第), a version found in the *Shintō taikai*⁴⁵, the discussion by Katsuaki Demura⁴⁶, and Bernhard Scheid’s German translation of the Yoshida *Jūhachishintō*.⁴⁷ As indicated above, regarding the versions sampled in the Tenrikyo Library, all of these are basically the same, such that the syntactic analysis given here reflects all of the versions consulted.

43 RICHARD K. PAYNE, “Shingon and Śaiva Siddhānta Homa Rituals: Methodological Considerations of Comparative Ritual Studies” paper presented at the Society for Tantric Studies conference, Flagstaff, Arizona, 1997.

44 DOMINIC GOODALL, “Preface,” in *The Pañcāvaraṇastava of Aghoraśivācārya: A twelfth-century South Indian prescription for the visualization of Sadāśiva and his retinue*, Dominic Goodall, et al. (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry and École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2005), 13. Goodall considers identification “to be invariable in tantric worship, regardless of what doctrinal position is adopted concerning the relationship of the deity and the soul” (ibid.). My thanks to the anonymous reviewer of this collection for pointing out this important nuance.

45 *Shintō taikai, ronsetsu-ben* 7/9: “Urabe shintō, ge.” SAKAMOTO TARO, et al., eds. (28 vols. Tokyo: Shintō taikai hensankai, 1991).

46 DEMURA KATSUAKI, *Yoshida shintō no kisoteki kenkyū* (English title given as “The Basic Study of Yoshida Shintō.” Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 1997).

47 SCHEID, *Eine und Einzige*, 274–93.

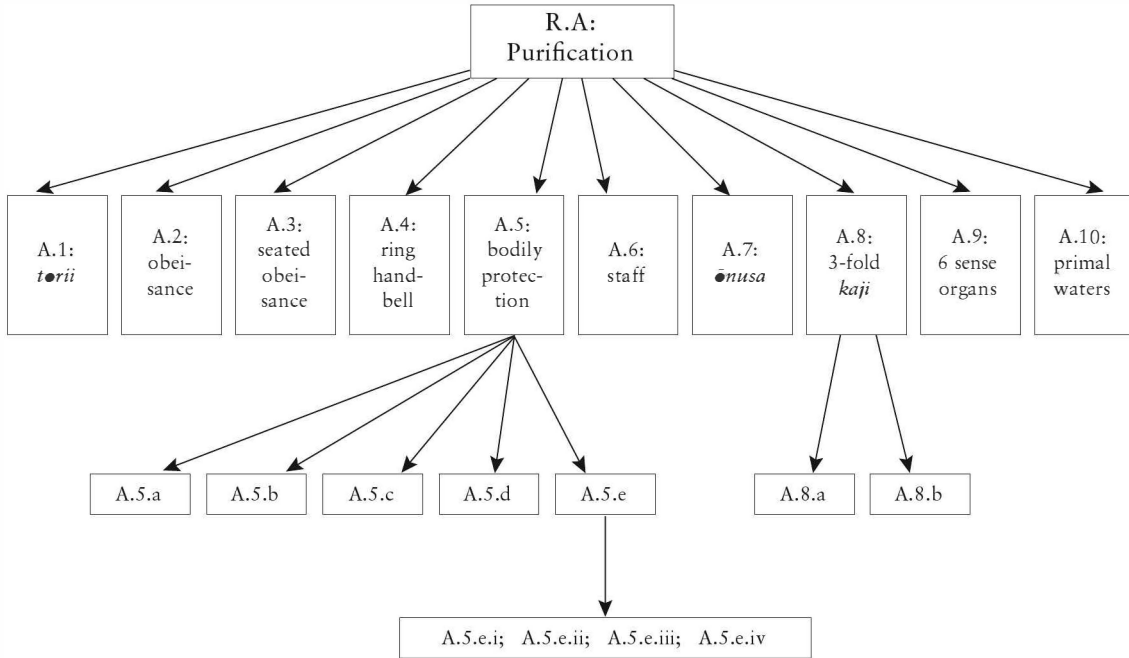


Diagram 3: Purification

A. Purification

With this first part of the *Jūhachishintō*, the multilayered structure of the ritual becomes clear. Rather than simply a straight line of one ritual activity after another, the syntactic analysis reveals that there are clusters of actions forming larger (higher level) units. Indeed, the ritual sequence here reveals three layers of activity. The “reading” of the ritual as a performance, that is, its surface structure as a sequence of observable actions, would go from A.1 to A.4, then drop down in the diagram to A.5.a to A.5.d, then drop again to A.5.e.i through A.5.e.iv, and then rise back up to A.6. This surface structure is shown in diagram 4 (next page):

A.1) First, the “ritual of the *torii*” (*torii sabō*).

First, position oneself directly under the *torii* and meditate.

mudrā of the heavenly curtains

mantra:

“We now step through the *torii*, into the realm where the gods are, and proceed with these feeble and simple bodies into the palace of the sun and moon.”

A.2) Next, process to the seat, make an obeisance (yū, 揖) [bow with one’s hands on one’s breast].

A.3) Next, sit down, and obeisance.

A.4) Next, three *uchinarashi* – ring handbell three times.

A.5) Next, the “holy rite of bodily protection.”

A.5.a) first step: *mudrā* of the foundation (*kon pon*),

[*mantra*:]

protective deity of the body

sangen kaji

divine king of the five elements 五大

all protective kami

just as shadows follow forms

just as actions follow intentions

A.5.b) second step: *mudrā* of the eight *fū* 八府 {eight storehouses⁴⁸};

[*mantra*:]

protective deity of the hair

sangen kaji

eighty-four thousand

48 RKP: Eight is a key number for Yuiitsu Shintō, recurring throughout its symbolism and drawn from the Yijing system of eight trigrams. SCHEID, *Der Eine und Einzige Weg der Götter*, 165.

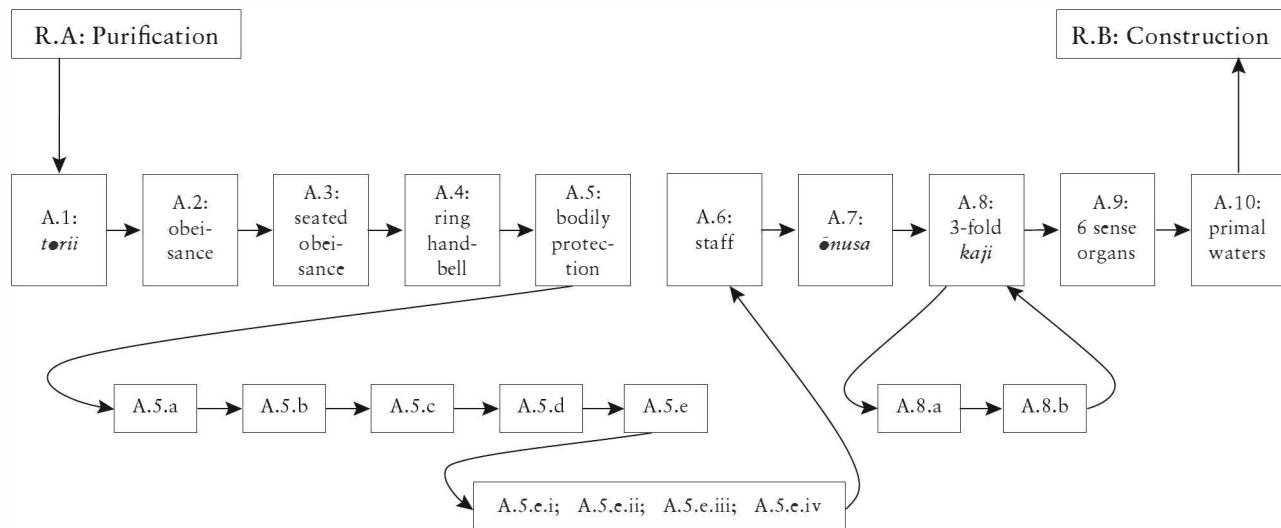


Diagram 4: “Surface Structure” of the Jūhachishintō

- {strands of} hair, and nine apertures⁴⁹
 free from all penetrating *qi*
 extend care for the root of life
- A.5.c) third step: *mudrā* of the sun,
 [*mantra*:]
 protective deity of the soul–spirit
sangen kaji
 eternal life
 motion and stillness (*dōsei* 動靜)
 the five organs at peace
 harmoniously before and after (*shintai* 進退)
- A.5.d) fourth step: *mudrā* of the moon,
 [*mantra*:]
 protective deity of the heart
sangen kaji
 clear one’s breast of haze
 the moon of the heart⁵⁰ shines clearly
 the great vow is ripened
 the wondrous fruit climbs to the sky.
- A.5.e) fifth step:
 A.5.e.i) *mudrā* of the nine celestial lights⁵¹
 [*mantra*:]
 protective deity of the passing year
sangen kaji
 the constellations, planets
 nurture us, protect us
 take away our needs and sorrows
- A.5.e.ii) *mudrā* of the ten jewels;

49 RKP: these would be the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, genitals, and anus.

50 RKP: the “heart-moon” also appears in Shingon conceptions of the body.

51 RKP: SCHEID has “nine weekdays” for “九曜.” However, the reference is probably to the northern dipper (*beidou*, 北斗), which in Daoist legend originally had nine stars, but two of them became invisible, or “that only seven of them were visible to the ordinary people, while the other two could only be seen under very special circumstances.” HO PENG YOKE, *Li, Qi and Shu: An Introduction to Science and Civilization in China* (1985. Reprint. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2000), 132–33; and idem., *Chinese Mathematical Astrology: Reaching out to the Stars* (London and New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), 23–24. My thanks to James Robson for these references. SCHEID notes (275, n. 3) that “In the manual for the *Jūhachi shintō goma*–ceremony from Fukushima here we find a deviation. It prescribes a *mudrā* of the seven stars [the Great Wagon].” As indicated, it is my interpretation that both are references to the northern dipper, but under the influence of different astronomic conceptions of the constellation.

- [*mantra*:] *mujō reihō shintō kaji*
 A.5.e.iii) *mudrā* of the eight graspings 八握
 [*mantra*:] *sangen sangyō sammyō kaji*
 A.5.e.iv) *mudrā* of the three lights;
 [*mantra*:]
 with divine power of our actions
 [with] shinto kaji power
 [with] divine transformations and power of
 penetration
 we make offerings and remain
- A.6) Next, placement of the Taigen *kunato* {staff}
 A.7) Next, take the *ōnusa*, two obeisances (*yū*)
 A.8) Next, the “threefold kaji” (*sanshu kaji*)
 A.8.a) *mudrā* of the ten jewels (cf. A.5.e.ii)
 [*mantra*:] *mujō reihō shintō kaji*
 A.8.b) *mudrā* of the eight graspings (cf. A.5.e.iii)
 [*mantra*:] *sangen sangyō sammyō kaji*
 A.8.c) *mudrā* of the three lights (cf. A.5.e.iv)
 [*mantra*:]
 with divine power of our actions
 [with] shinto kaji power
 [with] divine transformations and power of penetration
 we make offerings and remain
- A.9) Next, the “kaji of the purity of the six sense organs” (*rokkon shōjō kaji*)
mudrā of the ten jewels
Rokkon shōjō harae:
 Amaterasu-sume-ō-onkami proclaimed: “The human is a divine being under heaven. He must govern, when he [himself] is calm, then he makes [all others] calm. The heart is thus the primordial land of all the gods. Do not leave, lest [these] my divine spirits be injured.” Thus, when the eyes see any sort of impurity (*kegare*), it is not the heart seeing the impure. When the ear hears any sort of impurity, it is not the heart hearing the impure. When the nose smells any sort of impurity, it is not the heart smelling the impure. When the mouth speaks any sort of impurity, it is not the heart speaking the impure. When the body touches any sort of impurity, it is not the heart touching the impure. When the spirit thinks (*omou*) any sort of impurity, it is not the heart thinking the impure. Then [the heart] is perfectly pure. The various teachings and commandments (*nori*) are like forms and their shadows. When purity is there, then there is also impurity. This cannot be explained, it is produced just as fruit is from blossoms.

My body is thus the purity of the six sense organs. Through the purity of the the six sense organs the divine lords (*shinkun*) of the five organs⁵² are pacified. Through the peace of the lords of the five organs, so also are the kami equally fundamental (*dōkon*) to those of heaven and earth. Through the fundamental equality of the kami with heaven and earth, the bodies of all living beings (*banbutsu*) will be equal with their spirits (*rei*). Through the equality of all living beings' bodies with their spirits, nothing remains to be desired and nothing at all is unfulfilled.

mujō reihō shintō kaji

A.10) Next, the “kaji of the primal waters, the unitary *qi* of the great source.” (*taigen ikki gensui kaji*)

From the heavenly fountains [the gods] release the pure wonderful, primordial waters.

B. Construction

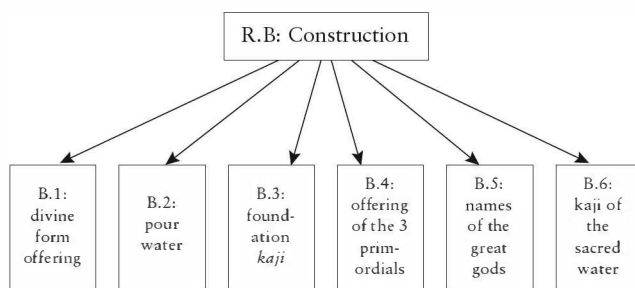


Diagram 5: Construction

B.1) Next, offering of the divine form (*shinzō kuyō*) take the kunato in hand, and think the Taigen *toho kami emi tame ono-goro-shima*

Circumambulate the shrine –

- on *yin* days clockwise
- rison shingon kanken dakon*
- on *yang* days counterclockwise

52 Probably a reference to the five inner organs or viscera of traditional Chinese medicine: liver, lung, spleen, heart, and kidney. These correspond to the five elements.

kangon shinson rikon daken

You raise up the hall of eight fathoms

Ama-no-sagiri-no-mikoto

Kuni-no-sagiri-no-mikoto

Ame-mi-warari-no-mikoto

Ō-moto-no-mikoto-no-kami

B.2) Next, the “kaji of pouring water” (*shasui kaji*)

order changes depending on *yin* or *yang* {day}

the three primordials (*sangen*) nine times

yin – entry

yang – exit

mudrā of the *kunato*, *mantra*:

Ana

Tengen tenmyōjinpen kaji

Chigen chimyōjinzū kaji

Jingen jinmyōjinriki kaji

B.3) Next, the kaji of the foundation (*konpon kaji*)

With the revered words of the exalted ancestral gods and ancestral goddesses, who abide in Takamagahara, we request that you listen to us – assure us of cleansing, assure us of purification.

B.4) Next, offering of the Three Primordials (*sangen hyōbyaku*):

mujō reihō tengen shintō jinpen kaji

mujō reihō chigen shintō jinzū kaji

mujō reihō jingen shintō jinriki kaji

As the sacred place (*saijō*), the Shrine of the Three Primordials, are the spirit altars having arisen from the five elements (五行), where the true Sōgen [Shintō] are manifested. Here, where the gods of heaven and earth descend and manifest themselves, [our prayers] are heard and fulfilled.

mujō reihō shintō kaji <three times>

B.5) Next, the title {name} of the great prime gods; *konpon mudrā*;

· invocation on *yin* days:

Ama-no-minakanushi-no-mikoto <strike {the bell}>

Ama-no-miwatari-no-mikoto <strike>

Kami-musubi-no-kami <strike>

Taka-musubi-no-kami <strike>

Tama [=tama-tsume]-musubi-no-kami <strike>

Iku-musubi-no-kami <strike>

Taru-musubi-no-kami <strike>

Ōmiya-nome-no-kami <strike>

Mike-tsu-no-kami <strike>

Koto-shiro-nushi-no-kami <strike>

· invocation on *yang* days:

Kuni-no-tokotachi-no-mikoto <strike>

Kuni- no satsuchi no mikoto <strike>

Toyo kumune no mikoto <strike>

U hiji ni no mikoto <strike>

Su hiji ni no mikoto <strike>

Ō to no ji no mikoto <strike>

Ō toma be no mikoto <strike>

Omo daru no mikoto <strike>

Kashikone no mikoto <strike>

Izanagi no mikoto <strike>

Izanami no mikoto <strike>

Amaterasu ō kami <strike>

Masa ka a katsu kachi haya ni ama no o shio mimi no mikoto <strike>

Ama tsu hiko hiko ho no ninigi no mikoto <strike>

Hiko hoho demi no mikoto <strike>

*Hiko nagisa take ugaya fuki aezu no mikoto*⁵³<strike>

- B.6) Next, the *kaji* of the sacred water <three times>
assure cleanliness, assure purity

C. Encounter

Encounter involves the making of offerings to the deities in the ritually created enclosure.

The diagram (see next page) for this section has been abbreviated for simplicity, while still attempting to point to the complexity of the actions involved in C.

C.1) Next, *Invocations*

C.1.a) invocation (*kanjō*) of the *Suijaku*-shrine: each shrine god come here to their place.

C.1.b) invocation to the great shrines of Ise, their branch and minor shrines,

C.1.c) invocation to the great shrines of the sun and the over seventy shrines of the Saijōsho

C.1.d) invocation of the eight divine halls of the Jingi-kan

C.1.e) invocation of the branch shrines of Iwashimizu and their minor shrines

53 BS: The “seven heavenly and five earthly generations of gods” of the *Nihon shoki*.

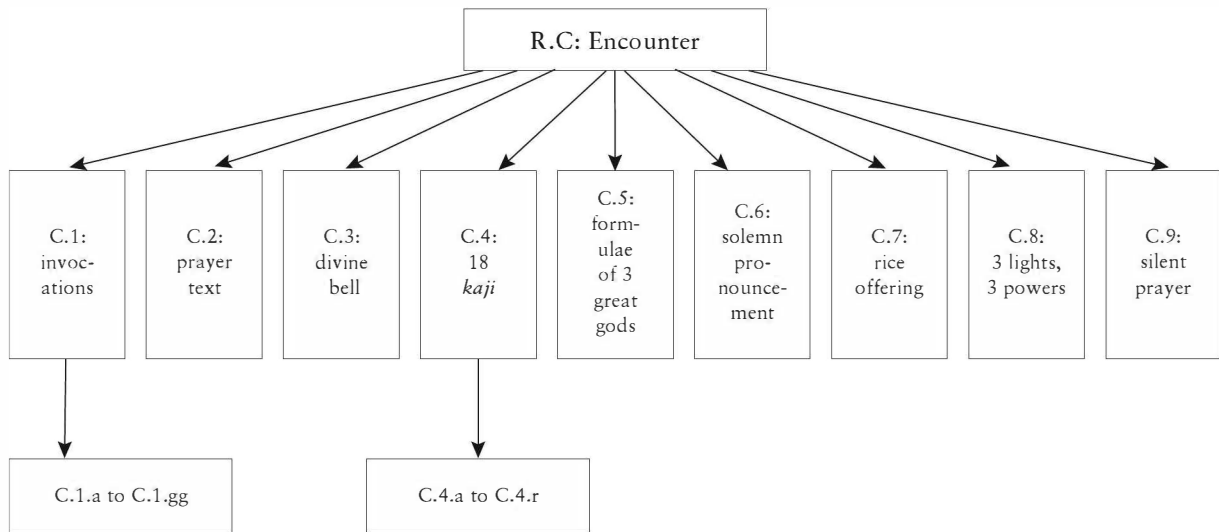


Diagram 6: Encounter

- C. I. f)* invocation of the Great Bodhisattva Hachiman of Usa
C. I. g) invocation of the Great Bodhisattva Shō-Hachiman
C. I. h) invocation of the five branch shrines⁵⁴
C. I. i) invocation of the Daimyōjin of the upper and lower Kamo Shrines
C. I. j) invocation of Matsunoo* Daimyōjin
C. I. k) invocation of Inari* Daimyōjin
C. I. l) invocation of Kasuga* Daimyōjin
C. I. m) invocation of Ōharano* Daimyōjin
C. I. n) invocation of Yoshida* Daimyōjin
C. I. o) invocation of Ōmiwa* Daimyōjin
C. I. p) invocation of Isonokami* Daimyōjin
C. I. q) invocation of Ōyamato* Daimyōjin
C. I. r) invocations of Hirose* and Tatsuta* Daimyōjin
C. I. s) invocation of Sumiyoshi* Daimyōjin
C. I. t) invocation of Hie* Daimyōjin
C. I. u) invocation of Umenomiya* Daimyōjin
C. I. v) invocation of Hirota* Daimyōjin
C. I. w) invocation of the three shrines of Gion, the branch shrines of the God of Heaven and the minor shrines
C. I. x) invocation of the filial and minor shrines of Somin shorai (see... 23)
C. I. y) invocation of Tenman daijizai tenjin (=Kitano* shrine)
C. I. z) invocation of both Daimyōjin from Niu[-kawakami*] and Kifune*
C. I. aa) invocation of Atsuta Daimyōjin
C. I. bb) invocation of Fuji Gongen {the avatar of Fuji}
C. I. cc) invocation of Mishima Daimyōjin
C. I. dd) invocation of Taga Daimyōjin
C. I. ee) invocation of Itsukushima Daimyōjin
C. I. ff) invocation of Kitsuki Daimyōjin [=Izumo]
C. I. gg) invocation of the *sanbō arakami*

All together there are over three thousand shrines in the land of Japan, the 80,000 divinities of heaven and earth.

C.2) Prayer-text of the invocation:

We announce the exalted names of the gods, who in moving through the twelve hours of each day and each night in Japan's highest sacred realm (*saijō*) descend and take their places in the shrines (*chinza*).

54 BS: 五所別宮, Hachimans in Kyūshū.

The great and small divine spirits (*shinrei*) in the thirty-three heavens and three worlds and six desires⁵⁵ who group themselves [thus]:

In the land of origins the great sun (大日本国) the seven earthly gods; the thirty-two gods who descend from the heavenly grandson; the 3,132 named gods, the unnamed great and small gods of the palaces; the capital, in the capital's surroundings, along the seven great routes, and in the more than sixty provinces, where they leave their traces behind. The gods from all divisions of the underworld, the gods, those belonging to the dragons, who in the inner and outer Myōken of the hearth god (*Kamagami-myōken*), the various Nanda dragon kings (*ryūō*), the Batsu-nanda-ryūō, the eight great dragon kings, the 100 great dragon kings, and the good dragon queens (*zenjo-ryūō*); the illegitimate {?: ungehörigen} from Kara-daikokuten as Kangiten-zen-kangiten (Nandikeśvara), the eight gods of Uga, the fifteen princes, the great Benzai-ten, Tamon-ten, the two good youths, the great Kichijō-tenjo, the seven mothers, the pearl-women, the gods of birth, the inner and outer gods, the gods of life, the stars of this year, the lucky calendric years, the dead and the new-born, the gods of the five official offering trenches⁵⁶, the gods of the one virtuous power in two meanings, the three forms of birth and four forms of death, the five demons, and six impediments, the seven injuries, and eight torments, and nine evils; the eight gods of the wood-planet (Jupiter), the great white [god] of the one-general, the gods of the sun, moon, five planets, and twenty-eight constellations⁵⁷, the thirty-six animal forms, the seven stars of the great wagon⁵⁸, the six associate commanders, month commanders, the hardening gods (*kenrō-jishin*), the five dragon gods of the five directions, the six Mutō tenjin, Gozu-tennō, the daughter of Shakada (Shakatsura-ryūō?), the eight princes and the prince of snake venom, the gods of contagion, the gods of the demon world (Makaimadō shin), the fox-women gods, the gods of paths (*dōsojin*), the hate-filled vengeful gods, the noble and the vulgar ghosts, the death-gods of monks

55 RKP: This cosmology is very similar to Buddhist cosmology coming from India. The thirty-heavens, the three worlds of past, present and future, and the six realms of rebirth.

56 RKP: One wonders whether this is a reference to a ritual practice of sacrificing into trenches in some manner, or might be a reference to grave sites, such as those of the Yamato clan?

57 RKP: These are the twenty-eight "lunar mansions," that is, the twenty-eight days of a full lunar cycle.

58 RKP: Again, this constellation is also known as the northern dipper, or in Western astronomy, the Great Bear (Ursus Major).

and of laity, the venom-suffocating evil gods, the twelve ways to the underworld, the great master of mountains, the great god of the five ways, gods of the entire underworld, the great mountains, the five summits, the four oceans, bays and rivers, the eight million gods of heaven and earth. Gather yourselves together and take your places. In deep respect we request that with sympathetic affection you accept (*nōju*) {these offerings}.

- C.3) Next, the “kaji of the divine bell” (*shinrin kaji*). Take the *ōnusa* staff in hand, *yin* right, *yang* left.

Aware ana omoshiro ana tanoshi ana sayake oke oke.

- C.4) Next the kaji of the three Primordials, the gods of heaven, earth and humans (*tenchi jin shin sangen kaji*) for each “shrine” six times; count out these eighteen items with the assistance of *sakaki* (leaves) –

C.4.a) Kuni no satsuchi no mikoto

C.4.b) Toyo kumune no mikoto

C.4.c) U hiji ni no mikoto

C.4.d) Su hiji ni no mikoto

C.4.e) Ō to no ji no mikoto

C.4.f) Ō toma be no mikoto

C.4.g) Omo daru no mikoto

C.4.h) Kashikone no mikoto

C.4.i) Kuku nochi no mikoto

C.4.j) Kagu tsuchi no mikoto

C.4.k) Hani yasu no mikoto

C.4.l) Kana yama hiko no mikoto

C.4.m) Mitsu hanome no mikoto

C.4.n) Ama no ya kudari musubi no mikoto

C.4.o) Ama no mi kudari musubi no mikoto

C.4.p) Ama ai musubi no mikoto

C.4.q) Ama no ya ho hi musubi no mikoto

C.4.r) Ama no ya so yorozu hi musubi no mikoto.

- C.5) Next, the formulae of the three great gods. Take the *ōnusa* staff in hand [and with it count out] the four shrines and the altar [in sequence], alternatively *yin* and *yang*, all together three times.

toho kaim emi tame [divine formula of the five elements]

kangon shinson rikon daken [divine formula of the *yang* heaven]

rison shingon kanken jakon [divine formula of the *yin* heaven]

harai tamai kiyomete tamae [good and beautiful words]

- C.6) Next, solemn proclamation to the gods of heaven, earth and humans. Solemn proclamation to the gods of heaven, earth and humans:

“How overwhelming! The divine light and the divine power of the exalted gods of the great origins, Kuni no tokotachi no mikoto and Amaterasu ō onkami, pervading the thousand worlds as previously. Without thought or reflection they reveal the principle. By the marriage of Izanagi and Izanami the divine power comes to humans. The *yin*-milk is the mother, the *yang*-semen (陽精) the father. Because the way of life in our bodies with its six sense organs is to wander and thereby forget the beginning of the beginning of the three hearts, punishments are many and rewards few. Yet the foundation of foundations is such that the visible body is a portion of the body of the gods, that the heart of the similar {?} root is as the one god. Consider closely that without heaven no seeds would come down, so that the earth would be infertile. Heaven and earth together are needed to produce the means of life. They are the only things without beginning, without end, without birth, without death, and without karmic constraints (*gōin*). One can never comprehend their limits (*gaisai*). Instead they give rise to that “nothing of all manifestations pervading, and that all four stages [of birth and decay] overwhelm.” Only once do we wander through reality and fiction (*zehi*), only once do we know reality and fiction. [...]

C.7) Next, the rice offering.

With these pearls, which are our treasure, we decorate the eight fathomhall.⁵⁹

In the “primordial shrine” resides Ōmoto no mikoto no kami
 in the first “shrine” the ancestor of waters, Mitsu ha no me no kami
 in the second “shrine” the ancestor of fires, Kagu tsuch no mikoto
 in the third “shrine” the ancestor of wood, Kuku no chi no mikoto
 in the fourth shrine the ancestor of metals, Kanayama hiko no kimoto

in Taigen resides the ancestor of earth, Hani yasu no mikoto

The rice offerings of the “shrines” are distributed: first, Taigen, then the first “shrine,” second, third, fourth, then “middle shrine,” then sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, then “middle shrine.”

C.8) Next, *mudrā* of the three lights, wonderful declaration of the three powers.

C.9) Next, pray in one’s heart {i.e., silently}.

59 RKP: eight-sided altar?

D. Identification: *this is null in this ritual*

D. Identification: null

Diagram 7: Identification

E. Dissociation

E.1) Next, closing “bright declaration” “one to ten contemplation.”

E.2) Next, *uchinarashi* three times. {cf. A.4}

E.3) Next, *Nakatomi harae*.
Nakatomi harae.

By virtue of the sublime words of the all-highest portentous gods and portentous goddesses, who dwell in Takamagahara, bring together the eight million gods in one divine assembly and proclaim the following words:

“Know, that the all-highest heavenly grandson of the land of rice-eats, shall pacify the reed-fields. [...] Thus, hear us, impart your purification, impart your purification.

E.4) Next, “binding the requests fast” (*kechigan*)

Heavenly and earthly, *yin* and *yang*, inner and outer
 Heaven, cloud-oceans, and earth-land.

Divine power, primordial spirit, fulfill, answer, and bring to fruition
 the power-virtue.

In response we offer you our gratitude, respect and belief.

E.5) Next, text of the leave-taking {dismissal} of the gods.

ten treasures *mudrā* and inner bundled {fist? i.e., *mudrā*?} of the two
 emptinesses.

“Gathered deities of heaven, earth and ocean, we send you to your
 primordial palace.”

great and small hand claps

E.6) Next, divine rite of bodily protection. {cf. A.5}

E.7) Next, bow twice (*hai*)

E.8) Next, prostration (*yū*) [with hands clasped at breast] {cf. A.3}

E.9) Next, standing prostration (*yū*) {cf. A.2}

E.10) Next, depart [the sacred place]. {cf. A.1}

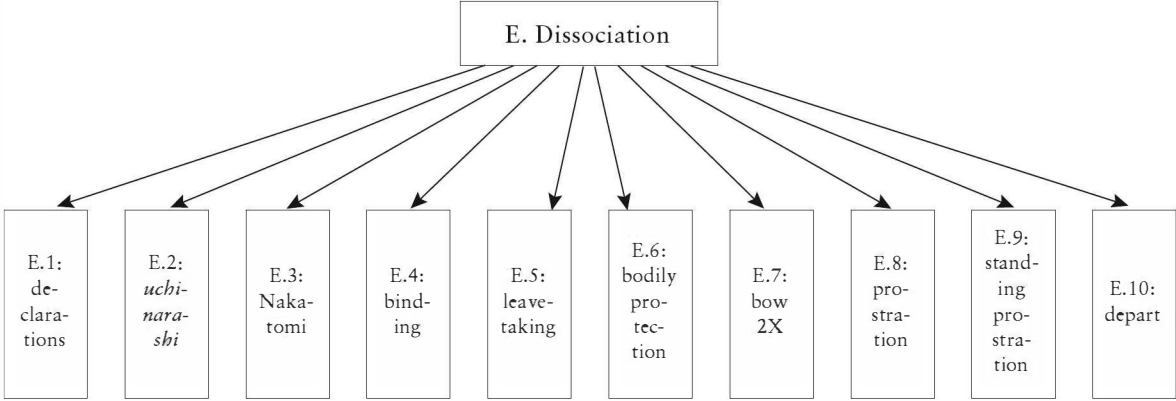


Diagram 8: Dissociation

Concluding Remarks

Since the appropriation of Shingon rituals by Yoshida was already known, the application of syntactic analysis in this instance does not discover that relation, though theoretically such discoveries will be possible through the syntactic analysis of rituals not already known to be related, but which reveal similar organizational principles. In this instance, however, what we have is a demonstration on a much deeper level of how that appropriation was made, demonstrating as well the general principle of the conservation of structure. Comparisons between the Shingon ritual practices and those of Yoshida Shintō may then be of two kinds: ritual and symbolic contents, and ritual structure. Comparison of the contents is itself divisible into direct appropriations and adaptations. Among direct appropriations are such elements as *mudrā* and *mantra*. Adaptations may be more subtle in form. We find, for example, at the close of the ritual the deities being returned to their “primordial palace,” which appears to correspond to the maṇḍala to which the deities are returned at the end of Shingon rituals. Of course, Yoshida also appropriates and adapts from Daoist and Confucian traditions as well, in keeping with the idea that Shintō is the fundamental source of all of those different traditions.

As has been indicated above, the basic four stages of the *Jūhachishintō* correspond to the five stages commonly found in Shingon rituals, taking into account the fact that Identification is not present here, or in the terminology employed above, it is a null element. The absence of ritual identification in this particular ritual is not definitive in any particular way regarding the process by which Kanetomo adapted the Shingon *Jūhachidō* to his own purposes. First, there may have been a doctrinal commitment, either explicit or implicit, to a dualistic relation between the practitioner and the *kami*. However, as mentioned *supra*, Śaiva Siddhānta maintains a dualistic doctrinal position, emphasizing the difference between the human practitioner and the divine figure, while at the same time employing identification between the practitioner and Śiva as a requirement for ritual worship. Thus, while it is possible that the Yoshida Shintō tradition as established by Kanemoto was itself dualistic in the same way that Śaiva Siddhānta is, a dualistic doctrinal position does not as such preclude the practice of identification. There is a second consideration, which is that the Shingon *Jūhachidō* itself does not include ritual identification. As the first of the four training rituals, perhaps this is because metaphorically the practitioner is in a sense simply being introduced to the deities, and is not yet familiar enough to unify with them. Thus, examination of other Yoshida Shintō rituals may change this preliminary conclusion.

A way of formulating the question of ritual adaptation is, Why not something entirely new? Why make only incremental adaptations, retaining the structure and changing the symbolic elements of the ritual? An answer might be that this was part of Kanetomo's strategy of claiming precedence. By constructing rituals on the model of those of Shingon, the argument could be made that these Yoshida rituals are the secretly transmitted predecessors of the Shingon ones. We of course cannot rule out the possibility that this was part of Kanetomo's thinking. However, since the conservation of ritual structure is found elsewhere, outside of this particular process of ritual appropriation, it would seem to be a principle of ritual appropriation generally, rather than a specific strategy.

The appropriation of tantric Buddhist ritual technology as part of a newly created tradition of Shintō in Japan required the adaptation of ritual practices. The syntactic analysis of the *Jūhachishintō* reveals that the Yoshida Shintō ritual followed the same basic structure as that of the Shingon *Jūhachidō*. The principle of conservation of ritual structure across boundaries of religious tradition is evidenced in this instance, as is the utility of syntactic approaches to the study of ritual.

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The Impact of Tantrism on Japanese Religious Traditions

The Cult of the Three Devas

BERNARD FAURE

It is well known that, after its introduction to Japan at the beginning or the ninth century, Tantric Buddhism (or esoteric Buddhism, *mikkyō* 密教, as the Japanese prefer to call it) rapidly became the mainstream of Japanese Buddhism. Its influence on Japanese culture and religion can hardly be overestimated. This is especially true of the medieval period, when the entire Japanese pantheon and mythology were restructured and rewritten in esoteric Buddhist terms. A particular case in point is the emergent religion that came to be called Shintō: medieval Shintō is hardly more than esoteric Buddhism in a new key.¹ But esoteric Buddhism also significantly influenced two other major religious movements, namely Onmyōdō 陰陽道 and Shugendō 修驗道.

The mythological effervescence that characterizes the period from the 12th to the 16th century has much to do with the ideological elaboration of a Buddhist conception of kingship. This was achieved in particular through medieval commentaries on the Chronicle of Japan (*Nihongi* 日本紀), which reinterpreted and developed classical myths along the lines of Tantric Buddhism and of Onmyōdō.² The esoteric notion of the non-duality of the two *mandalas* nicely overlapped with the yin-yang theory and its popular variants.

The paradigmatic example of Buddhist esoteric influence is probably the so-called Ryōbu Shinto 兩部神道, which developed around the Ise Shrines toward the 13th-14th century. As the term “ryōbu” 兩部 implies,

1 On this question, see KURODA TOSHIO, “Shintō in the History of Japanese Religion,” trans. JAMES C. DOBBINS and SUZANNE GAY, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7, 1 (1980): 1-21.

2 See BERNARD FAURE, “Pan Gu and his Descendants: Chinese Cosmology in Medieval Japan,” *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies* 2, 1 (2005): 71-88.

the two shrines of Ise, known as the “Inner Shrine” (*naikū* 内宮) and the “Outer Shrine” (*gekū* 外宮), were in turn redefined as symbols of the two great *maṇḍalas* of Shingon, the Womb Realm *maṇḍala* (*taizōkai mandara* 胎藏界曼荼羅) and the Diamond Realm *maṇḍala* (*kongōkai mandara* 金剛界曼荼羅). Through a convenient symbolic translation, the Sun Buddha Mahāvairocana (J. Dainichi 大日) was identified with the Japanese sun-goddess Amaterasu 天照大神, the main deity of Ise. Amaterasu was also identified with the Wisdom-king Aizen 愛染王 (Skt. Rāga-raja), because of the latter’s solar symbolism – and with various other Tantric deities.

Let me begin with a painted scroll from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts – which has the inconvenience of being poorly reproduced, but the advantage of presenting all the usual suspects. The scroll, dated to the 14th century, is called Kasuga Dakiniten mandara 春日茶吉尼天曼荼羅, and it is related to the Kasuga Shrine in Nara.³ The deer, messenger of the Kasuga deity, is represented at the top of the scroll, but apart from that reference, the image is very different from the other Kasuga *maṇḍalas* known to us.

The main deity (*honzon* 本尊) is a three-headed figure riding a white fox. It is surrounded by various other deities that form a popular Tantric sub-pantheon. Among the most important are, above Kishimojin 鬼子母神 (Skt. Hārītī) and another unknown female deity (perhaps Kichijōten 吉祥天, Skt. Lakṣmī) riding what seems to be a Garuda-bird.⁴ Below the main deity is a couple of elephant-headed deities standing in sexual embrace. It is a traditional representation of the dual-bodied Deva of Bliss Kangiten 歡喜天, also known as Shōten 聖天 (Skt. Vināyaka 毘那耶伽). Further below is King Aizen, the six-armed Wisdom-king (*myōō* 妙王).⁵ On the right is Mahākāla (Śiva), holding an elephant skin above his head in his two upper hands, and a human and a goat in his two lower hands. Mahākāla is shown here in his Indic form, before becoming utterly Japanized in the form known as Daikokuten 大黒天 (which also appears in similar *maṇḍalas* of that period).

The first mention of such a three-headed figure is found in a text written around 1178 by the imperial prince Shukaku Shinnō 守覺親

3 See ANNE NISHIMURA MORSE and NOBUO TSUJI, eds., *Japanese Art in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, and Tokyo: Kodansha, Vol. 2: *Plates*, 1998, ill. 143, p. 153.

4 On Hārītī, see NOËL PERI, “Hārītī la Mère-de-démons.” *Bulletin de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient* 17, 3 (1917): 1-102.

5 On Aizen, see ROGER GOEPPER, *Aizen-myōō: The Esoteric King of Lust. An Iconological Study*. Artibus Asiae. Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1993.

王 (1150-1202).⁶ It describes a guardian deity of Tōji 東寺 (the Shingon headquarters in Kyoto), a *yakṣa* called Matarajin 摩多羅神 (a variant of Mahākāla, and a name related to the pestilence deities known as the “Seven Mothers” (Shichimo, 七母, Skt. *saptamātṛkā*). This image, no longer extant, is described as a “strange deity” with three faces and six arms. Its central face (golden in color) is that of Shōten, its right face (red) that of Benzaiten 弁才天, its left face (white) that of Dakiniten 荼吉尼天. This figure was said to be a messenger of the Inari deity 稻荷神. It later came to be called the “Three Devas” (Santen 三天).

Who were these “Three devas” and why did they become so important in the late medieval period – whether as separate entities or as a single entity? First, a few words about devas in general might be in order. Devas are Indian deities that predated Buddhism, and were either converted or subdued by it. While, as Ronald Davidson and others have shown,⁷ the paradigmatic model for their conversion is the taming of Maheśvara (Śiva) by Vajrapāṇi or Trailokyavijaya, the devas of medieval Japan returned with a vengeance. Once converted, the most important gods of the Hindu pantheon were introduced into the Buddhist pantheon as directional deities – most notably the Twelve Devas (Jūnitennō 十二天) and the Four Deva-kings (Shitennō 四天王). Furthermore, Tantric Buddhism came up with a doctrinal development that was going to have a strong influence in Japan. To the traditional Three Bodies of the Buddha, it added two more, namely the Wheel-Commanding Body (J. *kyōryōrin-shin* 教令輪身), and the Assimilation body (J. *tōrujin* 等流身). The former corresponds to deities like the Wisdom-kings (*myōō* 明王), the latter to demonic or animal manifestations. The devas are usually perceived as “assimilation bodies” (*tōrūjin*). However, they also came to be perceived as “real ones” (*jisssha* 實者), that is, as deities who have a real and somewhat demonic nature, and who are provisional manifestations of a buddha or bodhisattva. In other

6 See Gyōki 御記, in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (hereafter abbreviated as T.), ed. TAKAKUSU JUNJIRŌ and WATANABE KAIGYOKU, Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924-1935, vol. 87, 2493: 614a. On this question, see also IYANAGA NOBUMI, “Daikokuten,” in *Hōbōgin: Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises*, Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, vol. 7: 906.

7 See NOBUMI IYANAGA, “Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya – d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises,” In MICHEL STRICKMANN, ed., *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, vol. 3 (1985): 633-745. Brussels: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises. See also RONALD M. DAVIDSON, “Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, 2 (1991): 197-225; and id., “The Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi’s Subjugation of Śiva,” In DONALD S. LOPEZ, JR., ed., *Religions of India in Practice*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995: 547-55.

words, these deities were not fully integrated into the Tantric system and retained a degree of independence.

The importance of the devas in medieval Japanese religion is emphasized in a 14th-century Tendai encyclopedia, the *Keiran shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集, in a section entitled “The Devas can free you from saṃsāra.” Yet, for all its emphasis on the efficacy of the devas, whether as “assimilation bodies” or as “real” deities like Shōten or Dakiniten, the text warns the reader that they are vulgar and dangerous deities that should be left alone. One of the reasons for their popularity in medieval Japan is their ambivalence, which facilitated their integration into the binary structures of esoteric Buddhism (and of Onmyōdō). For instance, the two elephant-headed figures that form the composite deity called Kangiten represent at the same time the blissful sexual union of the demon Vināyaka with Senāyaka (an avatar of Avalokiteśvara), the submission of the former by the latter, and the non-duality of Principle (*ri* 理) and Knowledge (*chi* 智), symbolized by the Womb and Vajra realms.

1. The Three Devas as individual deities

Benzaiten is said to go back to the Indian river goddess Sarasvatī, Dakiniten to the demoness Ḍākinī, and Shōten to the god Gaṇeśa or the demon Vināyaka. These deities – or at least their Indian prototypes – are well known, and they are too complex to be dealt with here in detail. I will simply mention a few significant features that may explain in part their affinities.

While the Japanese tradition has not retained the image of Gaṇeśa with his two consorts, the sexual symbolism remains prevalent in the image of Vināyaka (Shōten) as “Deva of Bliss” (Kangiten).⁸ As a “god of beginnings,” Shōten was also invoked at the beginning of all rituals, and most notably *goma* (fire) rituals. He also became identified with a wrathful deity named Kōjin 荒神 (wild god), a demon of obstacles that claimed to be the elder brother of the Buddha. As Kōjin, Shōten also became a “god of the placenta,” i.e., a deity protecting the individual from conception to birth and well beyond.

⁸ On Kangiten, see ALEXANDER KABANOFF, “The Kangi-ten (Gaṇapati) Cult in Medieval Japanese Mikkyō,” in IAN ASTLEY, ed., *Esoteric Buddhism in Japan*, SBS Monographs 1. Copenhagen and Aarhus: The Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1994: 99-126.

Like Sarasvatī in India, Benzaiten was initially worshiped in Japan as a goddess of eloquence and music.⁹ As a river-goddess, she also came to be perceived as a *nāga*, a snake- or dragon-deity, and she became identified with a chthonian deity named Ugajin 宇賀神. The latter is usually represented as a coiled snake with an old man's face, sometimes inside a wish-fulfilling jewel (*nyoi hōju* 如意宝珠, Skt. *cintāmaṇi*). Under the name Uga Benzaiten 宇賀弁才天, Benzaiten is represented wearing a diadem with a small Shintō shrine gate (*torii*), under which Ugajin appears.

The Indian *ḍākinīs* were a type of demons living in cemeteries and feeding on human flesh. Originally, they were part of the retinue of the Hindu goddess Kālī. Like the so-called “Mothers” (Skt. *māṭṛkā*), they belonged to the retinue of Mahākāla. In the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra* (J. *Dainichikyō* 大日經), they are tamed by the Buddha Vairocana in his form as Mahākāla.¹⁰ In medieval Japan, they became associated with foxes and with the cult of Inari. In this way, they came to be worshiped as a single female deity under the name Dakiniten.

As she rose into the Japanese pantheon, Dakiniten came to be worshiped as supreme deity under the name “Bodhisattva, King of astral foxes” (Shinkōō bosatsu 辰狐王菩薩).¹¹ Under that name, she came to play an important role in medieval enthronement rituals (*sokui kanjō* 即位灌頂), patterned after the Tantric *abhīṣeka*.¹² Through these rituals, Dakiniten even came to be perceived as the “original ground” (*honji* 本地) of the Sun-goddess Amaterasu, the ancestor of the imperial family.

The above deities tend to share the following features:

- They control human destiny.
- Through their links with the symbolism of the jewel, they become deities of fecundity, fertility, and wealth. They share this symbolism with other deities such as King Aizen and Nyorin Kannon 如意輪觀音 (*Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara*).
- Through their animal characteristics (elephant, snake, fox), they are linked to the dark side of power.

9 On Benzaiten/Sarasvatī, see CATHERINE LUDVIK, *Sarasvatī: Riverine Goddess of Knowledge*, Leiden: Brill, 2007; and YAMAMOTO HIROKO 山本ひろこ, *Ijin: Chūsei Nihon no hikyō-teki sekai* 異神—中世日本の秘教的世界 Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1998.

10 On this question, see NOBUMI IYANAGA “Dākinī et l’Empereur: Mystique bouddhique de la royauté dans le Japon médiéval,” *Versus: Quaderni di studi semiotici* 84/84 (1999): 41-111.

11 See *Keiran shūyōshū*, T. 76, 2410: 732a, 867b.

12 On this question, see IYANAGA 1999.

- They are all related with Mahākāla and with the earth-deity (and Mahākāla himself is perceived as an emanation of the earth-deity).
- Following various trajectories, they all ascended to the top of the pantheon, and ultimately tend to become primordial deities. We have here a feature that Friedrich Max Müller, speaking about Indian religion, described as “henotheism.”¹³

The henotheistic tendency is visible in the case of Shōten, as described for instance in the *Bikisho* 鼻帰書: “Shōten is King Yama is the underworld, Shōten among the devas, the twin-deva (*kushōjin* 俱生神) among men, and Susanoo among the kami. All these gods are transformations of Shōten.”¹⁴ A similar tendency is found in the case of Benzaiten. According to a Ryōbu shintō text entitled *Kōkozōtō hishō*:

“Conforming to the capacity of beings, [Benzaiten] manifests all kinds of secret bodies. Sometimes appearing as a deva with thousand tongues, she gives unobstructed eloquence; at others, she becomes Kudokuten 功德天 [Śrī Lakṣmī], and confers unlimited happiness. Sometimes she is called Karitei 訶梨帝 [Hārītī] and leads the five hundred demons in order to eliminate diseases; at other times she is called Kenrōchijin 堅牢地神 (Firm-earth deity), and dispenses food, drink, clothes, palaces and pavilions; she is also called Daikoku-shin 大黒神 [i.e., Mahākāla] and gives happiness to [the beings of] the three thousand great worlds.”¹⁵

According to the apocryphal *Ugaya daranikyō* 宇賀耶陀羅尼經, Ugajin (i.e., Benzaiten) appears as Dakiniten to bring people longevity and happiness, as Kangiten to remove obstacles in the present and future life, and as King Aizen to give love to all beings and lead them to enlightenment.¹⁶

A similar interpretation is found in the case of Dakiniten as well. In the *Inari Daimyōjin saimon* 稻荷大明神祭文, for instance, we read: “Dakiniten

13 See Friedrich Max Müller, *India: What Can it Teach Us?* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1883): 145-147.

14 See *Shintō taikai, Ronsetsu-hen, Shingon shintō*, vol. 2: 509. On Shōten (Kangiten), see KABANOFF 1994; and BERNARD FAURE, “The Elephant in the Room: The Cult of Secrecy in Japanese Tantrism,” in BERNHARD SCHEID and MARK TEEUWEN, eds., *The Culture of Secrecy in Japanese Religion*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006: 255-268. On King Yama, see CHARLES MALAMOUD, *Le Jumeau solaire*, Paris: Seuil, 2002; on the *kushōjin*, see NAGAO KAYOKO, “Kushōjin no tenkai” 俱生神の展開. *Bukkyō bunka* 10 (2000): 43-70; on Susanoo, see CORNELIUS OUWEHAND, “Some Notes on the God Susa-no-o,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 14 (1958): 138-161.

15 See *Kōkozōtō hishō*, in KOKUBUNGAKU KENKYŪ SHIRYŌKAN 国文学研究資料館, ed., *Ryōbu shintō shū* 両部神道集, Shinpukuji zenpon sōkan 6, Tokyo: Rinsen shoten, 1999: 372.

16 See *Keiran shūyōshū*, T. 76, 2410: 853a and 909a.

is a trace of the bodhisattva Monju 文殊菩薩 [...] Among the bodhisattvas, he is Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音 and Nyoirin Kannon. Among the Wisdom-kings, he is Fudō 不動 and Aizen [...] Benzaiten, Shōten, and Daikokuten, all are in essence Dakiniten.”¹⁷ Under the name of Cintāmaṇi King (Shindamani-ō 眞陀摩尼王), Dakiniten became a primordial deity that rules Heaven and Earth and controls the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行). In this new, astrological incarnation, the “earthly foxes” that form her retinue came to replace the “Five Emperors” (*gotei* 五帝) or five dragon-kings (*goryūō* 五龍王) of classical Chinese cosmology and Japanese Onmyōdō.

2. The Three Devas as Triad

Let us now return to the strange, three-headed deity of the Kasuga Dakiniten mandara. While the figure of the protecting deity of Tōji seems specific to Shingon, the group formed by the Three Devas – Shōten (or Daikokuten), Dakiniten, and Benzaiten – fitted quite naturally the ternary logic of Tendai 天台 doctrine. These deities are said to represent the Three Truths of Tendai and to correspond to the Womb Realm, the Diamond Realm, and the Realm of Realization (*soshitsuji* 蘇悉地, Skt. *susiddhi*), respectively.

The *Keiran shūyōshū* describes the Three Devas (here Daikokuten, Dakiniten, and Benzaiten) in terms of the “Three Mysteries” (*sanmitsu* 三密) – of body, mind, and speech – of the Buddha Dainichi.¹⁸ They are also identified with the “Three Bodies” (*sanshin* 三身) of the Buddha, whose higher manifestation is Benzaiten, his middle manifestation being Shōten, the lower manifestation Dakiniten.¹⁹ Oral traditions associate the Three Devas with the three fundamental seed-letters (*shūji* 種子, Skt. *bīja*) A-BAN-UN (Skt. A-VAM-HŪM) of Tantric Buddhism, and with the corresponding *mudrās*.²⁰

In the medieval enthronement rituals patterned after the Tantric *abhiseka*, Shōten, Daten (Dakiniten), and Benzaiten merged into one single deity, and their rituals were performed together. They correspond to

17 Quoted in NANAMI HIROAKI 名波弘彰, “Nantobon ‘Heike monogatari’ Tsunemasa Chikubushima mōde to Hie-sha Shōnyogū no Biwa hōshi: Eizan shinkō-ken ni okeru Uga Benzaiten shinkō o megutte” 南都本「平家物語」経正竹生島詣と日吉社聖女宮の琵琶法師—叡山信仰圏における宇賀弁財天信仰をめぐって, *Bungei gengo kenkyū: bungei-hen* Ⅱ (1986): 77-78.

18 T. 76, 2410: 853a.

19 *Ibid.*, 606a.

20 See YAMAMOTO HIROKO 山本ひろこ, *Henjō fu: Chūsei shinbutsu shūgo no sekai* 変成譜—中世神仏習合の世界. Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1993: 359.

various sets of three, such as: the Three Poisons, the three Jewels, etc.²¹ They were also worshiped on the margins or outside of Buddhism, in religious trends such as Onmyōdō, Shintō, and Shugendō. A major Onmyōdō text, the *Hoki naiden*, reveals for instance that the Three Devas were identified with various Tantric and Yin-Yang triads – including the Three Luminaries (Sun, Moon, and Stars).²²

The deity of Tōji was initially described as a messenger of Inari Daimyōjin. The Three Devas came to be inscribed in the landscape of Mt. Inari, on the so-called “Peaks of the Three Devas.” They were also worshiped at the three Inari sanctuaries – the Lower sanctuary corresponding to Dakiniten, the Middle one to Benzaiten, and the Upper one to Shōten.²³

The motif of the Three Devas was also important in Shugendō, as shown for instance in the symbolism of the yamabushi’s 山伏 attire: “The so-called persimmon dress (*kakigoromo* 柿衣) represents the “dragon-fox” (*shinko* 辰狐, that is, Dakiniten); the Fudō robe (*Fudō kesa* 不動袈裟) represent the coiled Kurikara 俱利迦羅, that is, Benzaiten [in her dragon form]; the cap (*zukin* 頭巾) symbolizes the lotus of the Womb Realm, that is, the conventional (*samaya*) form of Shōten 聖天三摩耶形. Thus, the physical aspect of the yamabushi corresponds to the joint performance of the secret rituals of the Three Devas (*santen gōgyō no hibō* 三天合行之祕法).”²⁴

The importance of the fox at Mt. Inari, on the southern outskirts of Kyoto, and the role of the “Three Foxes” in apotropaic rituals, have perhaps paved the way to the representation of the Three Devas as a fox-riding deity. One source describes the shrine maiden (*kora*) of Ise as avatars of Dakiniten and associates them with the so-called three foxes (*sanko* 三狐): “The ‘heavenly fox’ (*tenko* 天狐) is the acolyte of the great goddess Amaterasu, the earthly fox (*chiko* 地狐) that of Kasuga Daimyōjin. In heaven and on earth, these two deities protect the originally unborn jewel. The celestial fox becomes Shōten, the terrestrial fox Dakiniten, and the jewel that they guard is Benzaiten. These three, fusing together, become three jewels. They are the Three Luminaries in the sky, the three eyes in the [human] face, the three acts of body, speech, and mind, as well as the three points that summarize the Dharma.”²⁵

21 See for instance the ritual described in the *Jindaikan hiketsu*, in *Zoku Shintō taikai, Ronsetsu-ben, Shūgō shintō* 続 神道体系、論説遍、習合神道, 392.

22 See *Hoki naiden*, in *Shintō taikai, Ronsetsu-ben, Onmyōdō* 神道体系、論説遍、陰陽道, 1987: 39.

23 See *Jindaikan hiketsu* 神代巻秘決, *ibid.* See also: *Busshin ittai kanjō shō* 佛神一体灌頂鈔, coll Eizan bunko, 164a; and YAMAMOTO 1993: 360.

24 See *Keiran shūyōshū*, T. 76, 2410: 520a; see also *ibid.*, 867a.

25 See *Jingi hishō* 神祇祕抄, quoted in YAMAMOTO 1993: 359.

The Three Devas are represented in a series of painted scrolls that are often called “Dakiniten mandara,” owing to the fact that the main deity and several of its acolytes are riding foxes. Only one of them, to my knowledge, is actually called “Image of the Three Devas.”²⁶ These representations flourished between the 14th and 16th century, and they were still produced during the Edo period and even after.

The “Dakiniten mandara” usually represents a three-faced deity riding a fox. Its faces are those of Dakiniten, Shōten, and Benzaiten. Sometimes, however, other lateral faces – human or non-human – are added. The deity holds various attributes – some of which are characteristic of the eight-armed Benzaiten. It is winged, and snakes are coiled around its neck. The red solar disk above Shōten displays the three-legged crow, the white lunar disk above Dakiniten’s head the hare-in-the-moon (two emblematic figures that can be traced back to early Chinese mythology). The disk above Benzaiten’s head, while empty, is partly filled by the head of the snake-deity (Ugajin) in her headgear.

The main deity is flanked by four small fox-riding acolytes (three female, one male). They are called “Heavenly Maiden (Tennyoshi 天女子), “Red Maiden” (Shakunyoshi 赤女子), “Black Maiden” (Kokunyoshi 黒女子), and Taishaku shisha (Indra’s emissary 帝釈使者).²⁷ The names of the three females also appear in the *Hoki naiden* as acolytes of the King of Astral Foxes (Shinko-ō 辰狐王) – i.e., Dakiniten. In that text, they are identified with three forms of Benzaiten worshiped at the Itsukushima, Chikubushima, and Enoshima shrines, respectively.²⁸

Clearly, this three-faced deity and its acolytes were also important in Onmyōdō. A recent exhibition at Kanazawa Library on the relationships between esoteric Buddhism and Onmyōdō allows us to better understand the importance of that deity in divination rituals of the medieval period.²⁹ These rituals used a wooden divination board (*shikiban* 式盤) whose

26 This scroll, commonly known as “The Three Devas Riding a Fox,” was preserved at the Hōjū-in on Mt. Kōya. See Catalog “*Tenbu no shoson* 天部の諸尊, ill. 48 and 61.

27 SHIRAHARA YUKIKO 白原由起子. 1999. “Fushimi Inari mandara” kō: Kojin-bon ‘Dakiniten mandara’ ni taisuru iken” 「伏見稲荷曼陀羅」考—個人本「荼吉尼天曼荼羅」に対する異見. *Museum* (Tokyo National Museum) 560 (1999): 7-24.

28 HOKINAIDEN, in *Zoku Gunsho ruijū* 31: 399; quoted in SHIRAHARA 1999: 11.

29 See SHINAGAWA KENRITSU KANAZAWA BUNKO 神奈川県立金沢文庫, ed., “Onmyōdō kakeru mikkyō” 陰陽道×密教, Yokohama: Kanazawa bunko, 2007; and NISHIOKA YOSHIFUMI 西岡芳文, “Kanazawa Shōmyōji ni okeru tonjō shitsuji-hō: kikakuten ‘Onmyōdō kakeru mikkyō’ hoi” 金沢称名寺における頓成悉地法—企画展「陰陽道×密教」補遺, *Kanazawa bunko kenkyū* 320 (2008): 35-49.

structure and symbolism resemble that of the Chinese compass or astro-labe, while drawing on esoteric Buddhist symbolism.

The use of the *shikiban* in esoteric Buddhism reflects the same phenomenon of convergence between esoteric Buddhism and Onmyōdō that led to the creation of astral rituals centered on the Seven Stars of the Northern Dipper (*hokuto shichisei* 北斗七星) and on Myōken Bosatsu 妙見菩薩, the Pole Star deity. The *shikiban* is constituted of three parts: a conical top that symbolizes Heaven; a cylindrical, revolving part that symbolizes the realm of men; and a square bottom that symbolizes the Earth. Dakiniten as Ruler of astral foxes is represented at the top or center, while her four acolytes are drawn on the cylindrical section. On the square board are drawn the Eight directional Lads (*hachi dōji* 八童子), the twenty-eight lunar constellations (*nijūhasshuku* 二十八宿), and the thirty-six emblematic animals (*sanjūrokkū* 三十六禽) – very much like in the star *maṇḍalas* of esoteric Buddhism. Indeed, the two main parts of the *shikiban* correspond to the two *maṇḍalas* of Shingon esotericism. The *shikiban* was also ritually identified with the human body. The ritual was therefore not merely a divination ritual, its purport was also to bring the deities down into the *shikiban*, in order for the practitioner to merge with them.

In the Chinese *shikiban*, the heavenly board is centered on the Polar Star – which suggests that, in the Japanese *shikiban* as well, Dakiniten corresponds to the Polar Star.³⁰

What led medieval Buddhists to worship the Three Devas as a single composite deity? The grouping – whether in a single ritual or parallel rituals of several deities perceived as having functional similarities and symbolic affinities may have been part of a strategy for obtaining greater ritual efficacy. Why three?³¹ The number three has a particular symbolic value in esoteric Buddhism. In Japan, symbolizes the Three Truths (*santai* 三諦) of Tendai, The Three Mysteries (*sanmitsu* 三密) of Shingon, the Three Bodies of the Buddha, and similar doctrinal rubrics.

Symbolically, the triangle represents the fire of goma rituals, and in particular the shape of the hearth used for subjugation rituals. Rolf Stein suggested that, more generally, the triangular shape is that of the stove all over Asia – with its three stones or bricks serving as support. The triangle

30 Descriptions of similar divination boards or *maṇḍalas* have been found in the case of Shōten and Nyoirin Kannon as well; see NISHIOKA 2008: 43.

31 Actually, the Three Devas – like the Three Musketeers in Alexandre Dumas's novels – are usually *four*, although the identity and status of the fourth one (Mahākāla/Daikoku) varies: sometimes he becomes part of the triad, replacing another of its members; sometimes he remains in the background, as a multifunctional deity that serves as a link between the others or as their synthesis (as in the case of the Matarajin of Tōji).

also evokes the “three dots” (*santen* 三点) of the Siddham letter I, which plays an important role in Tantric ritual, and the three eyes of Śiva, a god that, in his Buddhist forms as Mahākāla and Maheśvara, is the main representative of the Deva category. The triangular form is also that of the tripartite jewel (*sanben hōju* 三弁宝珠). As noted earlier, this jewel is associated with various medieval deities, in particular Benzaiten, whose three main cultic centers are represented as three connected jewels forming a triangle.

Why these three deities in particular? Probably because they separately emerged as three major figures of the medieval pantheon and were linked by all kinds of affinities (like the jewel symbolism). The iconography expresses and brings the associative logic of Tantrism to its conclusion. But above all, it creates an atmosphere that is definitely Tantric, and was perceived as such. It shows that medieval Japanese culture, which is traditionally said to be indebted to Chinese influence, was also strongly influenced by India. It proves, if need be, that Tantric Buddhism was a pan-Asian religious movement.³²

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32 For a discussion of the pan-Asian nature of Tantrism, see MICHEL STRICKMANN, *Mantras et mandarins: Le bouddhisme tantrique en Chine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

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PART IV
... and Beyond

Kālacakra in Transition

From the Apocalypse to the Promotion of World Peace

KATJA RAKOW

In 1999 a book was published in Germany which caused quite a fuss in the German-speaking Buddhist scene. The book, written by Victor and Victoria Trimondi, was titled *The Shadow of the Dalai Lama: Sexuality, Magic and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*.¹ The authors promulgate the bold statement that the current Dalai Lama and the Government of Tibet in Exile – based on the Vajrayāna system that aims at a “mytho-political accumulation of power”² – seek to gain universal control and to establish a global Buddhocracy. The entire book follows a line of argument commonly used in conspiracy theories. Arguing in a manner typical of conspiracy theories the authors accuse the Dalai Lama of being a powerful manipulator who obscures his true intentions behind a façade of an ever-smiling and kind spiritual master. They justify their argumentation by a literal reading and

1 VICTOR and VICTORIA TRIMONDI (“Victory of the three Worlds”) are pseudonyms of Herbert and Maria Röttgen. For details concerning the meaning of the pseudonym see ULRICH DEHN, “Das Feindbild tibetischer Buddhismus,” in *Wenn Eisenvögel fliegen...* *Der tibetische Buddhismus und der Westen*, eds. ULRICH DEHN and CHRISTIAN RUCH (Berlin: EZW, 2006), 62-70, and JENS SCHLIETER, “Wer hat Angst vor dem Dalai Lama? Victor und Victoria Trimondis Der Schatten des Dalai Lama (1999) als spiritualistische Verschwörungstheorie,” *Transformierte Buddhisten* 01 (2008): 54-81. The German title of the book is *Der Schatten des Dalai Lama. Sexualität, Magie und Politik im tibetischen Buddhismus*. The first edition (1999) was issued by the German publisher Patmos, the second edition (2002) – meanwhile out of print – was published by Trikont Verlag, which was co-founded by Herbert and Maria Röttgen. An English translation of the book (2003) by MARK PENNY is available on the following webpage: <http://www.iiv.de/~iivso1311/SDLE/> (accessed November 27, 2008).

2 VICTOR and VICTORIA TRIMONDI, “17. Conclusion,” *The Shadow of the Dalai Lama: Sexuality, Magic and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism* (2003), paragraph 1. URL: <http://www.trimondi.de/SDLE/Part-2-17.htm> (accessed November 27, 2008).

a *pars-pro-toto* interpretation of certain sections of the *Kālacakra Tantra* (*dus kyi 'khor lo*).³

The Wheel of Time Tantra is considered to be one of the highest and most esoteric teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. Indeed, some parts of the *Kālacakra* scriptures describe a future Buddhist holy war eradicating the forces of evil and leading to the dawn of a golden Buddhist age. The mythical kingdom of Śambhala plays a crucial role in this apocalyptic vision of the Wheel of Time Tantra. According to the sources, Śambhala was the place where the *Kālacakra Tantra* was preserved and taught to the inhabitants of the kingdom. Furthermore, Śambhala will be the place from which the spiritual and earthly revival originates after the apocalyptic battle.

Based on a literal and decontextualized interpretation of the sources, the Trimondis claim to be able to reveal the hidden agenda of the Dalai Lama and the Government of Tibet in Exile. According to the authors, they aim at the conquest of the world and the eradication of all non-Buddhists in this very world. In the Trimondis' reading Śambhala is equated with Tibet and therefore the myth of Śambhala lies simultaneously at the centre of Tibetan history and is its ultimate goal.⁴

Victor and Victoria Trimondi are former sympathizers of Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama. They sought a religion promoting gender equality and incorporating "the Eros into the sacred space."⁵ They thought they had finally found what they were searching for in Tibetan Buddhism and especially tantrism. Yet, after an intensive study of the Buddhist tantric systems and the politics of the Dalai Lama, they – disappointed and deceived, as they recollect in an interview – turned their back on Tibetan Buddhism. As they declare, they had only discovered "the exploitation of women [...], the oppression of dissenters, despotism, intolerance, obsessive craving for power, demonization and fear as political means."⁶

Nowadays the Trimondis are among the main opponents of Tibetan Buddhism in the German-speaking countries. Taking this into account, it may not be surprising that their description of Tibetan Buddhism and one of its important tantric scriptures and systems is far from being neutral or balanced. There are three strategies of argumentation that can be outlined

3 For an analysis of Trimondi's argumentation in the light of conspiracy theories see SCHLIETER, 68.

4 See TRIMONDI, "17. Conclusion," <http://www.trimondi.de/SDLE/Part-2-17.htm> (accessed November 27, 2008), paragraph 16.

5 See the transcript of an interview with the Austrian TV station ORF from February 1999 on Trimondi's homepage: <http://www.trimondi.de/intervo2.html> (accessed January 19, 2009), paragraph 2. Translation by the author.

6 *Ibid.*, paragraph 6. Translation by the author.

in their presentation of the material. The first is the literal interpretation of the textual sources. Secondly, single aspects of certain tantric concepts and practices are projected on the whole of Tibetan Buddhism through a distorting generalization. And thirdly, any sound historical contextualization is missing. In contrast, from the perspective of socio-cultural anthropology, the Kālacakra Tantra as a set of concepts and practices is comprised of and interpreted by the epistemological possibilities and socio-historical conditions of its respective times and places. Different social agents in different historical, geographical, and social settings interpreted the Wheel of Time Tantra in a variety of ways. An analysis therefore requires a careful consideration of the respective historical and social context.

This article discusses different interpretations of the central parts of the Kālacakra Tantra through the course of history ranging from apocalyptic scenarios to the fostering of world peace. In each of the following examples attention is directed to the particular historical, geographical, and social settings in order to carefully contextualize each of the different interpretations of the Kālacakra Tantra and the myth of Śambhala. First, a short exposition of the emergence of the Kālacakra in the eleventh century in North India is provided. The focal points of this part will be the historical circumstances and the eschatological horizon of the Kālacakra, which is connected with the myth of the legendary kingdom of Śambhala. Second to be addressed is the revival of the myth of Śambhala due to a geopolitical crisis in Central Asia at the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, the discussion will focus on recent events of public Kālacakra teachings in the West conducted by the current Dalai Lama. The analysis will consider the presentation of the Kālacakra to large lay and partly non-Buddhist audiences, and the emphasis on the promotion of world peace.

The Emergence of the Kālacakra Tantra

The Wheel of Time Tantra emerged in northern India in the eleventh century.⁷ Indian Buddhism was subject to two significant threats at that epoch. On the one hand, Buddhism – in comparison with different flourishing Hindu sects – became gradually rarified and disengaged from the immediate interests of the common masses. Indian Buddhism therefore underwent

⁷ Based on a careful analysis of the Kālacakra sources Newman argues that the basic texts of the tantric system originated in the early decades of the eleventh century CE. See JOHN NEWMAN, “The Epoch of The Kālacakra Tantra,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 319-49.

an increasing loss of its social base.⁸ On the other hand, in the early eleventh century the first Turkic invasions and increased Muslim migration occurred. Traces of these historical circumstances can be found throughout the Kālacakra scriptures. These scriptures are considered to be among the main sources for Buddhist interpretations of Islam. The descriptions of Muslim religious beliefs and practices picture Islam as the antithesis of Buddhism. In other words, Islam is portrayed as a barbaric religion of savage behavior, violence, and iconoclasm.⁹

Furthermore, as John Newman states, the Kālacakra Tantra adopted and transformed the Hindu myth of *Kalkī*.¹⁰ Kalkī, the tenth and last incarnation of Viṣṇu, will appear at the end of the current Kali Yuga when evil has almost entirely eclipsed good. According to the myth, the Brahman warrior Kalkī will be born in a village named Śambhala.¹¹ It is predicted that he will lead an army of Brahmans and will “annihilate the outcastes and barbarians, establishing a new golden age of righteousness, prosperity, and social order.”¹²

The Wheel of Time Tantra adapted the Hindu myth of Kalkī to current religious and political conditions. In the Buddhist reinterpretation it is said that the Buddha taught the Kālacakra Tantra at the request of Sucandra, the ruler of Śambhala.¹³ Śambhala is a legendary kingdom situated somewhere north of India and the Himalayas. It is described as a beautiful realm where prosperity and happiness reign and all its inhabitants strive to attain enlightenment. According to the sources, the Wheel of Time Tantra was preserved in the kingdom of Śambhala and passed down to its successive rulers.¹⁴ The seventh *Dharmarāja* (*chos rgyal*) of Śambhala, King Yaśas,

8 Cf. RICHARD S. COHEN, “India,” *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. I, ed. by ROBERT E. BUSWELL (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, Thomson & Gale, 2004), 359.

9 Cf. JOHN R. NEWMAN, “Islam in The Kālacakra Tantra,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (JIABS) 21/2 (1998): 311-71.

10 JOHN NEWMAN, “Eschatology in The Wheel of Time Tantra,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. DONALD S. LOPEZ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 285.

11 WENDY DONIGER O’FLAHERTY, *Hindu Myth. A Sourcebook translated from the Sanskrit* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1982), 237.

12 NEWMAN, “Eschatology in The Wheel of Time Tantra,” 284-85.

13 According to the sources, King Sucandra wrote down the teachings he had received from the Buddha in the manifestation of Kālacakra. This text was regarded as the “root tantra” and therefore entitled *Kālacakra mulatantra* (*rtsa rgyud*). Sometimes this text is referred to as *Paramādibuddha* (*mshog gi dang po’i sangs rgyas*). For further details see JOHN NEWMAN, “The Paramādibuddha (the Kālacakra Mulatantra) and its Relation to the Early Kālacakra Literature,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 30 (1987): 93-102.

14 Concerning the succession of the Śambhala rulers see LUBOŠ BĚLKA, “Kalachakra and the Twenty-Five Kulika Kings of Shambhala: A Xylograph from Prague,” *Religio: revue pro religionistiku* 15/1 (2007): 125-38.

unified all the Brahman families of Śambhala within one single Buddhist *vajra* clan (*rdo rje rigs*) and on that occasion taught an abridged version of the Kālacakra Tantra to all of them.¹⁵ He was therefore given the title Kalkī. The Tibetan term is *rigs ldan*, which means “chieftain”.¹⁶ Henceforth, every king of Śambhala was wearing the title Kalkī. It is foretold that the last Kalkī of Śambhala at the end of the current age of degeneration will assemble a great army headed by the kings of Śambhala and the Hindu gods. Under the command of the Buddhist Kalkī the barbarian forces will be conquered and a new age of perfection will begin. In this predicted golden age Buddhism will flourish, righteousness will reign, and all people will live long and happy lives.

It is clear from the aforementioned that in the Buddhist refashioning of the prophetic Hindu myth the Brahmanic hero Kalkī is replaced by a Buddhist *Cakravartin*.¹⁷ According to the Buddhist version the army of Śambhala in alliance with the subordinated Hindu gods will defeat the barbarian forces (*kla klo*) and their barbarian dharma (*kla klo'i chos*), which threatened the continuance of the Buddhadharma. In both cases – in the Hindu myth and in the Buddhist adaptation – the figure of Kalkī bears eschatological traits. He is depicted as a warrior hero in an apocalyptic battle destroying the old order and establishing a new golden age.

The martial character of this part of the Wheel of Time Tantra seems to contradict the Buddhist principle of nonviolence. This has led later interpreters and commentators to stress the allegorical nature of the Kālacakra. The source for such an interpretation lies within the structure of the tantra itself. The Wheel of Time Tantra is divided into three main parts: the Outer, the Inner, and the Other Kālacakra.¹⁸ The Outer Kālacakra (*phyi'i dus 'khor*) delineates the external time cycles of the world and the cosmos. The Inner Kālacakra (*nang gi dus 'khor*) describes the inner time cycles of the person and the Other Kālacakra (*gzhang gyi dus 'khor*) deals with the initiations and the stages of generation and completion. One of

15 The abridged version of the *Kālacakra mūlatantra* is known as *Kālacakra lagbutantra* (*bsdus pa*) or *Śrī Kālacakra*. Cf. NEWMAN, “The Paramādibuddha,” 94.

16 For a discussion of the aspects of meaning of the Sanskrit and Tibetan terms see JOHN R. NEWMAN, “A Brief History of the Kalachakra,” in *The Wheel of Time. The Kalachakra in Context*, eds. GESHE LHUNDUB SOPA, ROGER JACKSON and JOHN R. NEWMAN (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1991), 83 n. 4, and KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, “Utopian Thought in Tibetan Buddhism: A Survey of the Śambhala Concept and its Sources,” *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions*, Vol. 5/6 (1992/93): 81 n. 12.

17 Cf. JOHN R. NEWMAN, “A Brief History of the Kalachakra,” 79.

18 For further details see GESHE LHUNDUB SOPA, “The Kalachakra Tantra Initiation,” in *The Wheel of Time. The Kalachakra in Context*, eds. GESHE LHUNDUB SOPA, ROGER JACKSON and JOHN NEWMAN (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1991), 93.

the distinctive features of the Wheel of Time Tantra is the emphasis on the identity of the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of the individual human being. The kingdom of Śambhala and the apocalyptic scenario are described in the first part, the Outer Kālacakra. Following the macrocosm-microcosm homology, the actual war could be interpreted as a struggle between enlightenment and ignorance. The struggle therefore is not taking place in the external world but in the body of the practitioner.¹⁹

It is clear from the above that the Kālacakra scriptures mirror historical events such as the first Muslim raids into northwest India and the decreasing importance of Buddhism. The ongoing competition between Buddhism and different flourishing Hindu sects is reflected in an attempt to subordinate the Hindu clans and their gods under the overarching rule of the Buddhist Kalkī. Therefore the Kālacakra can be seen as a timely response to the historical, religious and social tensions of that time, which are inscribed in the textual corpus of the tantric system. Although Buddhist scholars and commentators emphasize the symbolic nature of the Wheel of Time Tantra, the tantric system and the myth of Śambhala show a political connotation right from its time of emergence. During the course of history this political dimension of the Kālacakra has been revived and adapted to serve contemporary political purposes.

Political Reinterpretations of the Myth of Śambhala

Among the people of Tibet and Mongolia the common notion can be found that the kingdom of Śambhala is a paradise in the confines of the world, hidden in the remote valleys of the Himalayas or somewhere north of Tibet.²⁰ In addition to that notion the eschatological horizon of the Kālacakra Tantra and the myth of Śambhala have fuelled political debate in the Tibetan and Mongolian context at the turn of the twentieth cen-

19 See JOHN NEWMAN, "Eschatology in The Wheel of Time Tantra," 284-89.

20 Some Tibetan texts from the genre of itineraries or guides (*lam yig*), as e.g. Manlungpa's *Shambhalai Lamyig (sham bha la'i lam yig)*, describe the journey to the kingdom of Śambhala as a physically accomplishable trip to a land in the confines of this world whereas in later works the journey turns into a spiritual rather than a physical path. For further details and a list of the different guide books to Śambhala, see KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, "Utopian Thought in Tibetan Buddhism," 78-96. Tibetan and Mongolian prayers (*smon lam*) for rebirth in Śambhala emphasize the notion of paradise in the idea of Śambhala. See for example KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, "Ein mongolisches Wunschebet um Wiedergeburt in Śambhala," *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher*, Neue Folge, Band 13 (1994), 158-74.

ture. The Buryat Mongolian Agvan Dorjiev (1854-1938), for example, convinced the thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876-1933) that the Russian Empire was Śambhala and the Czar was the ruler of Śambhala. Protection from the imperial grasp of the British Empire, Dorjiev argued, could therefore only be found in czarist Russia. Furthermore the political dimension of the myth of Śambhala has been used by the Mongolians in different ways. For instance the Mongolian national hero Sukhbaatar (1893-1923), leading the Mongolian People's Party to regain independence in the early twentieth century, composed a marching song promising his soldiers rebirth as the warriors of the king of Śambhala.²¹ During the Japanese occupation of Mongolia in the 1930s the Mongolians were told that Śambhala could be found in Japan.²²

As noted before, the Kālacakra Tantra had a political connotation right from its inception. The previously mentioned examples from the turn of the twentieth century show a revival and reinterpretation of the myth of Śambhala induced by new historical and geopolitical circumstances.

Tibet – A Pawn on the Imperial Chessboard in the Great Game

To highlight the different historical, political and social factors at play, attention must be paid to the case of Agvan Dorjiev and his political utilization of the myth of Śambhala in promoting a rapprochement between Tibet and Russia. The events in question took place in the context of the so-called Great Game at the height of the imperialist era. The Great Game was the geopolitical contest between the British and the Russian Empire for supremacy in Central Asia from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.²³ The imperial Russian expansion came into conflict with the increasing British dominance of the occupied lands of the

21 Cf. EDWIN BERNBAUM, *The Way to Shambhala. A Search for the Mythical Kingdom beyond the Himalayas* (New York: Anchor Books, 1980), 18. NICOLAS ROERICH mentions a Mongolian song about Śambhala in his book *Shambhala: In Search of the New Era*. It is possible that Roerich refers to the song composed by Sukhbaatar. See NICOLAS ROERICH, "Shambhala, the Resplendent (Talai-Pho-Brang, 1928)," in *Shambhala: In Search of the New Era*, ed. NICOLAS ROERICH (Rochester: Inner Traditions International 1990 [1930]), 2.

22 KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, "Utopian Thought in Tibetan Buddhism," 87.

23 For further details concerning the epoch of the Great Game, see KARL E. MEYER and SHAREEN BLAIR BRYSAK, *Tournament of Shadows. The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Counterpoint: Washington D.C., 1999); TATIANA SHAUMIAN, *Tibet. The Great Game and Tsarist Russia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000) and

Indian subcontinent and their growing imperial interests in the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau. The relationship between the two antagonistic forces was marked by rivalry, exploration, and espionage. In this context Tibet became a “mere pawn on the imperial chessboard.”²⁴

In the nineteenth century, the situation of Tibet was precarious. The Chinese supremacy over Tibet started to decrease due to loss of power and fragmentation of the Qing dynasty.²⁵ But the sovereignty of Tibet was not only contested by Chinese interference but also by intrusions of Dogras from Kashmir (1842) and raids of Gurkhas from Nepal (1854) as well as by British interests.²⁶ Through the annexation of Assam in 1826, the agreement with Bhutan in 1865, and the establishment of the British protectorate over Sikkim in 1890 the British Empire was closing in on the Tibetan border. Although Great Britain had different agreements with China which obliged Tibet to cooperate with the British, the Tibetan government increasingly refused to follow a Chinese dictate. Besides their endeavors the British were still failing to successfully install diplomatic contact with the Tibetan government and to establish trading connections with Tibet. They increasingly feared that the region would fall under Russian influence. These fears were further fuelled by the more advantageous position of Russia. Different ethnic groups in the Russian Empire like the Kalmyks, Buryats, and Tuvans were followers of Buddhism in its Tibeto-Mongolian form.²⁷ The large Gelugpa (*dge lugs pa*) monasteries in central Tibet attracted monks, lamas and pilgrims from these remote regions in Russia.²⁸ Moreover, the czarist government pursued a tolerant policy towards (among others) the Buddhist minorities in order to open and maintain trading options in Central Asia. In 1741 Czarina Elizabeth

NIKOLAI S. KULESHOV, *Russia's Tibet File* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1996).

- 24 TSERING SHAKYA, *The Dragon in the Land of Snows. A History of Modern Tibet Since 1947* (London: Pimlico, 1999), xxiv.
- 25 Tibet was annexed to the Qing-Empire in 1793, but the Chinese supremacy soon began to decrease. See KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, *Kleine Geschichte Tibets* (München: C.H. Beck, 2006), 129-35.
- 26 The Dogras first established their authority over Ladakh and Baltistan in 1842 and expanded from there with the intention to gain control over the wool trade by conquering the wool producing areas in West Tibet. See K. WARIKOO, “Ladakh’s Trade Relations with Tibet under the Dogras,” *China Report* 26 (1990): 133-44.
- 27 For details on the early history of ethnic Buddhism in Russia, see the study of ELENA A. OSTROVSKAYA, “Buddhism in Saint Petersburg,” *Journal of Global Buddhism* 5 (2004): 19-95, <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/toc.html> (accessed January 10, 2009).
- 28 See KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, *Kleine Geschichte Tibets*, 137.

Petrovna granted Buddhism the status of an officially accepted religion²⁹ and the czarist government appointed the Bandido Chambo Lama (*pan di ta mkhan po blama*) in 1766 as religious and secular leader of the Buryat Buddhists.³⁰ Financially and administratively supported by the Russian authorities Buddhism flourished in the Transbaikal region until the 1930s.

Agvan Dorjiev – Tibet’s Emissary to the Czar³¹

Agvan Dorjiev, born in 1854, was a Buryat Mongolian who belonged to the Buddhist minority settling east of Lake Baikal. The Transbaikal was appertained to the Russian Empire and Dorjiev therefore was a Russian citizen. At the age of nineteen Dorjiev left for Tibet for the first time. He went back to Tibet in 1880 to study at the Gomang College of the Drepung monastery. In 1888 he took his geshe examinations, which he passed with the highest honors and was awarded with the Lharampa degree. In the same year Dorjiev became a tutor to the young thirteenth Dalai Lama. Over the years Dorjiev and the Dalai Lama developed a close and lasting friendship. In the politically tense situation at the end of the nineteenth century he convinced the thirteenth Dalai Lama of the possible advantages of an alliance with the Russian Empire. The Dalai Lama was afraid of a British annexation of Tibet that would eventually lead to the destruction of their Buddhist culture. Although both empires, Britain as well as Russia, were Christian nations, Dorjiev was able to point out that Russia was known for her tolerance towards Buddhists.

“Because she herself is an enemy of Great Britain, Russia will come to the assistance of the Land of Snows to prevent her being devoured by the British [...].

29 The official recognition of Buddhism included exemption from charge and military service, support of Buddhist religious institutions as well as the permission to send missionaries among the followers of non-Christian local forms of religion and Islam in East Siberia and the Transbaikal region. Cf. DITTMAR SCHORKOWITZ, *Staat und Nationalitäten in Russland: Der Integrationsprozess der Burjaten und Kalmücken, 1822-1925* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2001), 59.

30 Cf. SCHORKOWITZ, 60.

31 For a detailed account of the life of Agvan Dorjiev see JOHN SNELLING, *Buddhism in Russia. The Story of Agvan Dorzhiev, Lhasa’s Emissary to the Tsar* (Shaftsbury, Rockport, Brisbane: Element, 1993) as well as the autobiography of Dorjiev translated and published by THUPTEN J. NORBU, “Dorjiev: Memoirs of a Tibetan Diplomat,” *Hokke-bunka kenkyū* 17 (1991): 1-105.

Also the stainless teachings of the Buddha still flourish in Russian-controlled Torgut and in Buryat[ia].”³²

Dorjiev, who was familiar with the Kālacakra Tantra and the prayer for rebirth in Śambhala (*sham bha la'i smon lam*),³³ explained that the mythical kingdom in the north of the Himalayas, the kingdom of Śambhala, was actually the kingdom of Russia. Therefore the Russian Czar, equalized with the ruler of Śambhala, would protect the Buddhist teachings.³⁴ Another Kalmyk Lama named Dambo Ul'janov even suggested in a book that the Romanovs were direct descendents of Sucandra,³⁵ the King of Śambhala, and that Kalāpa, the capital of Śambhala, was to be Moscow.³⁶

Dorjiev obviously must have been convincing, because in 1898 on behalf of the Dalai Lama he traveled to Europe and eventually met with Czar Nicholas II. Two years later Dorjiev went on an official mission as emissary to the Russian Czar. He carried a letter from the Dalai Lama, which he handed over to the Czar at Livadia Palace, the czarist Summer Residence in Odessa. In 1901 he went on a second official mission to the Czarist court. Both missions were supposed to establish regular connections between the Russian Empire and the Land of Snows as well as to seek help in case of British interventions in Tibet. However the Russian response was mostly noncommittal due to their unwillingness to risk their insecure relations with the British Empire.

It was this very official mission of Agvan Dorjiev to the Russian court which sealed the destiny of Tibet in the early 20th century. The British considered Dorjiev to be a mere Russian agent rather than a Buddhist scholar who acted upon Czarist advice.³⁷ The news of Dorjiev's meeting with the

32 These words of Dorjiev are cited in SNELLING, 36.

33 See NORBU, 15 and 24.

34 See KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, “Utopian Thought in Tibetan Buddhism,” 86 and RAM RAHUL, *The Government and Politics of Tibet* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1969), III.

35 Cf. ALEXANDR ANDREEV, “Agvan Dorjiev and the Buddhist Temple in Petrograd,” *Chö-Yang: The Voice of Tibetan Religion & Culture*, Year of Tibet Edition (Dharamsala: Gangchen Kyishong, 1991), 216. KOLLMAR-PAULENZ has mentioned the book of Dambo Ul'janov. The book was titled *Predskazanie Buddy o dome Romanovykh I kratkij očerk moich putešestvij v Tibet v 1904-1905gg* and published in St. Petersburg in 1913. Cf. KARÉNINA KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, “Sambhala, eine tibetisch-buddhistische Utopie,” in *Tibetan Studies*, Vol. I, eds. HELMUT KRASSER et al. (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 539 n. 26.

36 Cf. KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, “Utopian Thought in Tibetan Buddhism,” 86 and SCHORKOWITZ, 283.

37 The image of Agvan Dorjiev in early Western literature therefore was quite distorted. He mostly was portrayed as an agent of Czarist imperialism. See the respective quotations in NORBU, 5-6.

Czar on behalf of the thirteenth Dalai Lama convinced Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, of serious negotiations between Russia and Tibet. He even conjectured some kind of a secret treaty, which threatened the security of British interests in India.³⁸ These suspicions prompted the British invasion into Tibet, which came to be known as the Younghusband Expedition of 1903/04. The plan to seek help from the Russian Empire to prevent British interference in Tibet turned out to produce quite the opposite of the intended aims.

The British were convinced that the Russians controlled all of Dorjiev's actions. However, Dorjiev had his own agenda. As the historian Helen S. Hundley pointed out:

“[A]t the time of the ‘Great Game’ none of the players could imagine that non-Europeans could have their own agendas or that a citizen of an empire would not share the same goals as those of their mother country.”³⁹

Dorjiev envisioned a pan-Buddhist, pan-Mongolian movement merging all Buddhists from the Baikal region to Tibet into one state.⁴⁰ Referring to the political conditions of that time, he recommended that this expanded Buddhist world would unite under the Russian empire. He assumed that with their increased physical size and numbers Buddhists could expect greater security in the Russian empire. His utilization of the myth of Śambhala has to be seen in this context.⁴¹

In 1909 Dorjiev got permission from the Czar to build a large Buddhist temple in Saint Petersburg. Some sources state that it was dedicated to the Buddhist deity Kālacakra.⁴² The first service on February 21, 1913, hap-

38 Cf. SHAUMIAN, 46-87.

39 HELEN S. HUNDLEY, “Tibet’s Part in The ‘Great Game’,” *History Today* 43/10 (1993): 45.

40 Pan-Mongolism was quite popular among some educated Buryats. Cf. ROBERT W. MONTGOMERY, *Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Nationality and Cultural Policy. The Buryats and Their Language* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 25.

41 *Ibid.*, 47. W. A. UNKRIG makes a similar statement on the aims of Dorjiev in a letter to Dr. R. LOEWENTHAL from the December 17, 1954, quoted in ROBERT A. RUPEN, *Mongols of the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Publications, 1964), 106-7.

42 Dorjiev himself mentioned in his autobiography, that he conducted ceremonies for different tutelaries and he named Kālacakra as one of them. See NORBU, 40. John Snelling reports that the temple “is believed to have been dedicated to Kalachakra.” See SNELLING, 160. Alexandr Andreev states that on the final consecration of the temple on August 10, 1915 special rites dedicated to the tantric deity Kālacakra were conducted. Cf. ANDREEV, 214. The International Kalachakra Network lists the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg as one of the special Kālacakra places. For further details see the URL http://kalachakranet.org/kalachakra_tantra_places.html (accessed February 28, 2009). For more information

pened to be held during the festivities that marked the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty.⁴³ But the dream of an alliance of Russian Buddhist communities with the Tibetan Buddhists under Czar Nicholas II ended just four years later with the Russian Revolution in 1917. In the aftermath of the upheavals the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg was partly destroyed by Red Army soldiers.

The case of Agvan Dorjiev clearly shows an interpretation of the myth of Śambhala with political connotations. The tolerant policy of the Russian empire towards the Buddhist minorities of the Buryats and Kalmyks, their strong connections with the Tibetan monastic institutions, and the need of the Tibetan government for support against the British Empire – in the perception of Agvan Dorjiev – were all factors that nourished hopes for a pan-Buddhist world under the aegis of the Russian Empire. The myth of Śambhala served as an interpretative pattern and therefore was hoped to offer a religiously legitimized solution by translating a current and politically tense situation into a well-known mythical context.

Public Initiations into the Kālacakra Tantra in the West

During the last decades a number of high-ranking teachers of all the Tibetan Buddhist schools have performed initiations into the Kālacakra around the world. The Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg is just one of the places where Tibetan Buddhist teachers offer those initiations to mainly Western adherents.⁴⁴ The fourteenth Dalai Lama is without any doubt the most prominent of these teachers. The first Kālacakra mass initiation ever conducted in the West took place in Madison, Wisconsin, in the USA in 1981. But even the preceding initiations into the Kālacakra Tantra conducted by the present Dalai Lama in Lhasa in 1954 and 1956 were considered to be huge events.⁴⁵

on the history of the temple, the restoration and its current use visit the following webpages: <http://dazan.spb.ru/> and <http://www.marhotin.ru/eng/> (accessed November 27, 2008).

43 See OSTROVSKAYA, 39.

44 Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche has given the Kālacakra teachings in the St. Petersburg temple in 2003 and 2005.

45 See URBAN HAMMAR, “Dalai Lama and the modern Kalacakra initiations,” paper presented at the conference “Ritual Practices in Indian Religions and Contexts” in Lund (2004), 4. <http://www.teol.lu.se/indiskareligioner/conference04/13996670/panelhammer.pdf> (accessed March 03, 2009).

Although the Wheel of Time Tantra is considered to be one of the most advanced tantric teachings of the highest tantra class (*anuttarayoga tantra*), it is offered to the general public. This contradiction may at first sight seem rather irritating in the light of the esoteric character of those Anuttarayoga tantras and their required preliminary practices and preparations. Yet there is a sort of ‘mass initiation’ in the Kālacakra scriptures themselves when King Yaśas taught an abridged version of the Kālacakra Tantra to all the inhabitants of the kingdom of Śambhala and thereby unified all the Brahman families within one single Buddhist *vajra* clan. Although public tantric initiations could be found as early as in the eleventh century,⁴⁶ the mass initiations into the Kālacakra Tantra are probably a recent phenomenon.⁴⁷ The ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937) conducted altogether nine Kālacakra initiations in China from 1926 to 1936 to thousands of attendants.⁴⁸ As Fabienne Jagou points out, he performed these initiations to raise funds for his monastery in Tibet. The Kālacakra was considered to be one of the most powerful initiations and was also the most rewarding financially.⁴⁹ A huge initiation was held in Peking in 1932 for about 60,000 Chinese and Mongolian participants including the seventh Changkya Khutuktu (*lcang skya hu tuk tu*) from Mongolia. On this occasion the Panchen Lama conducted the Kālacakra explicitly for peace in that area.⁵⁰

Taking that into consideration, the present Dalai Lama and his huge public teachings termed ‘Kālacakra for World Peace’⁵¹ seem to have a predecessor in the ninth Panchen Lama. In the official statements of the organizing committees of these events a strong emphasis could be found on the benefit for all participants of the event, regardless of their religious affiliation or non-affiliation and their level of participation in the initiation.⁵² Yet the Dalai Lama stresses the importance especially of the preliminary teachings as well as the limitations for different groups of partici-

46 See the example of Ralotsawa Dorjedrak (*rwa lo tsa ba rdo rje grags*) and his public presentations of the Vajrabhairava system in the eleventh century in Tibet. RONALD M. DAVIDSON, *Tibetan Renaissance. Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 136.

47 HAMMAR, 4.

48 FABIENNE JAGOUE, *Le 9e Panchen Lama (1883-1937): Enjeu des relations sino-tibétaines* (Paris: École française d'Extrême Orient, 2004), 117-26 and HAMMAR, 10.

49 JAGOUE, 124-26.

50 In September of 1931 Japan launched an attack on Manchuria and parts of Inner Mongolia and occupied that region.

51 The number of participants is ranging from 1,500 to 200,000, depending on where the initiation is given. Usually the largest teachings were performed in Tibet and now in India.

52 See for example the statement on the official website for the initiation in Graz http://www.shedrupling.at/KC/deu/deu_ikal/init.html (accessed March 03, 2009) and Toronto

pants. In an interview from August 2002 in Spiti, India, he declared that a practitioner needs a “good knowledge of Buddhadharma and especially Tantrayana [to] understand these rituals” and that the “Kalachakra is a teaching meant for Buddhists.”⁵³ Therefore only a selected few are able to participate in the initiation as an actual initiation into the tantric practice of the Kālacakra. For the majority of the participants taking part in the initiation, this is considered to be a blessing.⁵⁴

It is worth mentioning that there are differences in the Kālacakra initiations performed in the West and in India. According to the Dalai Lama, he conducts the complete initiations only in places where many young lamas will receive it because of their future role as teachers of the tantric system. In the West he usually only bestows the basic initiations and those initiations, which are the maturing factors for the practice of the completions stage.⁵⁵

Kālacakra and the Notion of World Peace

The public teachings and initiations conducted by the Dalai Lama on request are termed “Kālacakra for World Peace.”⁵⁶ As noted before, the ninth Panchen Lama already had given the initiation explicitly for peace in a time of war. A reason for requesting this initiation today is the perception that the world is in danger and that it is necessary to assemble all the good forces in the world to help in this crisis. The large numbers of visitors of ‘Kālacakra for World Peace’ events clearly show that the highest tantric initiation of Tibetan Buddhism, which is widely considered to be the non-violent and peaceful religion *per se*, seems to be perceived as an appropriate measure and the Dalai Lama as just the right person for that special task. Nevertheless it is noticeable that Kālacakra initiations performed by

<http://www.ctao.org/kalachakra/kalachakra/introduction.htm> (accessed March 03, 2009).

53 See http://www.shedrupling.at/KC/deu/deu_spir/1.html (accessed March 03, 2009), paragraph 6.

54 Cf. DALAI LAMA, “Foreword: Concerning the Kalachakra,” in *The Wheel of Time. The Kalachakra in Context*, eds. GESHE LHUNDUB SOPA, ROGER JACKSON and JOHN NEWMAN (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1991), xviii-xix.

55 See http://www.shedrupling.at/KC/deu/deu_spir/1.html (accessed March 03, 2009), paragraph 45.

56 We can say for sure that the public initiation given in 1985 in Rikon, Switzerland was termed “Kālacakra for World Peace” und every Kālacakra teaching which was since then performed by the current Dalai Lama.

other Tibetan Buddhist masters in the last years do not bear the addition ‘for world peace.’⁵⁷

Considering the historical origins of the Wheel of Time Tantra and especially its rather violent character in the passages of the Outer Kālacakra, the strong emphasis on ‘world peace’ may seem astonishing. Therefore, it is necessary to include some remarks on the aspect of world peace in the teachings of the fourteenth Dalai Lama.

It is well known that the promotion of peace, tolerance and nonviolence are on his main agenda, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.⁵⁸ His role as a political and religious leader and his struggle for independence for the Tibetan people are widely recognized. He is a most sought after interlocutor by journalists, scientists, artists, and increasingly by politicians. Many people in the West even see him not only as a leader in Tibetan Buddhism, specifically of the Gelugpa sect, but as the leader of a worldwide Buddhism.

While the Dalai Lama is presenting specifically Buddhist teachings and initiations for a primarily Western Buddhist or Buddhist-interested audience, most of the time he also holds public lectures aiming at a much wider audience in the supporting program of the event. These public lectures are orientated towards more general topics such as the very basics of Buddhism, the pursuit of happiness, the importance of an interreligious dialogue, tolerance and nonviolence. Comparing the Buddhist teachings presented by the Dalai Lama with his public talks, a fundamental difference in quality can be observed.

For illustration purposes I would like to refer to my own observations during the last visit of the Dalai Lama in 2007 in Hamburg, Germany. His visit lasted seven days and the program was divided into three sections. The first section was comprised of a weekend program termed “Learning Peace – The Practice of Non-Violence.” The second section was a public talk on a Sunday afternoon on the topic “Compassion in a Globalized World”. The third section was a five day course called “Buddhism: Philosophy and Practice” which extensively dealt with the *Four Hundred Verses* of the Indian Master Āryadeva.⁵⁹

57 To name an example, the Kālacakra teachings and initiation given by Sakya Trizin in November 2006 did not mention the addition “for world peace”.

58 Michael Bergunder has pointed out the strong influence of Mahātmā Gāndhī’s concept of *ahimsā* on the politics of the Dalai Lama and the presentation of Tibetan Buddhism in exile. MICHAEL BERGUNDER, “‘Östliche’ Religionen und Gewalt,” in *Religion, Politik und Gewalt*, ed. FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), 136-157.

59 *Catuhśataka* by Āryadeva.

It is worthy of note that the two-hour public talk was sold out almost immediately, followed by the two day weekend program, whereas the five-day course was far from being sold out at all.⁶⁰ Furthermore, significant differences in the appearance of the audiences could be perceived. The public lecture appeared very much like a social event. The audience consisted mostly of local people from Hamburg and the surrounding areas. They were wearing their best Sunday suits for this rare occasion of seeing the Dalai Lama in person. The public talk was given in English and translated into German. It ended with a resounding applause when five young representatives of five different religions recited an interfaith prayer on stage in front of the Dalai Lama and the assembled audience. Compared to the public talk, the audience during the five-day course consisted mainly of Buddhist practitioners from all over Germany as well as from abroad. Nevertheless, it could be observed that many of the listeners were completely lost in the process of translation: The Dalai Lama read from Āryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses* and commented on it in Tibetan. After ten to fifteen minutes he paused and his explanation was translated into German. After two to three hours there was a break. In this manner the lecture continued till the late afternoon. Undoubtedly, in order to be able to follow his elaborate teachings the participants needed already a very solid understanding of Mahāyāna doctrine.

The same pattern could be found during the Kālacakra teachings in 2002 in Graz, Austria, and in 2004 in Toronto, Canada.⁶¹ The main program, consisting of preliminary teachings and initiations, was accompanied by a large supporting program. It included public lectures, scientific symposia, interreligious dialogues and interfaith services as well as the presentation of awards to the Dalai Lama honouring his commitment to peace.⁶²

It is clear from the above that the fourteenth Dalai Lama is simultaneously a very prominent figure in public discourse on peace and nonviolence

60 The weekend program as well as the public talk were attended by 10,000 visitors. Both program sections were aimed at a more general audience and talks were given in English and translated into German. The five day course on Buddhist philosophy was attended by 6,500 participants. This part of the program was announced as "a very sophisticated" introduction to Buddhist principles.

61 See for example the schedule for the Toronto Kālacakra initiation http://www.ctao.org/kalachakra/kalachakra/Schedule_02042004.pdf (accessed March 03, 2009).

62 In October 2002 he was awarded the Human Rights Prize by the University of Graz, Austria and in April 2004 he received the International Acharya Sushil Kumar Peace Award by the University of Toronto, Canada. For a list with all prizes and honorary doctor titles ever awarded to the Dalai Lama visit the URL http://dalailama.ctao.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&cid=28&Itemid=49 (accessed March 03, 2009).

as well as an important teacher in the Buddhist world, especially to followers of Tibetan Buddhism. He attracts two sorts of audiences: to many people, quite aware of him being a Buddhist teacher, he is nevertheless primarily a celebrity with the message of world peace, whereas to others, his importance lies more specifically in his Buddhist teachings. By emphasizing the notion of world peace in presenting one of the most complex tantric systems to a mainly non-Buddhist Western audience, the Dalai Lama creates a scope of reference which is possible to understand for most of the attendants, whether they are Buddhists or not. His message of peace has a universalizing effect on the perception of the very particular setting and the teachings of the Kālacakra Tantra.

The designation of the teachings and the initiation as “Kālacakra for World Peace” was quickly embraced by Western audiences and the media. The official websites of the organizers as well as the press coverage of the events made frequent references to the notion of world peace. The Austrian media referred to the event as a “world peace meeting” rather than a Tibetan Buddhist initiation.⁶³ *The Cincinnati Enquirer* described the endeavor of participants that came to the initiation in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1999 as “seeking world peace,” trying “to spread world peace through meditation, teachings and rituals” and mentioned their wish “to pray for world peace.”⁶⁴ The official website of the “Kālacakra for World Peace Toronto 2004” stated in its introduction:

“For everyone involved, regardless of the level of participation, the Kalachakra serves as a universal prayer for the development of the ethics of peace and harmony within one’s self and humanity.”⁶⁵

Similar statements could be found on the official website of the Kālacakra initiation in Graz. Here the organizers formulated:

63 The Austrian press used the German term “Weltfriedenstag”. See for example the statement on <http://presstext.de/news/020122038/kalachakra-online-rasche-und-umfangreiche-information-zum-weltfriedenstag/> (accessed March 03, 2009).

64 See the article “Dalai Lama, followers coming to Indiana” from August 13, 1999, http://www.enquirer.com/editions/1999/08/13/loc_dalai_lama_followers.html (accessed March 03, 2009).

65 URL: <http://www.ctao.org/kalachakra/kalachakra/introduction.htm> (accessed March 03, 2009).

“To put it in a much simplified, secular way, the Kalachakra for World Peace is like a 10-day training in individual peace, positive thinking, harmony and tolerance.”⁶⁶

Although the major part of the program consisted of sophisticated Buddhist teachings and rituals it nevertheless led just a minority to take the initiation with the intention of actually practicing the Kālacakra Tantra. For the majority of participants, the reason for attending the initiation may not have been the possibility of gaining a deeper understanding of the elaborate philosophical and complex ritual aspects of the Wheel of Time Tantra; rather it may have been a chance to see one of the world’s most famous proponents of peace and nonviolence who is at the same time a revered Buddhist teacher and for many people an icon of a genuine modern spiritual leader with a message for everyone. The ‘Kālacakra for World Peace’ events could be interpreted as an approach to bring two worlds together: the world of an important Tibetan Buddhist teacher with a legacy to share and the world of a popular advocate of peace with a message to impart.

Conclusion

The outlined examples illustrated different interpretations and adaptations of the Kālacakra Tantra and the myth of Śambhala. Contextualizing each of the examples highlighted the respective historical, geographical and social factors at work. These shaped each of the adaptations and interpretations in a particular way: the specific historical circumstances of Buddhism in North India in the tenth and the eleventh century were inscribed in the textual corpus of the tantric system. The particular situation of Agvan Dorjiev, born as a Russian Buryat and trained as a Gelugpa master in Tibet and appointed to advise the thirteenth Dalai Lama in a politically tense situation, shaped his revitalization and interpretation of the myth of Śambhala. The special situation of the current Dalai Lama as a revered Tibetan Buddhist master, a political leader of an exiled and oppressed people and a famous advocate of peace on the world stage formed his way of presenting Tibetan Buddhism in general and on of its highest tantric systems in particular.

Turning back to the introductory example of Victor and Victoria Trimondi, even their interpretation of Tibetan Buddhism, the Kālacakra

66 URL: http://www.shedrupling.at/KC/eng/eng_ikal/short_expl.html (accessed March 03, 2009), paragraph 14.

Tantra, the myth of Śambhala and the role of the Dalai Lama has to be seen as a product of certain historical and social circumstances. In contemporary Western cultures Tibetan Buddhism is mainly perceived as a religion free of the errors attributed to institutionalized religion in general and Christianity in particular.⁶⁷ The Trimondis' interpretation represents a counter-discourse contesting the common notion of Tibetan Buddhism as a possible spiritual alternative for modern Western people.

The examples outlined in the article cover a wide range of interpretations of the Wheel of Time Tantra drawn from different times and places. The synopsis shows that the Kālacakra Tantra as a set of concepts and practices does not have an inherent timeless meaning in itself. On the contrary, different social agents in different historical, geographical and social settings interpreted the Wheel of Time Tantra in a variety of ways. In an active process of adoption and interpretation they revive certain aspects and neglect others; they may even contribute new fields of meaning.

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67 See for example the above mentioned work of Michael Bergunder.

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Remembering Ourselves

On Some Countercultural Echoes of Contemporary Tantric Studies

JEFFREY J. KRIPAL

(to [Pundit] Vidyasagar with a smile):
“Okay, so what’s your orientation?”
[*Acchā tomār kī bhāb?*]
Vidyasagar chuckles very softly and says,
“Ah, I’ll tell you someday when we’re
alone together.” (Everyone laughs.)

Kathāmr̥ta 3.12

We are hardly alone.¹ Still, I want to reflect for a moment here with you on what I see as some of the most basic cultural, historical, even metaphysical orientations of Indology in a geopolitical context increasingly defined by religious fundamentalisms of all stripes, including Christian and American ones. I have already written much – too much, in my opinion – about the controversies surrounding my first book, *Kālī’s Child*, on the erotics of the Bengali corpus surrounding the life and teachings of the nineteenth-century Śākta saint Ramakrishna Paramahansa.² I will not return to those controversies here, not at least directly. Both my approach and my subject are different. I want to weave a particular kind of story, a broad cultural genealogy, as it were, that might help us better understand the place from which at least some of us within Indology think and write about the religions of South Asia today. In essence, I want to tell you about my own

1 An earlier version of this essay was delivered as the plenary lecture for the Spalding Symposium on the Study of Indian Religions, Jesus College, Oxford University, 31 March 2006. My sincere thanks to Anna King for inviting me and to Gavin Flood for his generous response. This essay originally appeared in *Religions of South Asia* 1:1 (2007): 11–28; used with permission.

2 JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, *Kālī’s Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

cultural, historical and spiritual orientations as I have come to remember and understand them, my own *bhāva*, if you will, which – or so I am guessing – may speak privately to the cultural and spiritual orientations of some of you.

Much has been written about the colonial and postcolonial histories of the Hindutva movement in India and its rise to political power in the 1990s through the BJP as the social driver of the various kinds of ban or protest movements that we have seen since then. Precious little, though, has been written about the socio-political genealogies of the Western scholars who have chosen to write transgressively about traditionally taboo topics, who embrace psychoanalytic methods warmly and naturally, and who are fascinated by the transcultural and intercultural issues of gender and sexuality. After *Kālī's Child*, I began such a project in *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom* with respect to the comparative study of mystical literature, which turned the psychoanalytic lens back onto the scholars themselves (including this one) to uncover and analyze some of the erotic and mystical dimensions of the study of erotic mysticism.³ I developed this reflexive project further in *The Serpent's Gift*, where I tried to re-imagine the study of religion as a modern form of erotic gnosis.⁴ I want to continue this project here in a much more restricted and focused fashion, that is, as it applies to the contemporary practice of Indology and, more specifically, to one, and only one, form of that discipline, that is, the study of Tantric texts and traditions. In short, I do not want to analyze 'them'. I want to analyze 'us' (even if, in the end, I think all such dualistic designations are finally illusory). Perhaps this will result in at least a little more understanding, which is not at all the same thing as agreement, and in the process create a more humane and deeper sense of 'we'. That is my hope anyway. In the spirit of our opening epigraph, you are free to laugh at me. Or with me.

Defining One's Terms: 'Tantra' and 'Counterculture'

Before I attempt such a genealogy, however, I need to define my two central terms: *Tantra* and *counterculture*. Neither are ahistorical essences or stable categories for me. Both rather are altered states of consciousness and energy that have crystallized into 'altered categories', that is, into carefully

3 JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexivity in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

4 JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, *The Serpent's Gift: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

constructed terms of art with which historians imagine in their work various sorts of intercultural patterns, encounters, translations, controversies, conversions, disillusionments, initiations, pilgrimages and creative mis-readings, that is, the very stuff of the history of religions.⁵

For my purposes, then, I am defining Tantra as a broad comparative category that scholars of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism have forged over the last century (but particularly in the last four decades, that is, since the American and British counterculture) to describe a broad pan-Asian ‘deep worldview’ or ‘super tradition’ that weaves together such local traditions as Hindu Śākta Tantra, some forms of Indian Jainism, certainly Vajrayāna Buddhism, much of Chinese Taoism and Mahayāna Buddhism, as well as various forms of esoteric Japanese Buddhism, including and especially many aspects of Zen.⁶ The doctrinal features of this super tradition have been debated endlessly, but I am adopting here those of the American Indologist David Gordon White. For White,

Tantra is the Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways.⁷

What fascinates me so about this particular definition (although I could cite others) is that it can also function as a perfectly accurate description of many of the metaphysical assumptions of the American-British counterculture, that broad band of utopian and mystical movements that arced between America and England in the 1960s and 70s and helped energize other more political projects, from civil rights, early feminism and the sexual revolution, to the anti-war and gay rights movements. Not accidentally, these same decades also saw the height of Freud’s popularity in American culture and the entrance of most of its Asian immigrant families after the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 was officially lifted in 1965. It also saw the creation of the American Academy of Religion (in 1964) and the birth of ‘comparative religion’ or ‘world religions’ as a regular fixture of American university curricula.⁸ There was *a lot* going on in these two decades, and

5 JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

6 DAVID GORDON WHITE, ed., “Introduction,” in *The Practice of Tantra: A Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, 8).

7 *Ibid.*, 9. For another definitional discussion, see KRIPAL, *Kālī’s Child*, 29–33.

8 DAVID HABERMAN, “Religious Studies 2000,” The Lester Lecture on the Study of Religion (Department of Religious Studies, University of Colorado, 1999).

all of it, I am suggesting, is relevant to our present topic, to one present Western *bhāva* or spiritual orientation vis-à-vis Asian religion.

The term *counterculture* (originally as *counter culture*) was first brought into popular consciousness by the American historian Theodore Roszak in 1968, first in a series of magazine essays, then in a monograph, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969).⁹ Interestingly, there were close connections between Tantra and the coining of the counterculture from the very beginning. Roszak saw clearly that in order to make sense of what he had just named the counterculture one had to understand its fundamentally new and fundamentally *erotic* relationship to Asia, that is, one had to come to terms with what he called ‘the tantric tradition’ (a phrase, as we shall see, that he almost certainly borrowed from Aghananda Bharati, whose *The Tantric Tradition* had just appeared in 1965 and would be reprinted in 1970 with the very same press that was publishing Roszak). Here is how Roszak described the Asian religious accents of what he had just named ‘the counter culture’ in 1969:

The amorality of Zen, as one might imagine, was rapidly given special emphasis where sex was concerned. And in this respect, the latest European-American journey to the East is a new departure. The Vedantism of the twenties and thirties had always been severely contemplative in the most ascetic sense of the term. One always has the feeling in looking through its literature that its following was found among the very old or very withered, for whom the ideal swami was a kindly orientalized version of an Irish Jesuit priest in charge of a pleasant retreat... But the mysteries of the Orient we now have on hand in the counter culture have broken entirely from this earlier Christianized interpretation. In fact, nothing is so striking about the new orientalism as its highly sexed flavor. If there was anything Kerouac and his [Beat poet] colleagues found especially appealing in Zen they adopted, it was the wealth of hyperbolic eroticism the religion brought with it rather indiscriminately from the *Kāma-sūtra* and the tantric tradition.¹⁰

Speaking in purely Indic terms, we might say that Roszak understood that Tantra had overtaken Vedānta as the privileged deep worldview or super tradition of the American counterculture. If Advaita Vedānta had captured the imagination of the first colonial half of the century, various forms of Hindu and Buddhist Tantra would now capture the second postcolonial half. Theravāda would give way to Zen and the Vajrayāna, and Advaita Vedānta would give way to Śākta Tantra, the *Devī* or Goddess, and

9 THEODORE ROSZAK, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

10 *Ibid.*, 135-136.

Kashmiri Śaivism. In effect, the ascetic flipped over to its deep but related opposite, the erotic. Spirit gave way to Sex. At the very least, Consciousness now embraced Energy as real, as something that truly matter-ed. This, of course, is putting it much too simply, as Tantric themes began to resonate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Advaita Vedānta continued to have a major influence in the second half of the century, all of these traditions possessed profound ascetic dimensions, and popular countercultural movements like ISKCON emphasized rich emotional-devotional orientations that were sensuous in form but almost entirely ascetic in practice. Still, there is something worth noting here.

Perhaps, then, this deep resonance between ‘Tantra’ and ‘counterculture’ makes the most sense from a more abstract, structural point of view. After all, both the American-British counterculture and the historical Asian Tantric traditions often functioned as imagined ‘counters’ to their respective normative or conservative cultures: in more traditional scholarly terms, they *transgressed* or reversed the value systems of their respective societies through various antinomian rituals and doctrines toward what they perceived to be a deeper and more satisfying vision of reality.¹¹ Hence Prem Saran’s elegant study of Tantrism as a permanent ‘counter-system’ or ‘core’ esoteric counterculture within Indic civilization.¹² It is this *structural* fact or culture/counterculture pattern that perhaps best explains the various cross-cultural echoes I hear between the American-British counterculture of the 1960s and 70s and the much older Tantric traditions of South and East Asia. Every culture is different, but their respective countercultures, and particularly their mystical countercultures, are *countercoherent* in the antinomian, apophatic and erotic ways they go about deconstructing and transcending their specific local customs and beliefs.¹³

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- 11 I am aware that scholars have demonstrated convincingly that Tantric traditions in South Asia often serve conservative ends and can be read in these counter-structural ways only with significant qualification (DOUGLAS RENFREW BROOKS, “Encountering the Hindu ‘Other’: Tantrism and the Brahmins of South India.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60(3), 1992: 405-36; HUGH URBAN, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003). I would simply point out that other scholars have suggested more transgressive readings with other materials (ALEXIS SANDERSON, “Purity and Power Among the Brahmins of Kashmir,” in: *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, MICHAEL CARRITHERS, STEVEN COLLINS, and STEVEN LUKES, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; WHITE, “Introduction,” 2003), and that it is popular versions and intuitions of the latter understandings, not of the former, which drove the countercultural embrace of Tantra.
- 12 PREM SARAN, *Yoga, Bhoga, and Ardhanariswara: Individuality, Wellbeing, and Gender in Tantra*. Routledge India, 2006.
- 13 KRIPAL, *Serpent’s Gift*, 112-13.

The Thesis

Having noted (or claimed) all of that, it must be acknowledged, up front and immediately, that many Indologists, including David Gordon White, are quite critical of much of this countercultural translation, particularly in the later depoliticized and highly eclectic and consumerist New Age forms of the 1980s and 90s.¹⁴ Let me admit that I do not fully follow White on this particular point and that I am much less inclined to dismiss modern Western forms of Tantra as somehow illegitimate or metaphysically less than their Asian counterparts, although I do, of course, recognize that they are often much less developed. In this, my approach is more similar to that of Hugh Urban, who treats New Age Tantra and modern sexual magic as perfectly legitimate and related objects of study,¹⁵ Geoffrey Samuel, who has written eloquently and positively of what he calls ‘the attractions of Tantra’ in the modern West¹⁶ and, again, Prem Saran, who has suggested that the counter-core, sensual Self of Indic Tantric practice may provide deep metaphysical resources for genuine transcultural communication and realization.¹⁷

There are two reasons for my position on this point. First, I have become convinced that this Tantric transmission into American culture is much older and much more sophisticated than is usually recognized; it hardly began in the 1960s or 50s, as is often assumed, and its psychological, philosophical and scientific sophistication far surpass that of the consumerist forms on which scholars have tended to focus as representative. And second, I have come to realize that at least some types of Indological scholarship, including my own, historically emerge from this same countercultural lineage, that at least some of us share, if you will, in a kind of Western Tantric transmission.

Put much too simply, then, the thesis that I want to propose is that contemporary Indology’s turn to Tantric texts and traditions and its occasional ‘excessive’ focus on sexuality and gender do not derive in any direct or primary sense from Western colonialism, as is often claimed, I assume, as a kind of attempted immunization from this type of scholarship. The exact opposite, in fact, is much closer to being the case. Such moves, after

14 DAVID GORDON WHITE, *The Kiss of the Yogini: ‘Tantric Sex’ in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

15 URBAN, *Tantra*; see also, Urban, *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and liberation in Modern Western Esotericism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006).

16 GEOFFREY SAMUEL, *Tantric Revisionings: New Understandings of Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Religion* (London: Ashgate, 2005).

17 SARAN, “Yoga, Bhoga,” 1995.

all, followed closely on the heels of a shared British-American counterculture that enthusiastically embraced Asian religious practices and doctrines in an effort to deconstruct and move beyond conservative forms of Western religious and political culture, which these same countercultural actors found stale, unbelievable, materialistic, militaristic and sexually repressive.¹⁸ Arvind Sharma had it exactly right, then, when he suggested that devotees of a countercultural icon like Rajneesh were essentially rejecting major features of Western culture.¹⁹ Similarly, one major reason Western scholars turned to Tantric subjects in the 1980s and 90s was that the counterculture from which they had just emerged was driven by thousands of individuals that had similarly turned to these same traditions as ‘Asian countercultures’ in which they saw their own American and British countercultural experiences accurately and ecstatically reflected. Put most simply and succinctly, *what inspired us was counterculture, not colonialism.*

As with any cross-cultural encounter, there were, of course, projections, transferences and distortions within this prehistory, but there were also real comparative insights and real cultural and personal transformations. I do not want to dismiss or deny any of the distortions or projections. But I do want to point out that there is “another side” to this story and one that is not nearly as dark or depressing. I want to point out that we have only begun to take the comparative insights and transformations of the counterculture as serious objects of study, perhaps because we lack a theoretical practice that grants the same integrity, agency and authority to those among us as to those living in an “exotic” culture or in an irretrievable past. It is easy to honor, fetishize and divinize the dead. It is difficult to take the living so seriously, particularly when they are among us. Or are us.

The counterculture I seek to honor and analyze here, I must stress, was a shared American and European experience extending over many decades, with major influences on both sides of the pond. From the British-American novelists Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood, through the

18 For analogous readings of other moments in this Euro-American encounter, see CATHERINE ALBANESE, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A History of Metaphysical Religion in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); J. J. CLARKE, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997); WILHELM HALBFASS, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany, SUNY, 1988); RAYMOND SCHWAB, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); ARTHUR VERSLUIS, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and DAVID WEIR, *Brahma in the West: William Blake and the Oriental Renaissance* (Albany: SUNY, 2000).

19 ARVIND SHARMA, “The Rajneesh Movement,” in *Religious Movements: Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers*, ed. RODNEY STARK (New York: Paragon House, 1985), 115-128.

British Buddhist Alan Watts and the Viennese Hindu monk turned American anthropologist Leopold Fischer, to George Harrison and the Beatles, it was actually Europeans who provided much of the real action. Put affectionately, if I may speak as an American to my European colleagues, it's *your* fault too.

Put just as affectionately, if I may speak to my Asian colleagues now, it's also yours. Many of the missionary gurus, lamas, and roshis, after all, who appeared on the scene in the 1970s and 80s were heavily inflected toward Tantric ideas and themes, and sexual scandal followed in the wake of many, if not most, of them. From Bhagwan Rajneesh, who fled the US a wanted federal criminal, and Swami Muktananda, who died in the midst of a sexual scandal that has never really lifted,²⁰ to Chogyam Trungpa,²¹ Kalu Rinpoche,²² and the recently deceased Sai Baba – the list is long and remarkably consistent: again and again, the Western devotee's faith has been seriously challenged, if not entirely shattered, by striking sexual revelations that simply cannot be fit into the celibate public images and orthodox truths of these remarkable charismatic individuals. Hence Bernard Faure opens his multi-volume study of Buddhist sexuality by insisting on the transgressive and mystical uses of the erotic within Buddhist history and by placing his own work in a very specific cultural context. He points out, for example, that, "[o]ver the past two decades, a number of scandals have shattered Buddhist communities in North American and Europe." As demographic evidence of this truth, he cites Jack Kornfield's study of fifty-four Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain teachers in North America. The study revealed that thirty-four of them had had sexual relationships with their students.²³

Not everything has been so controversial, of course. Indeed, I would venture to say that the general mood of the American counterculture in the 1960s and 70s with respect to Asian religions was both ecstatic and Romantic, not to mention psychedelic. As Roszak saw so astutely, the counterculture was about consciousness not class, hence it did not look

20 See, for example, LIS HARRIS, "O Guru, Guru, Guru," *The New Yorker* (14 November 1999); SARAH CALDWELL, "The Heart of the Secret: A Personal and Scholarly Encounter with Śākta Tantrism in Siddha Yoga," *Nova Religio* 5(1) (October 2001): 9-51.

21 STEPHEN BUTTERFIELD, *The Double Mirror: A Skeptical Journey into Buddhist Tantra* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1994).

22 JUNE CAMPBELL, *Traveler in Space: In Search of Feminine Identity in Tibetan Buddhism* (New York: George Braziller, 1996).

23 BERNARD FAURE, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3.

back to Karl Marx but *out* to William Blake.²⁴ This ecstatic countercultural embrace of Asia in the 1960s and early 70s, followed by this long series of painful disillusionments in the 1980s and early 90s, followed again by a period of painful debate, mourning and cultural processing by practitioner and scholar alike, constitutes the heart and core of the Euro-American experience of Asian religions. There is no getting around this. This is how we remember ourselves.

Similarly, these same decades constitute the precise historical context from which Tantric Studies emerged as a subdiscipline within Indology in the late 1980s and 90s in order to process, as a culture, what had happened in the 1960s and 70s. This, I believe, is the best explanation for why Tantric traditions and themes became the focus of so much scholarship. Basically, it had to do with counterculture, with the attempted transgression of Western conservative norms and with a sincere desire to be transfigured by an encounter with the Asian religions. And it worked. There were, after all, literally hundreds of thousands of altered states of consciousness and energy catalyzed by everything from *bhakti* to *bhāṅg* to the Beatles, by gods, goddesses and gurus.²⁵

I have learned to be grateful, not dismissive, of this phenomenon. And I have learned to see “Tantra” as an altered category that crystallizes and encodes these altered states of consciousness and energy, forms of mind in which some of us still participate and out of which we still think and write. Whether we were actually there or not (and I, for one, was not – I first encountered Hinduism in a Benedictine monastic seminary in the early 1980s), it often seems to me that the spirit of Arthur Avalon still hovers over our pages and that Jimi Hendrix still sings and strums in our words.

That anyway is my thesis, my Memorable Fancy, as Blake might say. I am certainly not suggesting that such a thesis fits every individual case. I am perfectly aware that numerous scholars who have worked on Tantric texts and traditions had no personal connection to the counterculture (and would want none). My countercultural thesis, then, is more about “echoes,” about the general *Zeitgeist* or ecstatic resonance through which some of us have moved, often, I suspect, without being fully cognizant of its profound intellectual, moral and spiritual effects on the rhythms of our work. I, at least, have only recently come to this conclusion.

24 JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, “Reality against Society: William Blake, Antinomianism, and the American Counter Culture,” *Common Knowledge* 13(3) (2007): 98-112.

25 JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, “Western Popular Culture, Hindu Influences On,” in *The Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, eds. DENISE CUSH, CATHERINE ROBINSON, and MICHAEL YORK (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2007).

As a kind of humble beginning of coming to terms with this possibility, allow me to propose four different moments in this history involving the following seven individuals: (1) Sylvais Hamati and Pierre Bernard; (2) Sir John Woodroffe and Atul Behari Ghosh; (3) Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary; and (4) Agehananda Bharati. The first two moments set up the intellectual and cultural foundations of the countercultural Tantra; the second two expressed it archetypally. Such moments and figures, of course, could easily be multiplied into the hundreds: the Beat poets' turn East to Mahayāna and Zen Buddhism; Alan Watts's celebration of Taoism, Tantrism and Zen; the cultural influence of Sri Aurobindo's Tantric evolutionary metaphysics; Joseph Campbell's fascination with the mythology of the hero (*vīra*) and *Kuṇḍalinī* yoga; the Kashmiri Shaiva systems of Gopi Krishna and Swami Muktananda; and on and on. I have, in fact, explored the details of this larger story in a recent work.²⁶ Four brief moments will have to suffice for our present purposes. Obviously, they are merely emblematic, hardly exhaustive, of what I am trying to articulate so imperfectly here.

Sylvais Hamati and Pierre Bernard (1875-1955)

It appears that the first documented and truly serious American encounter with Indian Tantra involved a cross-cultural friendship between two men: an eccentric Iowan by the (likely) name of Pierre Bernard and a Syrian-Indian by the name of Sylvais Hamati. Bernard met Hamati in Lincoln, Nebraska, sometime in the late 1880s.²⁷ Hamati, by his own description, was an accomplished Tantric yogi probably from Calcutta, with whom Bernard studied intensely for years. From the late 1880s to just past the turn of the century, the two men traveled across the country together, perhaps as entertainers in a circus. Bernard first comes into clear historical view on 29 January, 1898, on the front-page of *The New York Times* and under the symbolic banner of the Hindu goddess Kālī no less. He had given a public demonstration of what he called his *Kālī-mudrā* or "death trance" to a group of physicians in San Francisco, during which he seems to have successfully slowed his vital functions sufficiently to mimic the vital signs of death. The newspaper photo shows him, well, dead.

²⁶ KRIPAL, *Esalen*.

²⁷ For this and so much more, see ROBERT LOVE, *The Great Oom: The Improbable Birth of Yoga in America* (New York: Viking, 2010).

Catalyzed by such publicity and psychophysical stunts, Bernard now morphed into “The Hypnotist Dr. Bernard” and became something of a personality in the Bay area. He left San Francisco sometime around the great earthquake in 1906. Around this same time, he also founded both the first Tantric Press and the first Tantric Order in America and published what must be the first Tantric publication in America, the *International Journal of the Tantrik Order* (1907). By 1909 we find him in New York, where, after various legal and criminal fiascos involving his sexual practices, Bernard eventually emerged as a successful teacher of yoga and opened a series of institutions. From one of these, the local press, which had now dubbed him “The Omnipotent Oom,” reported any number of slightly scandalous or just scandalous happenings, most of them involving Bernard’s relationships with his female disciples. Yoga and sex, in other words, were already joined at the hips in the popular imagination, literally.

By 1919, Bernard had moved his teaching practices to a lush 73-acre estate in Upper Nyack, where he was teaching some of New York’s elite, including Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt and her two daughters, and making a great deal of money in the process. The next year he bought another Nyack estate of 39 acres, and later in life he would settle down as President of the State Bank of Pearl River and collect expensive automobiles, much like Bhagwan Rajneesh would do decades later up in Oregon. He died in 1955, just before the counterculture would take up many of the themes he taught – from the importance of the *cakras* to the divinity of the body – in its own excessive and colorful ways.

Arthur Avalon

About the same time Bernard was founding his Tantric journal in America, a High Court Judge in Calcutta by the name of Sir John Woodroffe (1865-1936) was beginning his own writing career on similar subjects. Woodroffe’s life and writings have been thoroughly studied by Kathleen Taylor. Drawing on her marvelous work, I would like to make three simple points here that bear directly on my narrative.

First, as Taylor has shown, Woodroffe’s personal desire to study the Tantric texts, and probably even engage in some of the esoteric rituals, was supported by his life-long friendship with the Bengali pundit, Atul Behari Ghosh, who actually did most of the Sanskrit translation work. “Arthur Avalon,” as Taylor has shown so convincingly, was most likely a pen-name designed to fuse the historical personalities of Woodroffe and Ghosh into a single transcultural cross-cultural icon. Second, this engagement with Tantra was both scholarly and religious for Woodroffe. According to Taylor,

sometime after 1904, Woodroffe met a Tantric saint, who likely initiated him into Tantra and before whom Woodroffe is said to have received a very dramatic “electric shock” *śakti-pāt* experience during the night of Kālī Pūjā, probably of 1906.²⁸ Third, Woodroffe and Ghosh’s impact on Jungian psychology, Western understandings of Tantric yoga, and on the whole human potential and New Age language of the *Kuṇḍalinī* and the *cakra* system has been immense. Indeed, there are probably few previous texts, with the possible exception of Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* or Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* (itself a Blakean tract inspired by *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*), that were more influential on the practice, art and metaphysical assumptions of the counterculture than Arthur Avalon’s *The Serpent Power*.

All of this is to say what I hope is obvious, namely, that Tantric Studies began in the first decades of the twentieth century on a powerful note of cross-cultural affirmation and friendship, and it was designed precisely to counter the kinds of gross cultural misunderstanding that had been propounded against the Tantric texts and rituals in the nineteenth century, mostly by Christian missionaries and colonial administrators. Little wonder, then, that “Arthur Avalon” became such a central and beloved figure of the American counterculture of the 1960s and 70s. This British-Bengali icon expressed perfectly, if also secretly, what that counterculture was partly about – a friendly fusion of East and West via Tantric practice, a bit of Sanskrit and the serpent power of sexuality.

Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary and the Origins of Psychedelic Orientalism (1962)

Anyone familiar with the counterculture knows that mind-altering substances played a major role in both its countering and its turn East. Often, this Asian turn is read as a kind of foolish Western projection on cultures somehow completely devoid of such meanings. I think such a reading is both demeaning to the human beings it claims to understand and seriously mistaken in terms of the actual cultural facts. The truth of the matter is that the countercultural visionaries saw their own altered states fantastically

28 KATHLEEN TAYLOR, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: “An Indian Soul in a European Body?”* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 102-104. For two descriptions of my own *śakti-pāt* eighty-three years later during the same ritual cycle, see KRIPAL, *Roads of Excess*, 199-206; and JEFFREY J. KRIPAL, *Mutants and Mystics: Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 5-8.

reflected in the mythologies and mystical systems of Asia, many of which had been employing psychotropic agents for centuries (hence the Tantric South Asian term for cannabis – *siddhi*). These were deeply revelatory experiences that cried out for an explanation and a cultural frame generous enough to hold them. That explanation and that frame were commonly provided by Asian myth, symbol and practice.²⁹ That is why so many young Westerners traveled to Asia in the 1960s and 70s. That is why they loved India, Tibet, Nepal and Japan. Yes, they were projecting (but so was everyone else, including the Indians, Tibetans, Nepalese and Japanese). Yes, they missed the ascetic and conservative orthodoxies of these ancient cultures. But they also found something very real and very important there. They found the Asian countercultures.

It should hardly surprise us, then, to learn that many contemporary American Buddhist meditators found their first taste of enlightenment in psychedelic states.³⁰ Nor should we be shocked to discover that the American guru Ram Dass (previously Richard Alpert) identified the two most transforming factors of his life to be psychedelics and his Indian guru, Neem Karoli Baba. This psychedelic orientalism hardly escaped the notice of any number of countercultural actors. Few, however, were so taken with it than Ram Dass's former Harvard colleague, Timothy Leary (1920-1997).

As my thesis would predict, Leary's East was a Tantric East. The likely origin point of this psychedelic-Tantric orientalism appears in a letter from Aldous Huxley to Leary that Robert Forte has preserved for us. According to Forte and as evidenced by this letter, there is little doubt that Timothy Leary's turn to Asia stems finally back to Huxley. The two had been corresponding throughout 1961 on the subject of LSD. Huxley at this point was finishing his final novel and testament, *Island*, about a utopian community whose two central cultural practices involved the ingestion of a mind-altering mushroom (called *mokṣa*) and a contemplative sexual practice (called *maithuna*). At some point, Leary seems to have asked Huxley about the subject of Tantra. On 2 February 1962, Huxley answers this question. He begins by suggesting the works of Sir John Woodroffe, Heinrich Zimmer's chapter on Tantra in *Philosophies of India* (which was really ghost-written by Joseph Campbell), and the scholarly works of Mircea Eliade and Edward Conze. In other words, he suggests that Leary read Western scholarship.

29 L. GRINSPOON and J.B. BAKALAR. *Psychedelic Drugs Reconsidered* (New York: Lindesmith Center, 1997).

30 ALLAN HUNT BADINER and ALEX GREY, eds., *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002).

Then Huxley launches into his own interpretations of Tantra. He praises it as the highest ideal possible, explicitly links it to Zen Buddhism (recall Roszak), invokes psychoanalysis and *gestalt* therapy to explain its psychological mechanisms, offers some rather pointed criticisms of Asian traditions that ascetically reject the world (within a sentence that makes no grammatical sense), and finally suggests that it is Tantra that supplies the best context for the ritual use of psychedelics:

... the basic ideal [of Tantra] seems to me the highest possible ideal – enlightenment achieved, essentially, through constant awareness. This is the ultimate yoga – being aware, conscious even of the unconscious – on every level from the physiological to the spiritual. In this context see the list of 112 exercises in awareness, extracted from a Tantrik Text and printed at the end of “Zen Flesh Zen Bones” (now in paperback. The whole of gestalt therapy is anticipated in these exercises – and the world) as the Vedāntists and the Nirvāṇa-addicts of the Hīnayāna School of Buddhists. Tantra teaches a yoga of sex, a yoga of eating (even eating forbidden foods and drinking forbidden drinks)... LSD and the mushrooms should be used, it seems to me, in the context of this basic Tantrik idea of the yoga of total awareness, leading to enlightenment within the world of everyday experience – which of course becomes the world of miracle and beauty and divine mystery when experience is what it always ought to be.³¹

Not that Leary always followed Huxley’s sage advice. Psychedelics, Leary quickly realized, often had the effect of releasing and amplifying erotic energies and ecstasies. Huxley had recognized this effect as well before Leary, and he had warned Leary “to not let the sexual cat out of the bag,” that is, to not link psychedelics with sexuality in a public forum, even if, as everyone in the know knew, they were in fact linked. Leary ignored this advice and gave a very famous interview, “She Comes in Colors,” to *Playboy* in 1966 on exactly this topic.

There were, of course, many reasons for Leary’s legal fate, but the *Playboy* interview hardly helped him here. Huxley had guessed correctly what would happen in such a situation. As Leary gave this interview, he faced a series of court appearances that would eventually land him in federal prison for years and, through a dramatic prison escape, turn him into an international fugitive. President Nixon went so far as to call Timothy Leary “the most dangerous man in America.” The sexual cat was out of the bag. And it was having sex with the psychedelic cat. And it would be a long time before anyone could get these two cats back in the bag again.

31 Quoted in ROBERT FORTE, ed., *Timothy Leary: Outside Looking In* (VT: Park Street Press, 1999), 108-109.

A Tantrika Among Us: Agehananda Bharati (1923-1991)

Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary were hardly alone in their psychedelically tinged turn to Tantra. Agehananda Bharati was born Leopold Fischer on 20 April, 1923, in Freud's Vienna. Of Czech and possibly Jewish descent, Leopold was an apostate from Catholicism by age 13 and at 14 was sitting in on the classes of the Sanskritist Erich Frauwallner. At 16 he was formally accepted into Hinduism as "Ramachandra" by an itinerant Indian preacher who was visiting the Indian Club in Vienna. After the war, he studied Indian history, Buddhism and Sanskrit under Herbert Guenther and eventually sailed for his beloved India, arriving in Bombay on 30 January, 1949.

There, after joining and then leaving the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and being turned away by over one hundred monks in three dozen different establishments, he finally found an independent renouncer by the name of Swami Visvananda to give him initiation into the more ancient, more traditional, and more intellectual Dashanami sect. Ramachandra was initiated in 1951 by Visvananda, who gave him the monastic name of "Agehananda Bharati." Agehananda – "Homeless Bliss." Bharati lived in India for another six years after his initiation, wandering its roads the length of the country from north to south, interacting with hundreds of *sadhus* of all stripes, taking what he describes as a secret Tantric initiation in Assam, writing popular pieces for the papers and teaching philosophy, first in New Delhi and then at Benares Hindu University. Bharati left BHU in 1954 after a dramatic sexual scandal. He remained in the country for another two years, when he left to travel in Thailand and Japan.

He arrived in the United States in 1958, where he took a research position at the University of Washington. It was at Washington that the psychoanalytic anthropologist Melford Spiro convinced him that he needed to take up a traditional academic discipline to survive in the American academic world. Bharati chose anthropology. In 1961, he took a post in anthropology at Syracuse University, a position that he held (without a Ph.D.) for 30 years until his death on 14 May, 1991. Writing and speaking (the latter in 15 languages) as a one-of-a-kind monk-anthropologist, Bharati's career can best be understood as an early manifestation of a renewed, culturally supported interest in the Tantric traditions. Certainly he wrote during a time in which there was a plethora of popular works on Tantra being published but very little solid scholarship available to the general public. It was this state of things that Bharati sought to redress with the 1965 publication of his self-described magnum opus, *The Tantric*

Tradition.³² It was this book that Roszak was almost certainly quoting when he coined the term *counter culture* and wrote of this culture's fondness for "the tantric traditions."

What did Bharati understand by the expression "the Tantric tradition"? Tantra, for Bharati, was a "total sensuous indulgence guided by certain esoteric controls."³³ As "instruments of opposition and criticism of the official religious establishments,"³⁴ these traditions were "antiestablishmentarian,"³⁵ for they defy traditional moral claims systematically. Bharati, in other words, understood that what he called the Tantric tradition was a kind of counterculture that systematically and intentionally transgressed the norms of conservative society, be it Indian or American (or both). Hence, like Huxley and Leary, he did not hesitate to celebrate the sacramental use of LSD within such a countering culture. Bharati believed that this desire for experimentation, this willingness to transgress, and this ability to bracket dogma and doctrine were valuable characteristics of Hinduism that were uniquely suited to a skeptical and radically free-thinking Western modernity.

Bharati, however, was not naïve about the "dark side" of the Tantric traditions, and his writings presciently display a deep and insightful concern for the categories of gender and power well before such categories came to dominate religious studies in the last decades of the twentieth-century. Resisting any naively romantic treatment of the tradition, he rejected completely the popular American notion that traditional Tantra somehow inculcates mutual feelings of love and tenderness between the partners: "Nonsense. The sex of Tantra is hard-hitting, object-using, manipulative ritual without any consideration for the person involved."³⁶ He acknowledged that a future American-generated Tantrism might well include these emotions, but he had no patience for those who wanted to project such emotions onto Indian Tantric culture or, much worse, the historical past.³⁷

32 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, *The Tantric Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

33 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, "Hinduism, Psychotherapy, and the Human Predicament," in *Religious Systems and Psycho-Therapy*, ed. RICHARD H. COX (Springfield: Charles C. Thomas), 171.

34 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, "Fictitious Tibet: The Origin and Persistence of Rampaim," *The Tibet Society Bulletin* 7, 4.

35 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, "The Future (if any) of Tantrism," *Loka: A Journal from Naropa Institute*, 128.

36 *Ibid.*, 130.

37 *Ibid.* For an insightful discussion of this same theme, see HUGH URBAN, "The 'Poor Company': Secrecy and Symbolic Power in the Kartabhaja Sect of Colonial Bengal" (Ph.D. diss.: The University of Chicago, 1998), 126-139.

Bharati predicted in the mid 1970s that it would take about two decades of solid scholarship for knowledge about Tantrism to seep through to a wider Western audience.³⁸ He was also of the opinion that the psycho-experimental methods of these traditions were “diametrically opposed to that of the orthodox,” and that mystical enstasis is achieved in them “by activating precisely those mechanisms which the orthodox yogi seeks to suppress or eschew.”³⁹ In other words, he believed that Tantra would be a hit in America on both the popular and scholarly levels, and he predicted that this Tantric Renaissance would be deeply controversial, if not actually offensive to many orthodox Hindus.

He was correct on both counts.

Historically Understanding this Moment

This, of course, is where we find ourselves now, in precisely the scenario Bharati predicted. Having experienced the awakenings of the counterculture and worked through the Asian sources of this awakening through the scholarship of the late 1980s and 90s, we are now in a reactionary phase catalyzed by immigrant elites concerned about how their traditions are perceived, and often grossly distorted, by the surrounding dominant Christian culture in which they now live. When most of these families arrived, in or shortly after the counterculture, they set about doing what all American immigrant communities before them had done, that is, acculturate, adapt and build their own communities. They almost certainly did not feel like they could control what entered American culture from their original cultures, and they certainly experienced (and continue to experience) various forms of bigotry and racism on a regular basis both in their communities and in their places of work. But now they are settled in, they are often economically successful, they are enjoying the fruits of the civil rights movement (another manifestation, along with feminism and gay rights, of the countercultural period), and they feel empowered to speak out and try to take control of how their cultures are spoken and written about. How should Euro-American scholars of Indian religions respond to all of this? I

38 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, “Sakta and Vajrayāna: Their Place in Indian Thought,” in *Studies of Esoteric Buddhism and Tantrism*, ed. GISHO NAKANO (Koyasan, Japan: Koyasan University, 1965), 84.

39 AGEHANANDA BHARATI, “Techniques of Control in the Esoteric Traditions of India and Tibet,” in *The Realm of the Extra-human: Ideas and Actions*, ed. AGEHANANDA BHARATI, (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), n.p.

do not have many definitive answers here and I can, of course, only speak for myself, but I do have a few historical observations, with which I will close.

The first thing I believe Euro-American scholars should do is *listen*. The message is often twisted and counter-productively aggressive, but many of these voices are obviously speaking out of their own deep experiences of injustice, racism and gross misrepresentation in the workplace, the public square and the media. We need to hear these cries of the heart and take them to our hearts. Listening, of course, is not the same thing as agreeing with everything that is said.

We should also, I think, apply the same intellectual tools that we apply elsewhere here, that is, we should historicize and analyze our present moment with all the hermeneutical tools of sociology, psychology and philosophy that we have at our disposal. Consider, for a moment, the different patterns of censorship and control that we see manifested in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that is, in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Numerous scholars have noted that nineteenth-century India witnessed a systematic suppression of Tantric traditions, as the latter encountered the Western sensibilities of the colonial authorities, the Christian missionaries, and the Indian reformers anxious to establish Hinduism as an ethically viable world religion, mostly around an imagined Vedic and/or Advaita Vedantic narrative. Certainly my own *Kālī's Child* revolved around this very issue: the various subtle and not so subtle ways that Ramakrishna's Śākta Tantra was suppressed and denied, first within Bengal immediately after his death, and then in the West, in New York to be exact, through an orthodox translation project that systematically censored the sexual components of the Bengali texts and fore-grounded the neo-Vedānta of Swami Vivekananda. It was in this way that Vedānta eclipsed Tantra.

It is perhaps worth noting here that I do not count myself among that widespread school of thought I call "blame it on the British," that is, I do not think this suppression of Tantra was only or even originally a colonial phenomenon. This is much too easy. Historically speaking, such polemical patterns were in fact ancient and indigenous ones on the subcontinent. Tantric culture had undergone an internal major reformation in eleventh-century Kashmir through the school of Abhinavagupta, and Brahmanical, Buddhist, Jain, and Christian Indian writers had all been ridiculing and shaming Tantrikas for centuries before the British ever arrived on India's shores.⁴⁰ But colonial contact clearly exacerbated these same processes,

40 See, for example, CYNTHIA HUMES, "Wrestling with Kālī: South Asian and British Constructions of the Dark Goddess," in *Encountering Kālī: In the Margins, at the Center*, in

hence the gradual domestication, “sweetening” or censorship of Tantric motifs that numerous historians have noted as a defining feature of nineteenth-century Bengal, where much of the British-Indian encounter was focused during this period. In this, I am in complete agreement with a scholar like Prem Saran, who has suggested that the counter-system of Indian Tantrism has been repressed by a triple Puritanism on the continent, that is, by Brahmanical Hinduism, by Islam and by British colonialism.⁴¹

Seen in such a historical light, an Indological project like *Kālī’s Child* that zooms in on Tantric hermeneutical practices within an esoteric oral tradition recorded in a Bengali corpus ceases to be a nefarious form of “neo-colonialism” and becomes instead an intellectually responsible project of recovery and remembrance of the precolonial, the subaltern and the oral – a recovery that has been robustly defended, celebrated, and developed yet further from within the tradition recently.⁴² Such a book can also be heard as a rather dramatic echo of the American counterculture, which similarly turned from Vedānta to Tantra in order to realize its own erotic gnosis, its own enlightenment of the body. That, in my mind at least, was the deepest project of *Kālī’s Child* – to recover and then analyze the Tantra behind and within the Vedānta, to recover that which had been repressed in the colonial period, to speak the secret again. It is a very clever ruse to call such a project “neo-colonialist” or “orientalizing”, but it is the censoring reactions against such a project, not the project itself, that in fact display the clearest colonial pedigree (although, as already noted, such reactions probably lie much deeper still in traditional Brahmanical orthodoxy, against which the Tantric transgressive and antinomian rituals derive their meaning, logic and energy).

This is not to claim, however, that the secrets I spoke were identical to the secrets Ramakrishna spoke, that is, this is not to suggest that what I or any other contemporary scholar uncovers in the past is a simple reflection or representation of that past. Far from it. We too are historical beings. We too think and speak within and as bodies that, in the words of Gavin Flood, have been deeply “entextualized” by the terms, languages and doctrines of our cultures.⁴³ In some sense, this is precisely what I have tried to suggest here with respect to Tantric Studies and the American-British

the West, ed. RACHEL FELL McDERMOTT and JEFFREY J. KRIPAL (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

41 SARAN, *Yoga, Bhoga, and Ardhhanariswara*.

42 RAJAGOPAL CHATTOPADHYAYA, *Ramakrishna: Kālī’s Child and Lover* (San Jose: Vyasdeb Chatterjee, 2011).

43 GAVIN FLOOD, *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

counterculture: scholars have authored a particular body of scholarship, and the subtle sounds of that scholarly corpus echo in places of a specific countercultural history, one that turned to the Tantric bodies of Asia not to reproduce or mimic them, but to encode and entextualize a new democratic-erotic body no longer bound to a traditional religious register, be it Christian, Hindu, Buddhist or otherwise. A certain enlightenment of the body and a particular mystical or apophatic theology, a “religion of no religion,” thus sparkled at the heart of the countercultural experience.⁴⁴

This, I would suggest, is why questions of gender, sexual freedom and sexual orientation come so naturally and easily to some of us: these, after all, are body questions with a clear countercultural pedigree. Perhaps this is also why such questions do not always come so naturally and easily to our critics. Their own cultural histories, after all, have been defined by the historical experience of colonialism, not counterculture. Both counterculture and countercolonialism, however, are deeply ethical stances, each with their own profound integrities.⁴⁵ This, it seems to me, is an exceptionally poignant, but also eminently understandable, situation.

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44 KRIPAL, *Esalen*.

45 Perhaps the place for both of these groups to meet is another body issue that came to political resolution (if not practical solution) in the same counterculture, that is, the issue of race. But racial justice, gender equity and the civil rights of sexual orientation are all apiece in this democratic logic: I do not see how a society can adequately address one without eventually coming to terms with the other two. Obviously, no society, including and especially American society, has attained such a full enlightenment of the body.

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Tantra, American Style

From the Path of Power to the Yoga of Sex

HUGH B. URBAN

What I tell you must be kept with great secrecy. This must not be given to just anyone. It must only be given to a devoted disciple. It will be death to any others.

If liberation could be attained simply by having intercourse with a *śakti* [female partner], then all living beings in the world would be liberated just by having intercourse with women.

– *Kulārnavatantra*, II.4, II.117

Because the science of Tantra was developed thousands of year ago... many of the techniques are not relevant to the needs of the contemporary Western lover....So while I have retained the Tantric goal of sexual ecstasy, I've developed new approaches to make this experience accessible to people today. High Sex weaves together the disciplines of sexology and humanistic psychology to give Western lovers the experience of sexual ecstasy taught by Tantra but using contemporary tools.

– Margo Anand, *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy*¹

Surely few terms in the vocabulary of Asian religions hold such a tantalizing, titillating or controversial place in the contemporary American imagination as *tantra*. A word that conjures up images of exotic eroticism, mystical ecstasy and Oriental intrigue, Tantra has entered fully into both Western scholarship and popular discourse as a whole. Not only are entertainers like Sting practicing their own varieties of Tantric sex, but Tantra has now become a major commercial enterprise, marketed as the ideal

1 MARGO ANAND, *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy: The Path of Sacred Sexuality for Western Lovers* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1989), 7.

wedding of spiritual transcendence with this-worldly pleasure. The phrase “American Tantra” is now a registered trademark, representing a popular line of books, videos and other “ceremonial sensual” merchandise.²

Yet if we examine the history of Tantra and its transmission to this country, we find that it has undergone some profound transformations in the course of its long “journey to the West.” For most Americans today, Tantra is defined simply as “spiritual sex” or the use of sexuality as a means to religious experience. As the “exotic art of prolonging your passion play” to achieve “nooky nirvana,” it is praised as a much-needed liberation of sexuality for a repressive Western world.³ This would seem to be an image of Tantra very different from the one we find in most Indian traditions, where sex usually plays a fairly minor, often “unsexy” role, and there is typically far more emphasis on initiation, transmission of esoteric knowledge and elaborate ritual.⁴ What we see, in other words, is a clear shift in the imagining of Tantra as it has been imported to this country – a shift from Tantra conceived as *dangerous power and secrecy* to Tantra conceived as *healthy pleasure and liberated openness*. This shift is exemplified by the two passages quoted above: the first, a quote from one of the most important Tantric texts, the *Kulārnavatantra*, warns of the perils of revealing Tantric secrets to the uninitiated. Tantra, it is true, involves rites of sexual intercourse and consumption of wine, but these must only be engaged in guarded esoteric contexts; in the hands of the uninitiated masses they would lead to moral ruin. The contemporary neo-*tāntrika*, however, takes the opposite position. Jettisoning all the old ritual trappings as outdated or irrelevant, the neo-*tāntrika* takes only the most expedient of these techniques, mixes them with contemporary psychology and self-help wisdom and adapts them to a consumer capitalist audience.

In what follows, I will briefly re-trace the genealogy of Tantra’s rapid growth in the U.S. The contemporary imagining of Tantra, I will argue, is the result of a complex feed-back loop or a game of “cross-cultural ping-pong” between India and the West, through which American authors have selectively appropriated elements of Tantra – above all, the focus on sex and transgression – and re-worked them in the context of uniquely American obsessions. But it is an image of Tantra that has now been re-appropriated by contemporary Indian authors as well, to give birth to neo-Tantric gurus

2 PAUL RAMANA DAS and MARILENA SILBEY, “American Tantra,” 2010. <http://www.americantantra.org/> See URBAN, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chapter 6.

3 LYNN COLLINS, “The Secret to Tantric Sex,” *Cosmopolitan* (May, 2000): 240.

4 See especially DAVID GORDON WHITE, *The Kiss of the Yogini: “Tantric Sex” in its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); URBAN, *Tantra*, chapter 1.

like Osho Rajneesh and other meldings of East and West in a new age of global capitalism. Finally, through the new medium of the Internet and the global language of html, Tantra has spread to every corner of cyberspace, with on-line temples, electronic initiations and the cyber-orgasmic flow of *śakti* through the subtle veins and *cakras* of the world-wide web.

In my analysis of American Tantra, I will employ some of the insights of Michel Foucault, along with more recent authors like Andrew Weeks and Angus McLaren, who have examined the intense proliferation of discourse about sexuality in the 20th and 21st centuries. As McLaren comments, “Today’s media, while claiming to be shocked by the subversiveness of carnal desires, deluge the public with explicit sexual imagery to sell everything from Calvin Klein jeans to Black and Decker power drills. Sexuality... has invaded every aspect of public life. Sexual identity has indeed become a key defining category.”⁵ As Foucault argues, however, it is a misconception to suppose that the history of sex in the West is a progressive narrative of liberation from Victorian repression. On the contrary, the Victorian age witnessed, not so much a repression, but instead an intense proliferation of discourse about sex, which was categorized, theorized and medically classified in endless detail. Conversely, our own age is perhaps not the age of sexual revolution that it is commonly imagined to be. Our sexual liberation has been accompanied by new forms of regulation, as we all as backlash and conservatism. What *has* happened, however, is that we have produced an incredible body of discourse – a kind of “over-knowledge” or “hyper-development of discourse about sexuality, science of sexuality and knowledge of sexuality.”⁶ Hence, it is more useful to think of sexuality as a constructed, contested category, whose boundaries have been renegotiated in each generation. The category of “sexuality” is itself a fairly recent invention, a product of the late 19th century;⁷ and it is one that it is by no means fixed or static, but has been newly imagined in the changing social contexts of the last 100 years.

Similarly, as André Padoux and others have argued, the category of “Tantrism,” as a singular, abstract and relatively unified “ism” is itself

5 ANGUS MCLAREN, *Twentieth Century Sexuality: A History* (London: Blackwell 1999), 1.

6 MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Religion and Culture*, JEREMY R. CARRETTE, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 117.

7 The term “sexuality” first entered the English vocabulary through an 1892 translation of RICHARD VON KRAFFT-EBING’s classic work on sexual deviance (MCLAREN, *Twentieth Century Sexuality*, 224n).

largely the product of Western scholarship since the 19th century.⁸ And surely its equation with “spiritual sex” is a fairly recent Western invention. As I will argue, the American preoccupation with Tantra has gone hand in hand with our larger preoccupation with and anxieties about sexuality – as a source of fascination and titillation as well as a source of scandal, moral outrage and public censorship.

After a brief discussion of Tantra’s “journey to the West,” during the era of colonialism and Orientalist scholarship (part I), I will examine a series of four key transformations that have occurred in the transmission of Tantra to the U.S. First, I will examine the *sexualization and scandalization of Tantra* in the early 20th century, which began with the founding of the first “Tantrik Order in America” by the infamous Dr. Pierre Arnold Bernard (II). Second, I will look at the *commercialization and commodification of Tantra*, which began with the sexual revolution of the 60’s and reached its climax in the teachings of the notorious “Guru of the Rich,” Osho-Rajneesh (III). Third, I will examine the *homoeroticization* of Tantra in the last two decades, as Tantric practices have been increasingly appropriated by gay, lesbian and sado-masochist communities (IV). And finally (V), I will discuss the *digitalization and globalization* of Tantra in the new world of the Internet, where the seemingly global language of html opens a new cross-cultural circulation of knowledge and power between East and West.

8 ANDRÉ PADOUX, “Hindu Tantrism,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, v. 14, ed. MIRCEA ELIADE (New York: MacMillan, 1986), 273. See JOHN WOODROFFE, *Shakti and Shākta* (New York: Dover, 1978), 54.

I. From *Black Art of the Crudest and Filthiest Kind*
to *The Art of Spiritual Ecstasy*:
Tantra's Complex Journey to the West

The Tantras [exert] great influence in later days... The worship assumes wild, extravagant forms, generally obscene, sometimes bloody... We cannot go further into detail. It is profoundly saddening to think that such abominations are... are performed as part of divine worship. Conscience, however, is so far alive that these detestable rites are practiced only in secret.

– J. Murray Mitchell and Sir William Muir,
*Two Old Faiths*⁹

Tantra, it would seem, lies at a pivotal intersection between Indian and American imaginations, at the nexus of a complex play of representations and misrepresentations between East and West over the last 200 years. Not only was it a crucial part of the Western “imagining of India,” particularly during the colonial era; but it has been no less crucial a part of the “re-imagining of America,” particularly during the eras of sexual liberation, feminism, gay rights and sexual politics at the turn of the new millennium. To most contemporary Americans, the word Tantra is usually imagined as the Cult of Ecstasy or Yoga of Sex – a religious path that combines the physical experience of sexual pleasure with the spiritual experience of liberation. Yet anyone who reads the classic Tantric texts quickly realizes that it often takes quite some time to get to the juicy stuff. In fact, most Sanskrit *tantras* are fairly dry ritual manuals, and when they do happen to deal with the infamous “fifth M” of *maithuna* or sexual intercourse, it is usually just a couple of verses, surrounded by hundreds of pages of technical details.¹⁰

What is most important to the authors of the Indian Tantric literature, I would argue, is not sex, but rather *power* – power on all levels of reality, cosmic, physical and socio-political alike. Most Hindu Tantric traditions center on the goddess Śakti – power or energy which circulates throughout all of the manifest universe; she is the creative energy or force which radiates out of the supreme consciousness of Lord Śiva, generating the myriad forms of the phenomenal universe. “[T]he Tantric conceives of the world

9 J. MURRAY MITCHELL and SIR WILLIAM MUIR, *Two Old Faiths: Essays on the Religion of the Hindus and the Mohammedans* (New York: Chautauqua Press, 1891), 53-4.

10 See HUGH B. URBAN, *The Power of Tantra: Religion, Sexuality, and the Politics of South Asian Studies* (London: Tauris, 2009).

as power (*śakti*). As the goddess' own self-effulgence, he believes the world is nothing but power to be harnessed."¹¹ Thus the task for the *tāntrika* is to arouse and channel the flow of energy that circulates throughout the universe, the human body and the social order. As Douglas Brooks argues, the primary concern for the *tāntrika* is "how one might harness and actualize the power perceived to be inherent in all things, including social relations. The dichotomies of impure/pure, and auspicious/inauspicious are... mechanisms for the expression of... episodic forms of power."¹² Sex is indeed in some traditions one means of awakening and harnessing power; but it is by no means the only or even the most important one. In fact, if one examines most popular Indian books on Tantra today, it would seem that the most attention is given not to sexual pleasure but rather to the acquisition of supernatural abilities, attaining wealth and achieving all one's worldly desires.¹³

So how, then, did "Tantra" come to be defined as "spiritual sex?" This shift begins, I think, during the early colonial era, with the first discussion of Indian religions by Christian missionaries and Orientalist scholars in the 19th century. The Orientalist interest in the Tantras, I would argue, was a part of the broader concern with sexuality and its aberrations during the Victorian era. As Foucault and others have shown, the men and women of the late 19th century were by no means simply the puritanical prudes they are commonly imagined to be; on the contrary, the Victorian era witnessed an unprecedented new proliferation of discourse about sexuality – particularly in its socially deviant or perverse forms, which were now categorized in intricate detail. "Paradoxically, it was during the 19th century that the debate about sexuality exploded. Far from the age of silence and suppression, sexuality became a major issue in Victorian social and political practice."¹⁴

The first Orientalist authors, such as Sir William Jones and H. T. Colebrooke, actually had relatively little to say about the Tantras. It was really not until the early 19th century, with the arrival of Christian missionaries like Rev. William Ward and Alexander Duff that the Tantras became objects of intense interest and morbid fascination. Above all, the missionaries

11 DOUGLAS BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom: The Texts and Traditions of Śrīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* (Albany: SUNY 1992), XIX; see also WOODROFFE, *Shakti and Shākta*, 58; URBAN, *The Power of Tantra*.

12 BROOKS, *Auspicious Wisdom*, 149.

13 On the role of sex in Tantric history, see WHITE, *The Kiss of the Yoginī*; URBAN, *Power of Tantra*.

14 JEFFREY WEEKS, *Sex, Politics and Society: the Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981), 6-7.

singled out the sexual element – particularly transgressive sexuality – as the most horrific aspect of the Tantras and the clearest evidence of their complete depravity. As Ward put it, the Tantras involve “a most shocking mode of worship” centered on the worship of a naked woman and rites “too abominable to enter the ears of man and impossible to be revealed to a Christian public.”¹⁵

In most later European accounts, the Tantras were adapted to the Orientalist narrative of Indo-European history and the decadence of modern India. According to most Orientalist accounts, the history of India was a steady decline from a golden age, comparable to ancient Greece and embodied in the texts of the Vedas, down to a modern era of licentious superstition, embodied in the perverse rites of the Tantras. Throughout 19th century literature, we find the Tantras described in the most vivid language as “lust mummery and black magic” (BRIAN HODGSON), “nonsensical extravagance and absurd gesticulation” (H. H. WILSON), and “black art of the crudest and filthiest kind” in which “a veritable devil’s mass is purveyed in various forms” (D. L. BARNETT).¹⁶

This equation of Tantra with sex was only compounded with the Western discovery of the *Kāma Sūtra* and other erotic manuals. The leading figure in this new interest in Indian erotica was the famous Victorian Orientalist and explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890). Not only did Burton found a small secretive group called the Kama Shastra Society, but he also privately published the *Kāma Sūtra* (1883) and the *Anaṅga Raṅga* (1885), the first Hindu treatises on love to be translated into English (texts which could not be officially translated until the mid 60’s).¹⁷ From Burton’s time on, it seems, Tantra came to be increasingly associated and often hopelessly confused with the sexual positions of the *Kāma Sūtra*.

In the first decades of the 20th century, a few brave scholars made an effort to defend and re-valorize Tantra, arguing that there is far more to this ancient tradition than mere illicit sexuality. The most important figure in this moralizing reform of Tantra was John Woodroffe (a.k.a. Arthur Avalon), the enigmatic High Court Judge and secret *tāntrika*, who made

15 WARD, *A View of the History, Literature and Religion of the Hindoos*, v. I (London: Kinsbury, Parbury and Allen 1817), 247.

16 Quoted in AVALON, *Principles of Tantra: The Tantratattva of Śrīyukta Śiva Candra Vidyārṇava Bhāṭṭācārya Mahodaya* (Madras: Ganesh & Co, 1960), 3-5. On Orientalist views of Tantra, see URBAN, *Tantra*, chapter 1.

17 NIK DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex: Secrets of Tantra From the Ice Age to the New Millennium* (New York: Pocket, 1997), 183-84.

it is his life's work to defend the Tantras against their many critics.¹⁸ In Woodroffe's rather sanitized, rationalized account, Tantra is a noble philosophical tradition, basically in line with the Vedas and Vedānta, and comparable in its symbolism to the liturgy of the Catholic Church.¹⁹

Despite Woodroffe's attempts to present a sanitized and reformed version of Tantra, however, the equation of Tantra with sex would persist throughout the Western imagination, both popular and scholarly. And it was soon also identified and mixed with Western sexual-magical traditions, such as the work of the self-proclaimed "Great Beast, 666," Aleister Crowley. For Crowley and his disciples, Tantric sexual practices were combined with various Western occult rituals in order to achieve both material and spiritual ends – from generating large amounts of money to conceiving a kind of spiritual fetus or magical child.²⁰

However, it was really in the 1960s and 70s that Tantra became fully identified with sexual liberation, now enlisted in the service of the counterculture and the so-called "sexual revolution." As critics like Jeffrey Weeks argue, the period of the 60s and 70s represent something more complex than a simple liberation of the Western libido from its prudish Victorian shackles; rather, the freedom of sex in the age of promiscuity also brought all sort of new oppressions and bonds. Nonetheless, this period did witness an unprecedented new proliferation of discourse about sex, along with new fears about growing promiscuity among the youth. "[V]iolence, drugs and sex, three major preoccupations of the 1960s and 70s blended symbolically in the image of youth in revolt."²¹ The literature on Tantra was a key element in this discourse. Thus in 1964, Omar Garrison published his widely read *Tantra: the Yoga of Sex*, which advocates Tantra as the surest means to achieve extended orgasm and optimal pleasure: "Through... the principles of Tantra Yoga, man can achieve the sexual potency which

18 See KATHLEEN TAYLOR, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: 'An Indian Soul in a European Body?'* (London: Curzon Press, 2001). Taylor argues that "Arthur Avalon" is not simply a pseudonym for Woodroffe, but is rather the joint creation of Woodroffe and his Bengali collaborator, ATAL BEHARI GHOSE, who helped him translate most of the Sanskrit texts.

19 See WOODROFFE, *Shakti and Shākta*, 587.

20 On Crowley and his possible contact with Indian Tantra, see URBAN, "The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and its Impact on Modern Western Esotericism," *Esoterica: The Journal of Esoteric Studies* 3 (2001): 218-259, and "Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England," *Esoterica* 6 (2004): 138-192.

21 WEEKS, *Sex, Politics and Society*, 255.

enables him to extend the ecstasy crowning sexual union for an hour or more, rather than for the brief seconds he now knows.”²²

At the same time, Tantra began to enter into the Western popular imagination in a huge way, as entertainers, musicians and poets began to take an interest in this exotic brand of Eastern spirituality. In 1968, Mick Jagger even produced a film called “Tantra” – a psychedelic journey through the five M’s.²³ However, this had already begun with beat poets like Allen Ginsberg – one of the first white hippies to begin to flood into India in the 60s – who saw Tantra as one of many ways of breaking through the repressive morality of middle class America. Tantra is thus categorized with other “organized experiments in consciousness,” such as “jazz ecstasy” and drugs as a means of altering mental states and achieving “increased depth of perception on the nonverbal-nonconceptual level.”²⁴ For Ginsberg, India is the complete opposite of modern America; whereas America is sexually repressed, uptight, and overly rational, India is the land of spontaneous sexuality. And Tantra, embodied in the violent goddess Kālī, is the epitome of the sexually liberated Orient, beyond the oppressive prudery of Cold War America.²⁵

By the 1970s, Tantra had come to be synonymous with sexual liberation and freedom on every level – spiritual, social and political alike. According to a common narrative, widely repeated by advocates of New Age and alternative spirituality, our natural sexual instincts have long been repressed by the distorted morality of Western society and the Christian Church. “For centuries organized religions have used guilt about sex as a way of exploiting people and the recent liberalization of sexuality has not yet succeeded in erasing this cruel legacy.”²⁶ Therefore, Tantra is the most needed path for our age, the means to liberate our repressed sexuality and re-integrate our bodies and spirits: “Sexual liberation implies the liberation of the whole being: body, mind and spirit. This holistic viewpoint is an essential ingredient to understanding the sexual secrets.”²⁷

22 OMAR GARRISON, *The Yoga of Sex*, quoted in DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 222. For a similar celebration of Tantra, see PHILIP RAWSON, *The Art of Tantra* (Greenwich: New York Graphics Society, 1973).

23 “Tantra,” directed by NIK DOUGLAS, produced with MICK JAGGER and ROBERT FRASER (1968). Re-released as “TANTRA: Indian Rites of Ecstasy” (New York: Mystic Fire, 1993).

24 ALLAN GINSBERG, *Indian Journals, March 1962-May 1963* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1970), 93.

25 “Fuck Kali / Fuck all Hindu Goddesses / Because they are all prostitutes / [I like to fuck] / ... Fuck Ma Kali / Mary is not a prostitute because / She was a virgin / Christians don’t / Worship prostitutes / Like the Hindus.” (GINSBERG, *Indian Journals*, 80.)

26 ANAND, *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy*, 44.

27 ANAND, *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy*, 41.

This ideal of liberation through Tantric sex has been adapted for a wide range of agendas over the last few decades – as a key to self-fulfillment in the 70s, as a means to power and self-optimization in the 80s, and finally as one of the most exotic forms of “cybersex” now circulating through the world wide web. Yet whatever its form, Tantra has come to be defined not so much as the path of power but as the cult of ecstasy – the unique fusion of religion with sexuality, identified with diverse traditions from around the world, such as European sex magic, Wicca, and Kabbalah. As Neo-Tantric masters, Paul Ramana Das and Marilena Silbey put it, “Sacred sexuality provides us with a method of integrating the lust of sex with the love of spirit... Sex magic is what we now call ‘American Tantra.’”²⁸

II. *The Omnipotent Oom: Pierre Bernard and the Tantrik Order in America*

In this day and age, when matters pertaining to the sexes are generally avoided, and we are taught that the sexual appetite is an animal craving that should be subdued... it is not surprising that the great majority of persons are blind to the vast importance of the sexual nature... [T]hey fail to realize that not only is the cause of our individual existence, but that it is the well-spring of human life and happiness.

– Pierre Bernard,
*Tantrik Worship: The Basis of Religion*²⁹

The first man to bring Tantra to America – and also surely one of the most colorful characters in 20th century American history – was a mysterious, rather scandalous figure named Pierre Arnold Bernard. Infamous throughout the press as “the Omnipotent Oom,” Bernard claimed to have traveled throughout the mystic Orient in order to bring the secrets of Tantra to this country and so found the first “Tantrik Order in America” in 1906. Surrounded by controversy and slander for the sexual freedom he and his

28 PAUL RAMANA DAS and MARILENA SILBEY, “Celebrating Sacred Sexuality,” 1997. <http://www.angelfire.com/ky/pawthakh/Celebrating.html>.

29 PIERRE BERNARD, “Tantrik Worship: The Basis of Religion,” *International Journal, Tantrik Order* 5, no.1 (1906): 71.

largely female followers were said to enjoy, Bernard is in many ways an epitome of Tantra in its uniquely American incarnations.³⁰

Although he would later concoct many tales about his birthplace and early life, Bernard was born with the name Perry Arnold Baker in 1876 in the small town of Leon, Iowa. Bernard would later make various claims about his travels in India and his studies in the mystic Orient, but most of his knowledge of yoga and Tantra appears to have come from a young Syrian Indian man named Sylvain Hamati. Hamati and Bernard first met in 1889, soon formed a guru-disciple relationship and eventually began teaching their own unique versions of yoga and Tantra to an eager audience of American seekers. By 1898, Bernard had become moderately famous as a master of self-hypnosis who could use yogic technique to place himself in a state simulating death.³¹

In the early 1900s, Bernard established a Tantric circle in San Francisco where he taught his own version of hypnosis and yoga. Even then, Bernard had become something of a scandal in the California press, who charged that the Academy “catered to young women interested in learning soul charming – by which they meant the mysteries of relations between the sexes.”³² Sometime in the years 1906-7 Bernard also founded the Tantrik Order in America, with an accompanying journal – the *International Journal: Tantrik Order* – whose charter document for initiation reads as follows:

As a tear from heaven he has been dropped into the Ocean of the TANTRIK BROTHERHOOD upon earth and is moored forevermore in the harbor of contentment, at the door to the temple of wisdom wherein are experienced all things; and to him will be unveiled the knowledge of the Most High...

Armed with the key to the sanctuary of divine symbolism wherein are stored the secrets of wisdom and power, he no longer lives upon the appearance... but has proven worthy to be entrusted with the knowledge... to soar above the world and look down upon it; to exalt the passions and quicken the imagination... to treat all things with indifference; to know that religion

30 The best work on Bernard by far is ROBERT LOVE, *The Great Oom: The Improbable Birth of Yoga in America* (New York: Viking, 2010). Other studies of Bernard include URBAN, “The Omnipotent Oom,” DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 191f. ECKERT GOODMAN, “The Guru of Nyack: The True Story of Father India, the Omnipotent Oom,” *Town & Country* (April 1941): 50, 53, 92-3, 98-100; PAUL SANN, “Success Story: The Omnipotent Oom,” in *Fads, Follies and Delusions of the American People* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1967); CHARLES BOSWELL, “The Great Fuss and Fume over the Omnipotent Oom,” *True: the Men’s Magazine* (January, 1976).

31 LOVE, *The Great Oom*, 10-26.

32 Quoted in DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 195.

is the worship of man's invisible power... to enjoy well-being, generosity, and popularity... He has learned to love life and know death.³³

After the San Francisco earthquake in 1906, Bernard left California and relocated to New York City, where he would open the headquarters of his new Tantrik Order on the Upper West Side. Teaching Hatha Yoga downstairs and offering secret Tantric initiation upstairs, the Oriental sanctum quickly became an object of scandal in the New York press. The notorious "Omnipotent Oom" was charged with abduction and falsely impersonating a doctor, thereafter spending 104 days in prison. "I cannot tell you how Bernard got control over me or how he gets it over other people," said one of the alleged kidnapes, Zelia Hopp, "He is the most wonderful man in the world. No women seem able to resist him."³⁴ Similar controversy surrounded the "New York Sanskrit College," which Bernard founded a few years later. The press reported "wild Oriental music and women's cries, but not those of distress."³⁵

By the 1920s, Bernard had moved out to a large seventy-two acre estate in Upper Nyack New York – a former young girls' academy which he renamed the "Clarkstown Country Club" and made the site of his own "utopian Tantric community." A sumptuous property with a 30-roomed Georgian mansion rounded by a wooded mountain and river, the Club was designed to be "a place where the philosopher may dance, and the fool be provided with a thinking cap!"³⁶ Eventually, he would also purchase a huge property known as the Moorings and later open a chain of Tantric clinics, including centers in New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Chicago, as well as a Tantric summer camp in Westhampton, Long Island. His clinics were known for attracting the wealthiest, most affluent clients – mostly professional and business men and women from New York, including members of the Vanderbilt family, composer Cyril Scott and conductor Leopold Stokowski, among others. According to *Town and Country* magazine of 1941, "Every hour of the day limousines and taxies drove up to the entrance of the Doctor's New York clinic. In the marble foyer behind the wrought-iron portal... a pretty secretary handled

33 "Charter Document of the Tantrik Order in America," *International Journal, Tantrik Order* 5, no. 1 (1906): 96-7.

34 Quoted in SANN, "Success Story," 190. See LOVE, *The Great Oom*, 64-66.

35 DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 195.

36 PIERRE BERNARD, *Life: at the Clarkstown Country Club* (Nyack, NY: Clarkstown Country Club, 1935).

appointments.”³⁷ Hence, it is not surprising that Bernard quickly achieved a remarkable degree of wealth and status:

Almost overnight, Oom found himself showered with more money than he had ever dreamed of and chieftain of a tribe of both male and female followers ... This tribe at the outset consisted of no more than a dozen members, but eventually it would number well over 200, and would carry on its roster some of the best-known names in America.³⁸

However, Bernard’s Tantric teachings were also surrounded with an aura of secrecy, teachings so profound they had to be reserved for the initiated few. As the *International Journal, Tantrik Order* states, quoting the *Kulārnavatantra*: “The principal rites of Tantrik worshippers take place in secret with closed doors... One should guard the Kaula system from uninitiated beasts ... just as one guards money... from thieves.”³⁹ According to the police reports of a raid on Bernard’s clinic, entry involved a secret signal and a complex series of taps on the bell. There also seems to have been a hierarchy of disciples, with the lower-level initiates performing physical exercises downstairs, while the “Secret order of Tantriks,” engaged in the more esoteric rites upstairs:

Downstairs, they found a bare room where Oom’s physical culture clients, paying a \$100 bite, toiled through exercises designed to produce the body beautiful. Upstairs... on canvas-covered mattresses, Oom’s inner-circle clients participated in secret rites...[T]he upstairs customers, following physical examinations, had to pay large sums and then sign their names in blood before they could be initiated into the cult.⁴⁰

The popular press offers us some fairly vivid and probably rather imaginative accounts of Bernard’s secret Tantric rituals and the occult initiations into arcane esoteric techniques.

During Tantrik ceremonies, Oom sat on his throne wearing a turban, a silken robe and baggy Turkish pants, and flourished a scepter. While so engaged, he invariably smoked one of the long black cigars to which he was addicted...

A Tantrik ceremony involved the initiation of new members. “To join the order,” an Oomite later disclosed, “the novitiate must first have confessed all sins, all secret desires, all inner thoughts; must then promise to abide by Doctor Bernard’s orders and must finally take the Tantrik vow.”

37 *Town and Country* (April 1941), quoted in DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 198.

38 BOSWELL, “The Great Fuss and Fume,” 31-2.

39 BERNARD, “In Re Fifth Veda,” *International Journal, Tantrik Order*, 5, no. 1 (1906): 27.

40 SANN, “Success Story,” 189.

The novice looks upon Doctor Bernard as a high priest—indeed, as a sort of man-god. He kneels before Doctor Bernard and recites: “Be to me a living guru; be a loving Tantrik guru.” Then all present bow their heads as though in church and repeat in unison: ‘Oom man na padma Oom.’ It is sung over and over in a chanting monotone, like the beating of drums in a forest, and is supposed... to induce a state of ecstasy.⁴¹

There does appear to have been some need for the secrecy in Bernard’s Tantrik practice – particularly in the moral context of early 20th century America. According to most of the accounts that came out of Bernard’s Country Club, much of the spiritual practice there centered on the full enjoyment of the physical body and the liberation of sexual pleasure. As we read in the *International Journal, Tantrik Order*, the human body is the supreme creation in the universe and the most perfect place of worship: “The trained imagination no longer worships before the shrines of churches, pagodas and mosques or there would be blaspheming the greatest, grandest and most sublime temple in the universe, the miracle of miracles, the human body.”⁴² Like dance, yoga or other forms of physical expression, sex was for Bernard a spiritual discipline and a means of attaining the divine within the physical body. As Bernard put it, “Love, a manifestation of sexual instinct, is the animating spirit of the world”⁴³ (In his Tantrik journal Bernard even spells the word “Tantra” in *devanāgarī* characters comprised of tiny hearts). Yet in modern Western culture, the profound mysteries of sexual love have been stupidly repressed, relegated by self-righteous prudes to the realm of immorality. While most men and women today “are taught that the sexual appetite is an animal craving that should be subdued and concealed,” Bernard teaches that sex is in fact “the well-spring of human life and happiness.”⁴⁴ According to one disciple, Bernard is thus among the only teachers in modern America who recognizes the natural beauty and power of sex, which is nothing other than an expression of our union with the Divine:

Sex is discussed naturally... Doctor Bernard believes that men and women can learn a lot about living by learning a lot about playing and loving. He teaches the Oriental view of love as opposed to the restrained Western idea. Love, in its physical aspects, is akin to music and poetry. It unites men and women with their infinite.⁴⁵

41 BOSWELL, “The Great Fuss and Fume,” 32.

42 *International Journal, Tantrik Order* 5, no.1 (1906): 105.

43 “Tantrik Worship,” 71.

44 BERNARD, “Tantrik Worship,” 71.

45 BOSWELL, “The Great Fuss and Fume,” 31ff.

Apparently, Bernard also believed that for certain individuals - particularly overly-repressed women of the Victorian era - more drastic surgical measures might be needed to liberate their sexual potential. Hence, sexually unresponsive or "desensitized women" could be helped by a form of partial circumcision in which the clitoral hood was surgically removed - an operation believed to improve female receptivity by exposing the clitoral gland to direct stimulation.⁴⁶

The popular press of the day took no end of delight in discussing and sensationalizing Bernard's scandalous Tantric practices. Bernard's clinics seem to have represented something terribly shocking yet deliciously transgressive in the early 20th century American imagination, somehow strangely tantalizing in a world where sex for the sake of procreation within heterosexual marriage is the unassailable pillar of decent society:

The rites are grossly licentious and are most often invoked in veneration of the Śakti, the goddess of female energy. But sometimes Oriental men with a yen for one another invoke them just for kicks. A couple skilled in the rites... are supposedly able to make love hour after hour without diminution of male potency and female desire.⁴⁷

It seems inevitable that Bernard's Tantric clinics should have elicited some complaints from his neighbors and also attracted the attention of the authorities. F.H. Gans, who occupied an apartment across the way, summed up the neighborhood grievance: "What my wife and I have seen through the windows of that place is scandalous. We saw men and women in various stages of dishabille. Women's screams mingled with wild Orientalism usic."⁴⁸

After his brief rise to celebrity, followed by his descent into scandal, Bernard retired into a relatively quiet and comfortable later life. Enjoying an affluent lifestyle, he was known for his lavish celebrations, his generous patronage of professional baseball and boxing, and his investment in sporting venues and stadiums. Eventually he would assume a respectable position in Nyack society, becoming president of the State Bank of Pearl River in 1931. With a fondness for collecting fine automobiles, such as Rolls Royces, Stutzes and Lincolns, Bernard is said to have been worth over twelve million dollars at his peak. "I'm a curious combination of the

46 DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 197.

47 BOSWELL, "The Great Fuss and Fume Over the Omnipotent Oom," 85, 91.

48 SANN, "Success Story," 190. See LOVE, *The Great Oom*, 59-62, 136-37.

businessman and the religious scholar,” as Bernard described himself.⁴⁹ He died in New York City in 1955, at the age of 80.

In sum, we might say that the wonderfully colorful character of Pierre Bernard is of key importance for the history of Tantra for at least three reasons. First, he was a bold pioneer in the early transmission of Tantra to America, where it quickly took root and flourished; second, he was one of the first figures in the reinterpretation of Tantra as something primarily concerned with sex, physical pleasure and bodily ecstasy; and finally, like so many later Tantric gurus, he also generated intense scandal and slander from the surrounding society, foreshadowing Tantra’s role in the American imagination as something wonderfully seductive, tantalizing and transgressive.

III. From Sex Guru to Guru of the Rich: The Neo-Tantra of Osho Rajneesh

Tantra is a dangerous philosophy, it is a dangerous religion. It has not yet been tried on a larger scale, man has not yet been courageous enough to try it on a larger scale because the society does not allow it...[T]he society thinks this is absolute sin... Tantra believes in joy because joy is God.

– Osho, *The Tantric Transformation*⁵⁰

The second American Tantric guru I want to examine here is one who represents an intriguing complement and juxtaposition to Pierre Bernard – namely, the infamous sex guru and guru of the rich, known in his early years as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and later simply as “Osho.” If Bernard was among the first Americans to bring Tantra to the U.S., Osho-Rajneesh was one of the first Indians to travel to America and import his own unique brand of “Neo-Tantrism,” adapted to late 20th century American consumer culture. Whereas Bernard’s version of Tantra represents a sexualization of the tradition, Osho–Rajneesh’s version is a clear *commodification and commercialization* of Tantra. In this sense he is an example of a larger shift in Western attitudes toward sex in the latter half of the 20th century. As Weeks argues, it is too simple to assume that the late 20th century has been characterized by a radical revolution, with a complete breaking

49 DOUGLAS *Spiritual Sex*, 204.

50 OSHO, *The Tantric Transformation* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1978), 293.

down of sexual prohibitions. Rather, what has taken place is more like a “commodification of sex,” as part of the larger expansion of capitalism to all domains of modern culture: “Sex had long been something you were. By the 1950s it was also something you could buy, not just in the form of prostitution, but in the form of glossily marketed fantasy... Not only was sex an area that could be colonized by capitalism, it was also one that could expand ever more exotically.”⁵¹ This is much the same kind of commodification of ecstasy that we see in Osho-Rajneesh, the most notorious sex guru of the 20th century. If Bernard was the original American Tantric master for the dawn of the 20th century, Osho is exemplary of Neo-Tantra at the close of the millennium.

Rajneesh offered everything Westerners imagined Tantra to be: a free love cult promising enlightenment, an exciting radical community and the opportunity to rise up in the hierarchy... Rajneesh slipped comfortably into the role of “Tantra Messiah”... Largely because of Rajneesh, Tantra reemerged as a New Age Cult in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵²

Born in Kuchwada, Madhya Pradesh, in 1931 to a family of 12 whose parents died at an early age, Rajneesh Chandra Mohan was raised by his grandparents – an elderly, wealthy and high class Jain couple. From an early age, Rajneesh reports having various ecstatic experiences, finally achieving “full enlightenment” at age twenty-one. While at college at Jabalpur, the young Rajneesh suffered a traumatic period of depression, anorexia and attempted suicide; yet he emerged from his crisis in an intense spiritual breakthrough to Self-realization – “an inner explosion,” as he put it, in which he left his body and realized his true inner nature.⁵³

After receiving his master’s degree in 1957, Rajneesh taught philosophy for nine years at the University of Jabalpur. In 1967, however, he decided he could no longer keep his enlightened knowledge to himself and so left the academic world to gather disciples and teach the spiritual

51 WEEKS, *Sexuality and its Discontents: Meanings, Myths & Modern Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1985), 17, 23, 24.

52 DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 15.

53 See URBAN, *Tantra*, chapter 6; LEWIS CARTER, *Charisma and Control in Rajneeshpuram: The Role of Shared Values in the Creation of a Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); SUSAN J. PALMER and ARVIND SHARMA, *The Rajneesh Papers: Studies in a New Religious Movement* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1993); YATI, *The Sound of Running Water; A Photobiography of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1980); HUGH MILNE, *Bhagwan: The God that Failed* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986); JAMES GORDON, *The Golden Guru: The Strange Journey of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh* (New York: Viking, 1987).

life. His rather radical teachings quickly aroused enormous controversy in the Indian community, however, as he urged his disciples to indulge their physical desires, even as he attacked national heroes such as Mahatma Gandhi (whom he ridiculed as masochistic chauvinist pervert).⁵⁴ By 1971, Rajneesh had begun to call himself “Bhagwan” – Blessed One or God – and built himself an Ashram in Poona, where he hoped to begin a new utopian community as the seed of a new civilization. Bhagwan’s lucrative new civilization, however, soon came into increasing financial and legal problems with the Indian government. In 1981 Bhagwan and his devotees were forced to flee the country, trailed by some \$5 million in debts and a host of police and tax collectors.

Announcing himself as “the Messiah America has been waiting for,” Rajneesh took refuge in the United States, the land (as he described it) of freedom, opportunity and unfettered capitalism. After a brief stay in a New Jersey mansion, he and his followers bought a 64,000 acre ranch in Antelope, Oregon, which they dubbed their own new city and ideal society, “Rajneesh-puram.” Quickly growing into a remarkably lucrative financial complex, Rajneeshpuram amassed some \$120 million in revenues in its short four year existence. Meanwhile, Rajneesh’s following had spread not only throughout the US but also Europe and India, claiming over 25,000 members at its peak, and growing into an enormously diverse, multifaceted international business complex.⁵⁵

However, the group soon came into conflict with its American neighbors. They clashed first with the local residents of Antelope’s peaceful retirement community, whom they attempted to displace using terrorist tactics like dumping animal parts on the lawns of local officials and distributing salmonella bacteria in local restaurants and grocery stores. By 1985, they had also come under serious investigation by the US government, specifically around the issue of the interlock of the Rajneesh Church and the city of Rajneeshpuram, and its claim to tax exempt status. Finally in 1986, the State Attorney General decided that Rajneeshpuram violated the Church-State Separation clause of the Constitution. Rajneesh and his disciples, meanwhile, had also come under investigation for a variety of criminal activities, which included counts of electronic eavesdropping, immigration conspiracy, lying to federal officials, criminal conspiracy, first degree

54 See GEORG FEUERSTEIN, *Holy Madness: The Shock Tactics and Radical Teachings of Crazy-wise Adepts, Holy Fools, and Rascal Gurus* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 65.

55 On Rajneesh’s pro-capitalist spirit and the remarkably successful business structure of his movement, which developed into a complicated system of parent companies and subsidiaries, spread out through a range of secular and spiritual enterprises, see CARTER, *Charisma and Control*, 77-8.

assault, attempted murder, burglary, racketeering and arson. The movement, the State Attorney General concluded, had become “sociopathic.”⁵⁶ Deported from the US and refused entry into virtually every country to which he applied, Rajneesh returned to his Poona ashram in 1987.

But perhaps the most surprising aspect of the Rajneesh phenomenon lies not so much in his controversial career in America, but rather in his remarkable apotheosis and rebirth upon his return to India. A truly global Tantric guru, Rajneesh made the journey from India to America and back to India again, now achieving even more success in his homeland, perhaps in part because of his status as an international figure who had a massive US and European following. In the eyes of his followers, however, Rajneesh was by no means a criminal but in fact a martyr and a hero who had been unjustly persecuted by the oppressive US government: “[The Ranch] was crushed from without by the Attorney’s General’s office [...] like the marines in Lebanon, the Ranch was hit by hardball opposition and driven out.”⁵⁷

As part of his transfiguration in India, he would also reject his former Hindu title as “Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh,” a title that had asserted his divine, god-man status. Instead, he adopted the more universal title of “Osho” – a term which, according to some, derives from the Japanese term for master, and according to others, from the “oceanic experience,” described by William James. His message, too, became increasingly universal, less controversial and more palatable to both Indian and Western audiences, and marketed to a global new age consumer audience. “My message is too new. India is too old, ancient, traditional. I am rebellious [...] I belong to no nation. My message is universal.”⁵⁸ Osho died in 1990, after just a few years back in Poona, under circumstances which, according to some devotees, suggest that he may have been assassinated by the CIA because of his radical, threatening teachings.

Remarkably, however, Osho seems to have only grown in popularity in the years since his death. Indeed, he seems to have published more books and received more acclaim as a disembodied video image than he ever did while still incarnate. The Poona center, meanwhile, has grown into a hugely successful global organization: the “Osho Commune International.” Linked through its “Global Connections department,” the Commune runs

56 CARTER, *Charisma and Control*, 225, 237.

57 SWAMI ANAND JINA, “The Work of Osho Rajneesh: A Thematic Overview,” in *The Rajneesh Papers: Studies in a New Religious Movement*, ed. SUSAN J. PALMER and ARVIND SHARMA (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 54.

58 OSHO, *The Dhammapada*, Osho.com, 2010. <http://www.osho.com/library/online-library-receptive-camouflaged-india-d7954deb-e08.aspx>.

a network of centers worldwide, including “Osho International” in New York, which administers the rights to Osho’s works. Describing itself as the “Esalen of the East,” the Osho Multiversity in Poona teaches a dizzying array of spiritual techniques drawn from a smorgasbord of different traditions: astrology, Feldenkraus body work, Crystal energy, acupuncture, neo-Zen and other New Age activities. With an explicitly globalized religious vision, the new Osho commune has taken Rajneesh’s iconoclastic message, combined it with a host of other more generic New Age ideals and marketed it to a global audience of spiritual consumers.⁵⁹ In sum, the character of Rajneesh seems to have undergone an incredible apotheosis in his later years, and particularly after his death – a transfiguration from a scandalous Tantric sex guru into an international icon for a high-tech global movement and business enterprise.

In itself, Rajneesh’s philosophy was not terribly original, but was an elaborate synthesis of ideas drawn from an enormous array of sources. Bhagwan’s vast body of writings is itself a kind of postmodern pastiche: a wild hodgepodge of ideas drawn from a remarkable range of sources, from Plato to Śaṅkara to Lao Tzu to Sartre. His teachings are, as one observer put it, an eclectic “potpourri of counter-culturalist ideas: strive for love and freedom, live for the moment, self is important, you are okay [...] the fun ethic, God is within.”⁶⁰ An explicitly self-parodying, self-deconstructing Guru, Rajneesh claimed that his entire teaching was itself nothing more than a joke, a farce or a game – the ultimate game: “Nothing is serious. Even your disappointments are laughable. To become a Sannyasin is to enter the ultimate game [...] [I]t is a play [...] it is the ultimate game [...] You have played at being a husband, wife, mother, being rich, poor [...] This is the last game. Only you are left.”⁶¹

Rather than a religion in the conventional sense, Rajneesh taught a radically iconoclastic brand of spirituality – “an antinomian philosophy and moral anarchism.”⁶² As a “religionless” religion, his was a path beyond conventional morality, beyond good and evil, and founded on the explicit rejection of all doctrines and values. “Morality is a false coin, it deceives people,” he warns, “[...] A man of real understanding is neither good nor

59 JINA, “The Work of Osho Rajneesh,” 55; cf. Sharma and Palmer, *The Rajneesh Papers*, 161

60 BOB MULLAN, *Life as Laughter: Following BHagwan Shree Rajneesh* (Boston: Routledge, 1983), 44.

61 RAJNEESH, in KATE STRELLEY, *The Ultimate Game* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

62 FEUERSTEIN, *Holy Madness*, 67.

bad. He transcends both.”⁶³ For Rajneesh, the cause of all our suffering is the distorting socialization or programming of cultural institutions, such as family, schools, religion and government. All meta-narratives or overarching theories are only so many fictions, imaginary creations used by those in power to dominate the masses. True freedom can be achieved only by *deconstructing* all meta-narratives, liberating oneself from the confining structures of the past. One must be deprogrammed and de-hypnotized:

You are programmed by family, acquaintances, institutions. Your mind is like a blackboard on which rules are written. Bhagwan writes new rules on the blackboard. He tells you one thing is true and next the opposite is true. He writes and writes on the blackboard of your mind until it is a whiteboard. Then you have no programming left.⁶⁴

In order to help his disciples achieve this state of de-programming and liberation, Rajneesh advocated a variety of yogic, meditative and other psycho-physical disciplines. Most of these, we might note, came at a significant cost; at the Oregon ranch, prices ranged from \$50 for a one-day introduction to Rajneesh meditation, to \$7500 for a complete three month re-balancing program. But perhaps the most important of these spiritual techniques was Rajneesh’s unique brand of “Neo-Tantrism.” As he defines it, Tantra is the ultimate non-religion or anti-religion, a spiritual practice that does not demand rigorous ritual or orthodox morality but instead frees the individual from all such constraints. “Tantra is freedom—freedom from all mind-constructs, from all mind-games [...] Tantra is liberation. Tantra is not a religion [...]. Religion gives you [...] a discipline. Tantra takes all disciplines away.”⁶⁵ In this sense, Tantra is the ultimate form of rebellion for an age in which political revolution is not longer practical or relevant; it is not the rebellion of the masses against the state, but rather of the individual against society as a whole:

Tantra is a rebellion. I don’t call it revolutionary because it has no politics in it... It is individual rebellion. It is one individual slipping out of the structures and slavery... The future is very hopeful. Tantra will become more and more important...[N]o political revolution has proved revolutionary. All political revolutions finally turn into anti-revolutions... Rebellion means individual... It is for freedom—freedom to be.⁶⁶

63 RAJNEESH, *Tantra: The Supreme Understanding* (Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1975), 55, 6.

64 A Sannyasin informant, cited in CARTER, *Charisma and Control*, 48.

65 OSHO, *Tantric Transformation*, 4.

66 OSHO, *Tantric Transformation*, 6-7.

In strongest contrast to established social institutions, Tantra does not deny life or the body; rather, it is the ultimate affirmation of physicality and passion. It is the supreme “*Just Do It!*” religion, which celebrates life in all its transience and contingency: “Tantra accepts everything, *lives* everything,” Rajneesh declares, “This is what Tantra says: the Royal Way – behave like a king, not like a soldier... Why bother about tomorrow? This moment is enough. Live it!”⁶⁷ Far from imposing moral restraints, Tantra celebrates human nature with all its failings: “Tantra says – If you are greedy, be greedy,”

Tantric acceptance is total, it doesn't split you. All the religions of the world except Tantra have created split personalities, have created schizophrenia... They say the good has to be achieved and the bad denied, the devil has to be denied and God accepted... Tantra says a transformation is possible....Transformation comes when you accept your total being. The anger is absorbed, the greed is absorbed.⁶⁸

Above all, Tantra centers on the power of sex – a power that is at once the most intense force in human nature and also the one most severely distorted by Western society. Because the traditional Christian West has suppressed sexuality, Rajneesh argues, it is sexuality that must be liberated if modern students are to fully actualize their inner most Self:

Freud... stumbled only upon the repressed sexuality. He came across repressed people. Christian repression has made many locks in man where energy as become coiled up within itself, has become stagnant, is no longer flowing.

The society is against sex: it has created a block, just near the sex center. Whenever sex arises you feel restless, you feel guilty, you feel afraid... That's why I teach dynamic methods: they will melt your blocks.⁶⁹

In opposition to this life-denying, prudish Western attitude, Tantra is the path that accepts everything, above all, the sexual impulse. As the strongest power in human nature, sex also becomes the strongest spiritual force when fully integrated. “Tantra says everything has to be absorbed, *everything!*... Sex has to be absorbed, then it becomes a tremendous force in you. A Buddha ... a Jesus, they have such a magnetic force around – what is

67 RAJNEESH, *Tantra*. 93, 157.

68 RAJNEESH, *Tantra*, 190, 98-9.

69 RAJNEESH, *Yoga: The Alpha and the Omega* (Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1981), 157, 21. See SUSAN PALMER, “Lovers and Leaders in a Utopian Commune,” in *The Rajneesh Papers: Studies in a New Religious Movement*, eds. SUSAN J. PALMER and ARVIND SHARMA (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1993), 127.

that? Sex absorbed.”⁷⁰ Thus many of Rajneesh’s practices involved group sex – “therapy intensives,” as he called them – which were “designed to bring about a catharsis followed by transformation of consciousness”⁷¹ (Former disciple, Hugh Milne, also recalls that one of the most popular practices in the early movement was a form of ritual sex in which males would eat ripe mangoes from between the legs of female partners).⁷²

The ultimate aim of Tantric practice is to achieve this full self-acceptance, to love ourselves wholly and completely, with all our sin, vice, greed and sensual desires and to realize that we already are “Perfect.” Once we accept our sensual, desiring nature, once we release the pent-up sexual side of ourselves, we discover that we are already divine. We already possess truth, freedom and infinite power within ourselves. We already are “God:”

This is the most fundamental thing in Tantra, that it says you are already perfect... Perfection does not have to be achieved. It simply has to be realized that it is there. Tantra offers you enlightenment right here and now—no time, no postponement.⁷³

Ecstasy is your very nature. You are truth. You are love. You are freedom....If you can stop all doing for a single moment the energy converges and explodes... Then *you become a god*.⁷⁴

As the ideal wedding of sensuality and spirituality, Tantra is also the perfect integration of materialism and transcendence. Not only was Rajneesh un-opposed to the accumulation of wealth, but he even saw it as a the natural manifestation of spiritual attainment. With his ideal of “Zorba the Buddha,” he conceived of a new kind of perfect man or total being, who would combine the spirituality of the Buddha with the sensuality and materialism of Zorba the Greek. Indeed, Rajneesh was an ardent defender of American-style capitalism – which he saw as the expression of individual self-determination and free will – and an outspoken critic of socialism – which he saw as the symptom of laziness of the masses and the jealousy of the have-nots: “the creation of wealth is the task of genius ... Socialism is the jealousy of the masses, of the have-nots against the few who succeed in doing something for mankind.”⁷⁵ As Rajneesh put it, in his typically unapologetic style,

70 RAJNEESH, *Tantra*, 100.

71 FEUERSTEIN, *Holy Madness*, 70. See PALMER, “Lovers and Leaders,” 111.

72 MILNE, *Bhagwan*, 186.

73 RAJNEESH, *Tantra*, 100.

74 RAJNEESH, *The Goose is Out* (Poona: Rajneesh Foundation, 1982), 286.

75 MULLAN, *Life as Laughter*, 48.

I don't condemn wealth. Wealth is a perfect means which can enhance people in every way and make life rich in all ways. The materially poor can never become piritual.⁷⁶

People are unequal and a fair world has to give people full freedom to be unequal.

Capitalism has grown out of freedom. It is a natural phenomenon.⁷⁷

Tantra is the unique path which does not separate, but actually integrates and synthesizes the quest for spiritual liberation with the desire for material wealth. Rather than denying and repressing the physical senses or even materialist greed, Tantra seeks the active wedding of worldly pleasure and spiritual liberation, physical bliss and divine transcendence: "Tantra has a very beautiful thing to say and that is: First, before you start serving anybody else, be absolutely selfish. How can you serve anyone else unless you have attained your inner being? Be absolutely selfish!"⁷⁸

In sum, Osho-Rajneesh was able to appropriate Tantra in a form that was remarkably well-suited to the socio-economic situation of late 20th century America – the situation that some have described as late capitalism, post-Fordism, post-industrial society, or even "hyper-capitalism."⁷⁹ As Bryan S. Turner, Mike Featherstone and others argue, the late 20th century has witnessed a significant shift from an earlier mode of capitalism – based on the Protestant ethic of inner-worldly asceticism, hard work, thriftiness and accumulation – to a new form of late capitalism or postindustrial society – based on mass consumption, physical pleasure and hedonistic enjoyment. In consumer culture the body ceases to be an unruly vessel of desire that must be disciplined and subjugated; rather, the body is the ultimate source of gratification and fulfillment. "The new consumptive ethic... taken over by the advertising industry celebrates living for the moment, hedonism, self-expression, the body beautiful, progress, freedom from social obligation."⁸⁰ At the same time, the late capitalist world has also witnessed a progressive extension of the logic of the marketplace to all aspects of culture. In the market-like conditions of modern life, everything

76 RAJNEESH, cited in LAURENCE GRAFSTEIN, "Messianic Capitalism," *The New Republic*, 20 (1984): 14.

77 RAJNEESH, *Beware of Socialism!* (Rajneeshpuram: Rajneesh Foundation International, 1984), 15, 19.

78 RANJEESH, *Tantra*, 109-110; see OSHO, *The Tantric Transformation*, 260.

79 On the concept of late capitalism, see FREDRIC JAMESON, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press 1991); DAVID HARVEY, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell, 1989).

80 MIKE FEATHERSTONE, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), 114.

tends to become a commodity that may be bought and sold, from art to politics to religion itself.⁸¹ Now forced to compete in the commercial marketplace alongside secular businesses, religion itself tends to become yet another consumer product within the supermarket of values. The religious believer, meanwhile, is free to choose from among a wide array of possible beliefs and piece together his or her own personalized spiritual pastiche:

Max Weber's metaphor... of religion striding into the marketplace of worldly affairs and slamming the monastery door behind, becomes further transformed in modern society with religion placed very much in the consumer marketplace ... Individuals [are] able to select from a plurality of suitably packaged bodies of knowledge in the supermarket of lifestyles... The tendency in modern societies is for religion to become a private leisure pursuit purchased in the market like any other consumer lifestyle.⁸²

Thus, with its ideal wedding of spirituality and physical pleasure, divine transcendence and material prosperity, Rajneesh's brand of Neo-Tantrism would appear to be a striking example of what we might call the "spiritual logic of late capitalism."

IV. *An American Obsession:* Appropriations of Tantra by Gay, Lesbian and S&M Communities

To fully understand Tantra you must be willing to renounce all your previous prejudices and conceptions of what is proper and improper. You must open yourselves up to experience the new and the exotic.

– Dax Michaels, *The Definition of Tantra* (2000)

Virtually all the major Tantric traditions of India are fundamentally *heterosexual* traditions. The basis of most Tantric metaphysics is the creative union of male and female principles, Śiva and Śakti or Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, from which all the manifold forms of the universe unfold. Hence the path to liberation lies in the re-unification of the male and female principles, re-integrating Śiva and Śakti through the union of male and female partners. Tantra would therefore appear to be *deeply heterosexual*, even an extreme

81 See JAMESON, *Postmodernism*, x.

82 FEATHERSTONE, *Consumer Culture*, 112-3.

form of heterosexuality, which takes conventional South Asian ideas of male and female identities to their furthest, most essentialist limits.⁸³

Remarkably, however, one of the most important trends in contemporary American Tantra has been the *homosexual appropriation of Tantra* – that is, attempts to reinterpret Tantric practice for the needs of gay, lesbian, trans and even S&M communities. After all, Tantra is a method that affirms sexuality, while at the same time offering alternatives to normal marital relations, procreation and childbirth. One need not search far, in fact, to find a wide range of gay authors arguing for Tantra as a usable technique and even a guiding philosophy for homosexual lifestyles.

As such, the gay appropriation of Tantra is a key part of the larger role of homosexuality in modern American culture – what Jennifer Terry has dubbed “an American obsession.”⁸⁴ It is perhaps no accident that Western discourse on Tantra emerged at roughly the same time as discourse on sexual perversions in medical, scientific and psychological literature. The very term homosexuality was not coined until the late 19th century, a time when there was an increasing desire to classify, categorize and so control all possible forms of sexual deviance, from nymphomania to necrophilia, erotomania to spermatophobia.⁸⁵ Thus the Western interest in the “deviance” of Eastern traditions like Tantra was a key element in the wider discourse about sexual dysfunctions like homosexuality. Similarly, the rise of interest in Tantra during the 60s and 70s coincided with the rise of gay and lesbian rights movements and the search for a uniquely gay identity; both “Tantric” and “gay” were once taboo, transgressive terms that were later appropriated and re-deployed with a sense of pride to identify an emerging counter-culture.⁸⁶ Just as many men and women with same sex preferences

83 On the largely heterosexual and male-dominated nature of Tantra, see URBAN, *The Power of Tantra*, chapter 4. One of the few important exceptions is case of Ramakrishna, who, as JEFFREY J. KRIPAL has argued, had profound (and deeply ambivalent) homo-erotic impulses: *Kālī's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

84 JENNIFER TERRY, *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1-26. See STEVEN SEIDMAN, ed., *Queer the ory/sociology* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 33-40.

85 See MICHEL FOUCAULT, *The History of Sexuality, v. I* (New York: Vintage, 1980), 43. Foucault dates the origin of the term to CARL WESTPHAL's *Archiv für Neurologie*, in 1870. “[T]he psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized... less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain sexual sensibility... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (ibid.).

86 On the positive re-appropriation of the labels gay, lesbian and queer see TERRY, *An American Obsession*, 367-73; STEVEN SEIDMAN, ed. *Queer the ory/sociology*.

proudly identify themselves as gay, lesbian or queer, so too, “Tantra” has become less a stigma of perversion and more an index of sexual chic.

Both respected scholars and popular gay and lesbian authors have undertaken this bold gay interpretation of Tantra. In the scholarly realm, one of the foremost authorities on Tibetan Buddhism and a former translator for the Dalai Lama, Jeffrey Hopkins, has recently published a gay interpretation of a Tibetan sexual manual. Taking the explicitly *heterosexual* sexual manual, the *Tibetan Arts of Love* by Gedun Chopel, he has published his own re-translation of the text from an explicitly *homosexual* perspective; thus we find masculine pronouns substituted for feminine, and male anatomy for female. For Hopkins, Tantric Buddhism is not only a powerful spiritual path that is “sex friendly” – that is, making positive use of sexual pleasure “to gain insight into the reality behind appearances, which is like the sky;”⁸⁷ but Tantric techniques can also be adapted for non-heterosexual purposes in the service of gay spirituality. As Hopkins explains in his preface,

Since gay persons need care, support and encouragement from their own community, I felt that in addition to translating ... a Tibetan heterosexual sex manual, I needed to live up to my responsibilities to my own community. Thus I present a guide to gay sex infused with my perspectives from India and Tibetanc ulture.⁸⁸

Buddhist Tantra, Hopkins thinks, can and should be appropriated by gay males today; because it does not separate body and spirit but rather affirms the continuity between physical, emotional and spiritual realms of awareness, Tantric Buddhism has a place for sexual pleasure and orgasm as insights into the true nature of reality. Thus it represents a much-needed source of healing and reintegration for a fragmented modern Western psyche which has so long tended to sever the spiritual and sexual, the physical and transcendental planes:

During sex it is possible to gain awareness of more profound levels of mind... The focus on the mind of clear light does not turn sexual acts into metaphors of reunion with the divine. Rather, ordinary sex is viewed as a basis for development into extraordinary insight. The sky-experience of the mind of clear light stands behind the scintillating descriptions of erotic acts, beckoning the participant to taste reality.⁸⁹

87 JEFFREY HOPKINS, *Sex, Orgasm and the Mind of Clear Light* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1998), 71-2.

88 HOPKINS, *Sex, Orgasm and the Mind of Clear Light*, x11.

89 HOPKINS, *Sex, Orgasm and the Mind of Clear Light*, 107.

If gay Tantra has now penetrated the academic world, then it is not surprising to find it entering the popular non-academic side of American culture, as well. For example, we can now surf the “gay-tantra.com” web-site and browse its Tantric gift shop for a variety of goods, such as Sex Toys, Cock Rings, Whips, Dog Collars and Riding Crops. Both Tantra and homosexuality, many gay authors argue, have been known to humankind for millennia and can be found everywhere from ancient Greece to Native America. Yet they have long been repressed, denied and marginalized by mainstream religious and social institutions, and are only just now beginning to be rediscovered the modern West:

Tantric sexual techniques have been used in India for centuries. The basic idea involves using sexual energy to expand and explore. Anyone and everyone is capable of Tantric sex, all you need is patience and imagination... Sextasy is the orgasmic openness achieved in sexual communion.⁹⁰

The Tantric path, however is also the most radical path, one that will take the practitioner beyond all known categories of moral and immoral, acceptable and unacceptable, good and evil, taboo and transgression: “To fully understand Tantra you must be willing to renounce all your prejudices and conceptions of what is proper and what is improper.”⁹¹

But it is not only gay men who have turned to Tantra as a legitimization for their alternative sexual practices; lesbians have also found in Tantra a powerful image of liberation and empowerment. As the path of *śakti* or female creative energy, Tantra seems to many lesbians a celebration of the divine power of the female body, a power that is at once the creative source of life and also radically free, transcending patriarchal control. As Diane Mariechild argues,

Love between women can be a celebration of and an initiation into the female creative spirit... When we open to the great feminine, the holy space that is the foundation of the world, making love becomes sacred. Lesbians hold the form of woman power at its most profound. Many lesbians seek to identify ourselves from an inner source of woman wisdom ... Woman loving woman can be an alchemical process which reaches into our very cells.⁹²

90 DAX MICHAELS, “The History of Tantric Massage,” <http://www.tantricmassage.com/the-history-of-tantric-massage.htm>.

91 MICHAELS, “The Definition of Tantra.”

92 DIANE MARIECHILD, “Lesbian Sex,” *Tantra.org*, 1996. <http://www.tantra.org/lesbian-kama-sutra/>

Again, lesbian Tantra is here celebrated as a liberation and empowerment – this time liberating women, as the true embodiments of *śakti*, from the oppressive binds of male control.

We know ourselves as “virgin,” meaning one-in-herself, belonging to no man. Lesbian sacred sexual love has the potential to awaken and reunite us with the divine source of our being... Through the power of love we come to know ourselves as both mothers/ creators of our lives and as daughters / caretakers of the earth.⁹³

Finally, it is not surprising that the Tantric cult of ecstasy has also been appropriated by the more extreme end of the alternative sexual spectrum, particularly in the Sado-masochist world. According to many advocates, S&M is something far more than a sexual practice that involves a certain degree of pain or bondage; rather, it is a method of optimizing sexual stimulation in order to achieve the most intense states of ecstasy. According to some authors, it is a way to reach mystical states that far transcend ordinary physical pleasure. One of its more outspoken proponents, Fakir Musafar, even compares S&M with Indian religious techniques known to yogis or millennia. The Nāth Siddhas and other yogis have long employed methods for stretching the penis, through the use of weights, chains and ropes; through such techniques they are able to achieve prolonged states of sexual arousal, yet without orgasm, thus using sex as a springboard to higher states of ecstasy: “The net result is that they become sexual with no physical way of orgasming. They are capable of going up to much higher levels of ecstasy and prolonging it.”⁹⁴ Like Tantra, Musafar argues, S&M is a controlled method of using sex to achieve ecstatic experiences, one that works by intensifying desire while at the same time postponing orgasm.

You can go into an altered state with the sexual thing. When it results in orgasm, you never discover there’s a higher ecstasy beyond ecstasy...[E]roticism is the best possible way to reach God, to get into another world. Without sexual arousal it would be impossible to escape the human condition, but if we get stuck there, then it gets to be a limitation. If you push the ultimate, deny a physical orgasm, you are making constructive use of sexual energy.⁹⁵

93 MARIECHILD, “Lesbian Sex.”

94 KRISTINE AMBROSIA and JOSEPH LANZA, “Fakir Musafar Interview,” in *Apocalypse Culture*, ed. ADAM PARFREY (Los Angeles: Feral House, 1990), 108. For a good discussion of the psychology of S&M, see JESSICA BENJAMIN, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 3-10, 219-224.

95 AMBROSIA and LANZA, “Fakir Musafar Interview,” 108.

But this S&M interpretation is perhaps only the logical conclusion of a long trajectory of American appropriations of Tantra in this century: in its American forms, Tantra has from the beginning been about radical transgression, the violation of taboos and the use of sexual stimulation to reach intense states of ecstasy. S&M is perhaps just a new reading of Tantra in an age where we have a new set of taboos to be broken and a new array of laws to be violated with titillating pleasure.

V. *tantra.com*:
The New Vernacular Language of Tantra
on the World-Wide Web

If you want to integrate your sexual and spiritual nature into one healthy, juicy, magnetized whole... all the while enlarging your options for a more multidimensional sex life... then welcome to the frequency of Sacred Sex... and our version we call AMERICAN TANTRA.

– Paul Ramana Das and Marilena Silbey, “Sacred Sexuality”⁹⁶

American Tantra has crossed virtually every boundary through its gay, lesbian and sado-masochist interpretations, perhaps the last barrier to cross is the *virtual* one – the realm of digitalization and the world-wide web. One might argue that html has emerged as the vernacular language of Tantra for the new millennium, a global language that transmits Tantric texts and images to all corners of the planet at the click of a mouse. Circulating through a new network of veins (*nāḍīs*) and energy centers (*cakras*) comprised of cables and computer terminals, the Tantric *śakti* has assumed a new form in the digital energy running through the world-wide web. As Douglas puts it, “Tantra is like the Internet- expanding exponentially, links everywhere, innovative, cross-cultural, knowing no boundaries and changing day by day.”⁹⁷

The role of the Internet within the realm of religion is a vast and difficult question only now beginning to be explored. For many critics,

⁹⁶ DAS and SILBEY, “Sacred Sexuality: Explore and Enjoy Divine Fantasy,” *Omplace.com*. http://www.omplace.com/articles/Sacred_Sex.html.

⁹⁷ DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 347.

the Internet is simply the latest example of the progressive loss of genuine human community in the face of mass culture, consumerism and an increasingly depersonalized, dehumanizing technocracy.⁹⁸ For its proponents, however, the Internet opens a new world of possibilities for creating alternative religious communities and imagining new forms of spiritual authority which transcend traditional barriers of class, wealth, gender and race.⁹⁹ As Jennifer Terry points out, the Internet, like all technology, can be used in all sorts of creative and subversive ways never dreamed of by its creators. This medium originally designed for US military use is now one of the primary vehicles for the spread of a wide range of New Age and new religious movements. With its general anonymity and the possibility of logging on without any indication of gender or physical appearance, the Internet offers remarkable new possibilities for re-imagining the self. Not only are there now a myriad of on-line temples and shrines; but there are also thousands of new “imagined religious communities” proliferating on the web, offering an alternative form of collective experience, unbounded by geographic location and freed of the barriers of wealth, class, gender or race.¹⁰⁰

The Tantric cyber surfers have been among the first to capitalize on the new possibilities of the Internet. As Rachel McDermott suggests in her study of the Tantric Goddess Kālī, we are now witnessing a remarkable global dialectical play between Indian and Western imaginations, between ancient Tantric traditions and 21st century net-surfers, mediated by the new world of cyber-space.¹⁰¹ In the last few years, the teachings and rituals of Tantra have become among the most widespread of the various alternative spiritualities available on the Net. Through the seemingly egalitarian medium of the Internet, they profess to offer a more accessible, non-elitist brand of Tantra, available to anyone regardless of status or education. One

98 See ARTHUR and MARILOUSE KROKER, *Hacking the Future: Stories for the Fleeshating 90s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 78.

99 See MITCH KAPOR, “Where is the Digital Highway Really Heading?” *Wired* July-Aug. (1993): 53.

100 JENNIFER TERRY and MELODIE CALVERT, *Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 1997), 7. See BRUCE LAWRENCE, “God On Line: Locating the Pagan/Asian Soul of America in Cyberspace,” in SUSAN MIZRUCHI, ed. *Religion and Cultural Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 236-254; ERIK DAVIS, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic + Mysticism in the Age of Information* (New York: Harmony Books, 1998).

101 RACHEL F. McDERMOTT, “Kālī's New Frontiers: A Hindu Goddess on the Internet,” in *Encountering Kālī: On the Margins, in the Center, at the Extremes*, ed. RACHEL F. McDERMOTT and JEFFREY J. KRIPAL (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chapter 12.

need only enter the word “tantra” into any search engine to generate several hundred sites, bearing titles such as “Sacred Sex-Karezza, Tantra and Sex Magic,” “Extended Orgasm: a Sexual Training Class,” “Ceremonial Sensual Pleasuring,” or “Oceanic Tantra. In his volume, *Spiritual Sex*, Nik Douglas includes an appendix with some 20 pages of on-line sex-magic possibilities, concluding that

the enormous variety of sexual fantasy scenarios offered in the media, over the phone, and on the Internet tells us that nowadays nothing is off limits... Using the information superhighway we can get on with finding out who we really are... what our sexual fantasies really are and how we want to live them out. We can do this interactively and anonymously, irrespective of country borders... In the years ahead, Tantra data on the information superhighway will lead spiritual travelers directly to their goal.¹⁰²

Thus we find a proliferation of “ritual spaces,” in which individuals disconnected in physical space can enter virtual temples to participate in on-line Tantric *pūjās*. Not only may we now visit the “Kālī Mandir,” where we are invited to experience cyber-*darśan* and perform a virtual *pūjā*, by offering fruits and flowers up to the computer screen; but we can also use the Tantric web to “greatly increase [our] sensual and sexual pleasure” and “deepen [our] intimate relationships.”¹⁰³ One of the most remarkable of these online offerings is “American Tantra,” which promises a “third millennium” vision of Tantra for a post-modern globalized, on-line audience.

American Tantra (tm) is a fresh eclectic weaving of sacred sexual philosophies drawn .. from around the world, both ancient and modern ... “American” mean[s]... fresh, innovative, fun, free, multicultural, creative, energetic, optimistic... We are innovative teachers... of this exciting blend of Sex and Spirit in a New Paradigm Relationship. In American Tantra (tm) it is vital to embrace our sexuality... and celebrate it in every aspect of our daily life... [M]aking love is a galactic event!

We intend to co-create neo-tribal post-dysfunctional multi-dimensional sex and spirit positive loving and juicy generations of gods and goddesses in the flesh. On the Starship Intercourse we greet and part with: ORGASM LONG AND PROSPER!¹⁰⁴

Ultimately, its advocates claim, the on-line rituals and cyber-sexual encounters of the Internet offer truly transformative, even utopian possibilities.

102 DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 323.

103 TRUE L. FELLOWS, “Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy,” 2000. <http://www.blisstantra.com/>

104 PAUL RAMANA DAS and MARILENA SILBEY, “Celebrating Sacred Sexuality: American Tantra (tm),” 1997. <http://www.angelfire.com/ky/pawthakh/Celebrating.html>.

As Douglas suggests, they help “re-program” the human “bio-computer” itself, to re-write the psychic software of individuals who have been sexually deformed or badly programmed by mainstream Western society:

We can access Tantric knowledge by reprogramming our biocomputer. By exploring our true spiritual potential as dynamic and creative sexual beings, we can rid ourselves of confining sex- or gender -negative conditioning.

Our bodily ‘hardware’ is desperately in need of spiritual ‘software,’ of new spiritual programming. Tantra can best be viewed as an extremely well-tested spiritual software designed specifically for this time, software that, when correctly implanted, imparts world happiness and spiritual liberation in this lifetime¹⁰⁵

Here we seem to be witnessing the birth of a new vision of the human body itself, reconfigured for the digital era. This is perhaps the ultimate fantasy of creating an alternative, incorporeal body, a cyber self, in which telephone wires and cables become the *nāḍīs* of this virtual subtle corpus, computer terminals become the new *cakras* or nodes of energy, and the flow of vital *prāṇa* becomes the infinite stream of information transmitted by digital code. As Arthur Kroker suggests, this is the digital generation’s version of the age-old struggle between the material and the immaterial, between the corruptible flesh and the desire to transcend the body in an incorruptible other-world: “Not something new, digital reality continues anew a very ancient story: the struggle between two irreconcilable elements in the human drama—the unwanted reality of the decay of the flesh and the long-dreamed promised land of escape from body organic of the pre technological body... that’s the utopia and futility of digital reality.”¹⁰⁶

Ultimately, as we see in the “American Tantra” site, the human body itself becomes a kind of terminal in this world-wide web of flowing energy, a virtual temple of erotic ecstasy, bursting with “high-frequency vibrational engorgement:”

American Tantra (tm) offers easy, fun ways to celebrate the body and spirit as divine temples of loving expression... American Tantra (tm) is designed to enhance energetic states of intimate communication, passion and pleasure... for contemporary people who choose to expand the frequency of love and light in their lives. This new paradigm “weaves” together lust and love... honoring

105 DOUGLAS, *Spiritual Sex*, 308, 19.

106 ARTHUR and MARILOUISE KROKER, *Hacking the Future: Stories for the Flesh eating* 905 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 33.

our bodies as temples of divine pleasure... channeling our spiritual/sexual... aspects of being into a new frequency of living love and light.¹⁰⁷

In short, if html is in some sense a new Tantric language for our globalized, technological age, then the message it teaches is also a rather new one. In an ironic twist, it is precisely through the Internet, by participating in on-line ecstasy, achieving cyb-orgasm via mouse and video-screen, that we are said to achieve the ultimate *physical* experience, to achieve the fullest realization of our bodily and sexual nature.

Conclusions

Primitive Passions in a Postmodern World

I have a vision for the future where all the necessary sex education will be available for everyone... No one will ever go hungry for sex because there will be sex kitchens all over town serving sex instead of soup... We will learn how to use orgasm to cure disease as some of the ancient Tantrics and Taoists did. ... In the future, everybody will be so sexually satisfied, there'll be an end to violence, rape and war. We will establish contact with extra-terrestrials and they will be very sexy.

– Annie Sprinkle¹⁰⁸

Deep down, the US, with its space, its technological refinement... is the *only remaining primitive society*. The fascinating thing is to travel through it as though it were the primitive society of the future.

– Jean Baudrillard, *America*¹⁰⁹

Our venture into cyberspace has brought us full circle – from East to West and back again; we have retraced what F. Max Müller long ago called “that world wide circle through which, like an electric current, Oriental thought could run to the West and Western thought return to the East.”¹¹⁰

107 DAS and SILBEY, “Celebrating Sacred Sexuality.”

108 GARY MORRIS, “An Interview with Sprinkle,” *BrightLightsFilms.com*, 2010. <http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/16/annie.html>.

109 JEAN BAUDRILLARD, *America* (London: Verso 1988), 7.

110 F. MAX MÜLLER, *Biographical Essays* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1884), 13.

For we have journeyed from the American appropriation of Tantra, with its re-definition of Tantra as “spiritual sex,” to the re-exportation of “Neo-Tantra,” which has been repackaged for a global marketplace and appropriated by a wide array of spiritual consumers. In the process, Tantra has undergone a series of profound transformations. No longer an esoteric path centered on acquisition of power, Tantra has been not only publicized, but also sexualized, commercialized and globalized, emerging as a brand of spirituality that seems remarkably well-suited to consumer culture at dawn of the new millennium.

It is in precisely this sense that Tantra would seem to be the ideal religion for American culture at the turn of the millennium – as the most radical and transgressive form of spirituality which violates every known taboo and oversteps every possible social restriction. Thus we now find performance artists like the notorious Annie Sprinkle – a self-proclaimed “Post-Porn-Modernist” – who uses her live performances of Tantric sex as a vehicle for absolute liberation from all forms of sexual taboo.¹¹¹ As one South Asian-American, Hakim Bey explains, Tantra is thus the most powerful path for our own age of darkness, death and power in the Kali Yuga:

Her age must contain horrors... To go thru CHAOS, to ride it like a tiger, to embrace it (even sexually) & absorb its shakti... this is the faith of the Kali yuga. Creative nihilism. For those who follow it she promises enlightenment and & even wealth, a share of her temporal *power*. The sexuality & violence serve as metaphors in a poem which acts directly on consciousness... they can be openly deployed & imbued with a sense of the holiness of *every thing* from ecstasy & wine to garbage & corpses.¹¹²

This dialectic of Tantra, I would argue, is an extreme form of the larger role of sexuality in contemporary American culture. As Foucault observes, it may not be the case that we in the modern West have liberated sexuality in some radical way; but it does seem that we have intensified our discourse about sex, talking and arguing and fantasizing about it as an endless source of titillation. At the same time, our generation has taken sex to the furthest possible extremes – to extremes of transgression, and excess, not resting until we have shattered every taboo: “We have not in the least liberated sexuality, though we have... carried it to its limits: the limit of consciousness, because it ultimately dictates the only possible reading of our unconscious; the limit of the law, since it seems the sole substance of

111 ANNIE SPRINKLE, *Post-Porn Modernist* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998), 193.

112 HAKIM BEY, Instructions for the Kali Yuga, in *Apocalypse Culture*, 87.

universal taboos.”¹¹³ Thus, one might well argue that we are now living in a kind of “post-orgy world” – “the world left after the great social and sexual convulsions” – which has broken every imaginable taboo and yet left us in a strange “undefined state,” in which we are left questioning our very being. For after all, what is there left to do after every taboo has been violated and every forbidden desire indulged?¹¹⁴

In this sense, much of the contemporary American fascination with Tantra is very similar to the contemporary fascination with the primitive, which Marianna Torgovnick has explored. As Torgovnick suggests, the West has long defined itself against its Others – whether in the form of primitives, savages, or exotic Orientals. Yet the primitive has always held a deeply ambivalent Janus-faced role in the Western imagination – at once demonized and denigrated as backward, uncivilized, retarded or dangerous, and yet also romantically celebrated as somehow more fully in tune with nature, the sacred and the mystical, ecstatic dimensions of experience. Hence as Torgovnick persuasively argues, this primitive, ecstatic and irrational dimension has, in some fundamental sense, always been a deep part of the Western imagination itself. When we turn to the “primitive” in our quest for the oceanic or ecstatic experience, we are in fact searching for a displaced part of ourselves that we have projected onto the exotic other:

The West has repeatedly tried to displace... the oceanic, severing it from the perceived self and projecting it outward. But the projection has never really worked. The time for denial seems long past. The recognition is overdue that primitivism is much more about us than about them. ... It is time to realize that the quest for ecstasy is as much a part of Western fears and desires as it is a part of... their people.¹¹⁵

So too, I would argue that our American fascination with Tantra has less to do with any actual Indian practice than it has to do with our own uniquely American fantasies, obsessions and repressed desires. Sex, I would argue, is not in fact the central preoccupation of most Tantric texts, where secrecy and the acquisition of power are typically far more important. But sex is very much a contemporary American preoccupation, one that continues to drive us in our own primitive passion for the elusive ideal of bodily and spiritual ecstasy.

113 FOUCAULT, *Religion and Culture*, 57.

114 BAUDRILLARD, *America*, 46.

115 MARIANNA TORGOVNIC, *Primitive Passions: Men, Women and the Quest for Ecstasy* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 1998), 219.

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The Serpent Rises in the West

Positive Orientalism and Reinterpretation of Tantra in the Western Left-Hand Path

KENNET GRANHOLM

In the last century or so, Tantra has gone from being an extremely polemic and detested subject to achieving immense popularity in Western spirituality. As Hugh Urban has shown, the process has involved drastic reinterpretations of the subject matter, which have changed perceptions of Tantra in both the West and its South Asian origins.¹ In the West, Tantra is commonly represented as “sacred sex”, and consequently other, arguably more central characteristics, are all but neglected. In essence, Western Tantra has very little to do with its South Asian forefather. This is, however, not an article on Tantra in the West per se, nor is it an examination of the reinterpretation of Tantra in the larger esoteric milieu in the West. This article is an examination of how Tantra is being appropriated in a specific current of contemporary Western esoteric magic – the so called Left-Hand Path. In this milieu the interpretation of Tantra differs quite drastically from what could be termed more “New Age” appropriations of the same. Instead of the sexual aspects, more focus is placed on the attainment of power and the antinomian possibilities that Tantra provides. In effect, the Western Left-Hand Path appropriations of Tantra are an example of a positive orientalism through which certain disliked characteristics of Western cultural and religious traditions can be critically scrutinized and discarded in seemingly legitimate ways.

I will start by discussing Western² esotericism and the significance of “exotic others” in the formation of esoteric identities and worldviews. I

1 HUGH B. URBAN, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

2 The qualifier “Western” is problematic, particularly in the study of the esoteric under the influence of globalization in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. See KENNET

will then treat the dubious connections between Western sex magic and South Asian Tantra. Finally, I will discuss the Western Left-Hand Path in more detail, along with its connections to and appropriation of Tantric discourse.

Western Esotericism and the Primacy of the Exotic Other

As this article deals with reinterpretations of Tantra in Western esoteric contexts, in an anthology otherwise largely devoted to Tantra in non-Western locations, a discussion of Western esotericism is in order. There are many different takes on the subject. Here I will forgo the sociological discussions and definitions presented by scholars such as Edward Tiryakian³ and Marcello Truzzi,⁴ and instead move directly to the more historically focused approaches of Antoine Faivre, Wouter Hanegraaff, and Kocku von Stuckrad.

In 1992, Antoine Faivre formulated a characterization of Western esotericism which has become very popular among scholars of esotericism. It can even be regarded as one of the central factors leading to the study of esotericism becoming a discipline in its own right. Faivre defines Western esotericism as “an ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history which share a certain *air de famille*, as well as the form of thought which is its common denominator.”⁵ This collection of spiritual currents is furthermore characterized by four intrinsic and two extrinsic features. The intrinsic characteristics consist of the idea of correspondences – that everything in existence is connected in some way and that affecting these connections is possible; the idea of living nature – that nature is permeated by divine forces, in essence being the body of God; the primacy of mediation of knowledge by “higher beings” and the human being’s imaginary faculties in achieving spiritual insight; and the

GRANHOLM, “Locating the West: Problematizing the *Western* in Western Esotericism and Occultism,” in *Occultism in Global Perspective*, ed. HENRIK BOGDAN & GORDAN DJURDJEVIC (London: Equinox, forthcoming).

3 See e.g. EDWARD A. TIRYAKIAN, “Towards the Sociology of Esoteric Culture,” in *On the Margins of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult*, ed. EDWARD A. TIRYAKIAN (New York, N. Y.: John Wiley & Sons).

4 See e.g. MARCELLO TRUZZI, “Definition and Dimensions of the Occult: Towards a Sociological Perspective,” in *On the Margins of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult*, ed. EDWARD A. TIRYAKIAN (New York, N. Y.: John Wiley & Sons).

5 ANTOINE FAIVRE, “Questions of Terminology Proper to the Study of Esoteric Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe,” in *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, ed. ANTOINE FAIVRE & WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 2.

goal of transmutation – the purification of the soul to the degree where it can approach the divine.⁶ Furthermore, Faivre determines that Western esotericism proper came into existence during the Renaissance, when different practices and traditions were unified in a common frame of reference.⁷ Faivre's approach is somewhat problematic as it can be read as a strict prescription where all the main characteristics need to be present in order for something to be "truly" esoteric.⁸ As the definition is based on historically limited source material, Renaissance phenomena will easily appear more esoteric than later (or earlier) expressions.

Wouter Hanegraaff has always stressed the scholarly constructed nature of Western esotericism – that the subject matter consists of a very diverse set of philosophies and practices lumped together under a common denominator for the sake of analysis – and has in recent times developed a conceptualization of esotericism which differs quite radically from Faivre's. In his earlier (and some of his later) work Hanegraaff builds on Faivre's notions and Gilles Quispel's idea of "gnosis" as a "third current of Western culture alongside reason and doctrinal faith."⁹ Later on, however, he has moved to analyze the esoteric, or more properly what is *today* studied under the banner of Western esotericism, through what he calls the "Grand Polemical Narrative."¹⁰ He builds on Egyptologist Jan Assmann's idea of mnemohistory as "collectively imagined history" and posits that the subject of the study of Western esotericism is Western religious phenomena that

6 ANTOINE FAIVRE, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), 10-15.

7 WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 386-388.

8 It should be noted that this is not the intent with Faivre's characterization. It is derived from a specific historical source material, and in a strict sense only applies to that specific material. The characteristics are thus a way of identifying core elements in the specific sources Faivre was examining, and not to be used in a "check-list" approach trying to determine if a certain phenomenon is esoteric or not. Nonetheless, Faivre's characterization easily lends itself to just such a check-list approach, and this is indeed how it has been used in many instances.

9 See WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, "Reason, Faith, and Gnosis: Potentials and Problematics of a Typological Construct," in *Clashes of Knowledge: Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Science and Religion*, ed. PETER MEUSBURGER, MICHAEL WELKER & EDGAR WUNDER (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008), 138.

10 WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, "Contested Knowledge: Anti-Esoteric Polemics and Academic Research," in *Aries* 5:2 (2005): 225-254; WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, "The Trouble with Images: Anti-Esoteric Polemics and Western Esotericism," in *Polemical Encounters: Esotericism and Its Others*, ed. OLAV HAMMER & KOCKU VON STUCKRAD (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 107-136.

have, at one time or another,¹¹ been regarded as contrary to established orthodox knowledge in the West, and subjected to polemic discourses where the phenomenon is presented as dangerous, immoral, irrational, or simply wrong. Hanegraaff sees this conflict as largely one between monotheism, where the divine is far removed from the human sphere, and cosmotheism, where the divine is immanent but hidden. While my presentation of Hanegraaff's ideas surely do not do the complexity of them justice, I do see some problems with his approach. One problem is that it runs the risk of broadening the scope of the field to the degree where it can essentially encompass almost anything. An example Hanegraaff himself provides is that of contemporary polemical depictions of Islam.¹² Surely there is some merit in keeping an analytical distance between mainstream, orthodox Islam and subjects such as astrology, alchemy, and magic? While the "Grand Polemical Narrative" deals not with the esoteric per se, but instead with processes where certain phenomena have been "esotericized," Hanegraaff still is engaged in dealing with the esoteric/occult as a "waste basket of knowledge" in much the same way he has earlier criticized sociologist Marcello Truzzi for.¹³ The approach is problematic as it defines its subject by negation; the esoteric is that which has been marginalized in Western culture.

In 2005, Kocku von Stuckrad suggested a discursive approach, using the term esoteric for a "structural element of Western culture"¹⁴ where the focus lies on "claims of higher knowledge and ways of accessing this knowledge."¹⁵ Two particularly prominent ways of accessing "higher knowledge" are mediated by higher beings and personal experience of the divine, and esoteric worldviews are often based on ontological monism.¹⁶ A further constitutive element of esoteric discourse is secrecy, not as pertaining to knowledge that is actually unattainable for the general popula-

11 This is an important detail, as Hanegraaff stresses that his focus is largely on post-Enlightenment discourses, where many previously accepted phenomena such as alchemy and astrology are a posteriori defined in polemic ways.

12 HANEGRAAFF, "Forbidden Knowledge," 227.

13 WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, "On the Construction of 'Esoteric Traditions,'" in *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, ed. ANTOINE FAIVRE & WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 40-42.

14 KOCKU VON STUCKRAD, "Western Esotericism: Towards an Integrative Model of Interpretation," *Religion* 35 (2005), 80. See also KOCKU VON STUCKRAD, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (London: Equinox, 2005), 9-11; KOCKU VON STUCKRAD, *Locations of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Esoteric Discourse and Western Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

15 VON STUCKRAD, "Western Esotericism," 88.

16 *Ibid.*, 91-93.

tion but as “the dialectic of the hidden and revealed;”¹⁷ “the rhetoric of a hidden truth”¹⁸ which can be accessed by the individual who uses the right methods to acquire it. A considerable benefit of von Stuckrad’s approach is that it is not restricted to a set body of sources or a specific historical period, thus broadening the field of study and opening it up for new perspectives. However, there is a downside to this broadening; “the esoteric” can easily become an all too inclusive term to be of greater analytical value.

Both Hanegraaff and von Stuckrad are shifting the focus to issues of legitimacy and power, but they do so in different and at times conflicting ways. They both note “othering” as a key theme when studying the esoteric. However, I do not feel that they give it enough importance as an integral element of esoteric worldviews. I want to argue that the creation of and focus on a positive other is at the very centre of esoteric spirituality. True, in the European context (and Europe’s eventual offshoots in e.g. North America) the creation of exotic others through which self-understandings and self-identities can be constructed is commonplace. However, the exotic other has generally been regarded in the negative – representing everything one does *not* want to be. In contrast, the esoteric exotic other is primarily a positive one – having access to superior wisdom that does not exist in the West, at least not presently. We see numerous examples of this in the history of the esoteric in the West. In the Renaissance the focus lay on the Greece of Antiquity and its philosophers. Later on, as the Greek sources became too familiar, Egypt came to be regarded as the cradle of esoteric knowledge. Eventually this was no longer enough, and the gaze was turned to India and the “mystic orient” as the “true abode of ancient wisdom.” Of course, imaginary esoteric centers such as Agharti in Tibet and the lost continents of Atlantis and Lemuria also represent the exotic and esoteric other. In the twentieth century various indigenous and pre-Christian pagan religions, arguably also representing exotic and esoteric subjects, have become increasingly important.¹⁹ An important point is that

17 Ibid, 89.

18 VON STUCKRAD, *Western Esotericism*, 10.

19 When looking at the function of exotic others for the esoteric, the example of Traditionalism is an enlightening one. This is an esoteric current, originating in the writings of René Guénon in early twentieth-century France, where the modern West (and modernity in itself) is regarded as spiritually dead and the focus is shifted to “authentic traditions” such as Islam (particularly Sufism) and Orthodox Christianity. See MARK SEDGWICK, *Against the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) for the definitive work on Traditionalism.

East and West are primarily emic categories in the world of the esoteric, and should not be regarded as definite categories in a scholarly, etic sense.²⁰

It is precisely due to this positive orientalism and exoticization that Tantra has become an important element in contemporary esoteric teachings in the West. The Gnostics, Rosicrucians, and the Knights Templar of European history and their imagined sexual rituals were not exotic enough as the world shrunk in processes of globalization, and the gaze was increasingly turned outside the West. Tantra became the preferred “origin” of sex magical practices, and it is for this reason more than any other that we find more references to Tantra than to e.g. Paschal Beverly Randolph²¹ in discussions of sex magic in the context of groups such as the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) and Dragon Rouge, and writers such as Kenneth Grant and Zeena and Nicholas Schreck. The exotic is simply more esoteric, not to mention more erotic!

The Left-Hand Path

The current²² of contemporary esotericism called the Left-Hand Path has received very little attention in academia. Scholars such as Richard Sutcliffe and Graham Harvey have discussed it briefly, and others such as Dave Evans and I provide lengthier treatments.²³ However, beside some of

20 See GRANHOLM, “Locating the West”.

21 See John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1997).

22 In my take on esoteric currents I diverge from Antoine Faivre, who defines them as “schools, movements, or traditions”, see FAIVRE, “Questions of Terminology,” 3. I conceive currents as “discourse complexes”, i.e. specific combinations of specific ways of understanding and communicating one’s understanding of the world, that structure the more general discourses of “higher knowledge” and “ways of accessing higher knowledge” as per Kocku von Stuckrad’s approach to the esoteric. See KENNETH GRANHOLM. “Esoteric Currents as Discursive Complexes,” *Religion – special issue on discourse analysis in the study of religion* (forthcoming).

23 RICHARD SUTCLIFFE, “Left-Hand Path Ritual Magick,” in *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. CHARLOTTE HARDMAN & GRAHAM HARVEY (London: Thorsons, 1996), 109-137; GRAHAM HARVEY, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), 97-99; DAVE EVANS, *The History of British Magick after Crowley: Kenneth Grant, Amado Crowley, Chaos Magic, Satanism, Lovecraft, the Left-Hand Path, Blasphemy and Magical Morality* (London: Hidden Publishing, 2007); KENNETH GRANHOLM, *Embracing the Dark: The Magic Order of Dragon Rouge – Its Practice in Dark Magic and Meaning Making* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2005).

my own later work,²⁴ no thorough discussion of what actually defines this current has been provided. All of the abovementioned scholars do identify antinomianism as a central ingredient in Left-Hand Path spiritualities, and discuss the aim of Left-Hand Path magic to transcend the boundary between the dualisms of “black” and “white” magic, and good and evil. However, more substance is needed in a definition of the Left-Hand Path.

Drawing from emic self-understandings, I propose an etic definition of the Left-Hand Path as a distinct development of contemporary Western esoteric magic, which is distinguished by the following discursive components:

The *ideology of individualism*, where the individual and his/her spiritual development is the primary concern. Left-Hand Path organizations are typically likened to schools where the individual magician can acquire the tools necessary for his/her magical progress, rather than as communities. The individual is positioned in opposition to the collective, and this often results in a form of elitism, which posits the magician as an elect individual.²⁵ It could be argued that most or all esoteric philosophies throughout history have been individualistic in character. However, the distinction with Left-Hand Path spiritualities is that individualism is raised to the level of explicit ideology.

The *goal of self-deification*, where the aim of the practitioner is to become a creator, or a god, through initiatory processes. The nature of this self-deification is interpreted in various ways by different individuals (as groups rarely define it in a singular fashion). On the one side of the continuum we find psychological interpretations in which self-deification signifies assuming total control over one’s own personal existential universe. On the other side we find purely metaphysical interpretations in which the practitioner is regarded to become an actual god.

An *antinomian* stance, in which collective religious and cultural norms are questioned in the pursuit of individualized ethics²⁶ and spiritual evolu-

24 See e.g. KENNET GRANHOLM, “‘The Prince of Darkness on the Move’: Transnationality and Translocality in Left-Hand Path Magic,” (Torino: CESNUR, 2007) URL: http://www.cesnur.org/pa_granhholm.htm; KENNET GRANHOLM, “Left-Hand Path Magic and Animal Rights,” *Nova Religio* 12:4 (2009); KENNET GRANHOLM, “Embracing Others Than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu,” in *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. JESPER AAGAARD PETERSEN (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

25 I have earlier termed this condition “uniqueism” as the term elitism is rather pejorative and the common understanding of it does not really capture the essence of the phenomenon. See GRANHOLM, *Embracing the Dark*, 129-131.

26 KENNET GRANHOLM, “Den vänstra handens väg: Moral, etik och synen på ondska i en mörkmagisk orden,” in *Hotbilder – våld, aggression och religion*, ed. MARIA LEPPÄKARI &

tion. This is often realized in ritualistic fashion in spiritual practices where the magician breaks religious, cultural, and personal taboos (most often on a purely mental level).²⁷ The idea is that this will grant the magician a level of freedom and separation in his individualization and self-deification. Part of Left-Hand Path antinomianism is that any particular Left-Hand Path exists in an antithetical relation to what it perceives to be “the Right-Hand Path.” This includes religious (and often political, ideological etc.) groups that are “mainstream” and conform to established norms, as well as many forms of alternative spirituality that are regarded as being essentially collective in character, and/or conforming in ideology and practice (including esoteric spiritualities such as “New Age” and neopaganism). A particular Left-Hand Path thus defines itself in opposition to this “Right-Hand Path,” and becomes what this “mainstream” spirituality is not.²⁸ Part of this antinomian stance is the preference of symbols and rhetoric that is commonly regarded as “satanic,” e.g. the inverted pentagram, talk of “The Prince of Darkness,” and terms such as black magic.

The origin of the term Left-Hand Path can be traced back to nineteenth-century Western reinterpretations of Indian religious sources, particularly perceptions of Tantra. While many Tantric texts name seven or more “paths,”²⁹ the notion of two juxtaposed paths – *Dakṣiṇācāra* (also *Dakṣiṇāmārga*, roughly translatable as “right way”) and *Vāmācāra* (also *Vāmāmārga*, roughly translatable as “left way”) – was the one propagated in the Western occultist milieu. The idea that Tantra could easily be divided into the two main traditions resonated with the already established division into black and white magic. Notions of “left” and “right” had of course been part of the occultist milieu for a long while, based already on Biblical tradition, but it was Helena Petrovna Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society who popularized the Indian and Tantric connections.³⁰

The evolution of the Left-Hand Path cannot be discussed without mentioning the most (in)famous occultist of the twentieth century;

JONATHAN PESTE (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2006).

27 SUTCLIFFE, “The Left Hand Path”; Granholm, *Embracing the Dark*, 137–138.

28 GRANHOLM, *Embracing the Dark*, 138, footnote 43; see also Granholm, “The Prince of Darkness on the Move”.

29 See DAVID KINSLEY, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahāvidyās* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 48. See also the *Kulārṇava Tantra* 2: 4–9, quoted in Urban, *Tantra*, 33, where *Vāmācāra* is listed as one path along with Vedic worship, Vaiṣṇava worship, Śaiva worship, *Dakṣiṇācāra*, *Siddhānta*, and *Kaula*.

30 See e.g. HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY, *The Secret Doctrine. Volume 1: Cosmogony* (London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, Ltd, 1888), 192; HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY, *The Secret Doctrine. Volume 2: Anthropogony* (London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, Ltd, 1888), 579.

Aleister Crowley (1875-1947). While Crowley did not use the term Left-Hand Path as a self-designation, his magical philosophy and practice has been extremely influential on the later Left-Hand Path milieu.³¹ Crowley received his initial training in magic and occultism in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (founded in 1888), and came to develop his own magical religion, Thelema, from 1904 onwards. In 1912 Crowley became involved with the German-originated magic order Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), which is the main organization expounding Crowley's teachings today.³² Crowley's use of sex as an initiatory tool, his antinomian stance towards traditional society and religion, his focus on the Will as the main instrument of the magician, and his uncompromising attitude to spiritual progress have all influenced Left-Hand Path spiritualities.

From the early 1970s onwards, a positive re-evaluation of the term Left-hand Path can be found in the works of British magician and author Kenneth Grant (1924-2011). Grant was the personal secretary of Crowley for a short period in 1945, and further developed the Thelemic system of his mentor. A few years after Crowley's death Grant made an attempt to take over the O.T.O., and although this ultimately failed he has maintained his own branch of the order, commonly identified as the Typhonian O.T.O.³³ Even though Grant's O.T.O. has never had more than a handful of members, his writings are well known within the occult milieu. The most central of these are the three Typhonian Trilogies, published between 1972 and 2002.³⁴ Grant's *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (1973) contains one of the first positive appraisals of the term Left-Hand Path,

- 31 Aleister Crowley's influence is apparent in most contemporary esotericism, for example on Neo-Pagan witchcraft and Wicca, see e.g. HENRIK BOGDAN, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007), 147-155. However, it is not uncommon that this heritage goes unmentioned, as the perception of Crowley is still rather negative.
- 32 MARCO PASI, "Ordo Templi Orientis," in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF with JEAN-PIERRE BRACH, ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK & ANTOINE FAIVRE (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 898-906. It should be noted that there are conflicting views regarding whether O. T. O. existed as an actual order before the involvement of Crowley or not. Even if the order may have existed before Crowley, he certainly had a decisive impact on it.
- 33 PETER R. KOENIG, "Introduction," in ALEISTER CROWLEY & THEODOR REUSS, *O. T. O. Rituals and Sex Magick*. Edited and Compiled by A. R. NAYLOR (Thame: Essex House, 1999), 25-26. Grant's group was reorganized as the Typhonian Order in the late 2000s, see *Starfire, A Journal of the New Aeon: The Official Organ of the Typhonian Order*. Volume III, Number 3 (London: Starfire Publishing Ltd, 2008).
- 34 The first trilogy consists of *The Magical Revival* (1972), *Aleister Crowley & the Hidden God* (1973), and *Cults of the Shadow* (1975), the second trilogy consists of *Nightside of Eden* (1977), *Outside the Circles of Time* (1980), and *Hecate's Fountain* (1992), while the

with increasing treatment in subsequent books. For example, in *Cults of the Shadow* Grant writes “It is the almost universal failure to understand the proper function of the Left Hand Path that has led to its denigration...”,³⁵ and this sentiment is expressed in *Nightside of Eden* as well.³⁶ Grant identifies the Left-Hand Path as a genuine and important spiritual path, and considers it to be as valid as the more common “right-hand path.”

If the term Left-Hand Path is not directly used as a self-designate by Kenneth Grant, it is used so by Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan (1966) and “father of modern Satanism.” For example, in *The Satanic Bible* the following sentence is included as part of an incantation: “Strengthen with fire the marrow of our friend and companion, our comrade on the Left-Hand Path.”³⁷ Also discussed is the “Right-Hand Path,” portrayed as representing religions of ignorance and fear.³⁸ It is interesting to note that this “Right-Hand Path” is treated a lot more thoroughly than the Left-Hand Path. This is an example of the importance of a negative other for Left-Hand Path spiritualities.

Some other representatives of the milieu are the Temple of Set, founded in California, USA, in 1975, the Texan author Michael W. Ford and his Order of Phosphorus, and the Swedish originated Dragon Rouge,³⁹ founded in 1990 and currently the largest Left-Hand Path order with its approximately 400 members worldwide. Of these groups and individuals Dragon Rouge is of most significance in the present context, as it incorporates a particular interpretation of Tantra into its very foundations – in an eclectic synthesis with Kabbalah, alchemy, and Old Norse rune mysticism.

Sexual Mysticism, Sex Magic, and Tantra in Western Esoteric Contexts

While Indian Tantric practice is not automatically sexual in nature, in the Western imagination it has certainly become highly sexualized. Sexuality and sexual mysticism has always played a part in Western esotericism. Examples of this are e.g. the treatment of the feminine aspect of the

third and last trilogy consists of *Outer Gateways* (1994), *Beyond the Mauve Zone* (1999), and *The Ninth Arch* (2002).

35 KENNETH GRANT, *Cults of the Shadow* (London: Skoob Books, 1994 [1975]), 1.

36 KENNETH GRANT, *Nightside of Eden*, (London: Skoob Books, 1994 [1977]), 52.

37 ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible* (New York, N.Y.: Avon Books, 2005 [1969]), 151.

38 E.g. LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*, 42.

39 See GRANHOLM, *Embracing the Dark*, for a thorough study of the order.

godhead in Kabbalah, the Shekhinah, and the mystical union of it with the masculine aspect of God;⁴⁰ and discussions by such important Renaissance esotericists such as Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno, who regarded sensual desire as central to spiritual attainment.⁴¹ It was, however, not before the mid to late nineteenth century before sexual techniques were systematically incorporated into Western esoteric teachings.

Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875) is generally considered the first in the history of Western esotericism to develop a system of sex magical practice.⁴² Randolph was born in New York, an illegitimate child to a black woman and a white man – a mixed heritage that consistently troubled him. From about the early 1850s to the early 1860s he was deeply involved in spiritualist circles, as well as active in women's rights and anti-slavery movements. By the late 1850s he had started to become disillusioned with spiritualism. After having come into contact with older esoteric currents – e.g. Rosicrucianism and magic – on his travels in Europe he started developing a system which focused on the use of sexual intercourse as a spiritual practice. He died by his own hand at age forty-nine, having difficulties managing his feelings of jealousy towards his wife. Randolph's teachings were picked up by the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor⁴³ – probably founded by Max Théon (Louis Maximilian Bimstein, 1848-1927) in 1884. The order marketed itself as an alternative to the Theosophical Society and its (as some felt) overly Eastern focus.⁴⁴ The order more or less ceased to exist after a financial scandal in late 1885, but even with its short existence the impact of the Brotherhood on the esoteric milieu was considerable. It is mainly through the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor that Randolph's sex magical teachings have spread.

Aleister Crowley, mentioned above, and the O.T.O.⁴⁵ are commonly regarded as the most important progenitors of sex magic in the West. Crowley engaged in sexual experimentation already in his teens, published

40 GERSHOM SCHOLEM, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York, N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1991), 140-196.

41 WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, "Under the Mantle of Love: The Mystical Eroticism of Marsilio Ficino and Giordano Bruno," in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, ed. WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF & JEFFREY J. KRIPAL (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 175-207.

42 HUGH B. URBAN, *Magia Sexualis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 55; see DEVENEY, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, for the definitive work on Randolph.

43 See CHRISTIAN CHANEL, JOHN PATRICK DEVENEY & JOSCELYN GODWIN, *The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor: Initiatic and Historical Documents of an Order of Practical Occultism* (New York, N.Y.: Samuel Weiser, 1995).

44 DEVENEY, *Paschal Beverly Randolph*, 246.

45 See PASI, "Ordo Templi Orientis," for more information on the order.

a collection of erotic poems called *White Stains* in 1898 – the same year he joined the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and worked with sexual techniques in his magic since at least the early 1900s. However, it was not until 1912 when he came into contact with Theodor Reuss of O. T. O. that Crowley seriously began to develop a sex magical system. The O. T. O. was founded on paper in the early 1900s, but it is doubtful if the order was operational before Crowley's involvement with it. According to its own origin myths the order was founded in cooperation by Carl Kellner (1851-1905) – who had travelled in the East and probably come into contact with Tantric practices – and Theodor Reuss – an entrepreneur in the occult world who managed several fringe masonry groups. While it seems that both Kellner and Reuss had some familiarity with Tantra, it is not likely that their knowledge was particularly extensive.⁴⁶ As the order's activities probably commenced well after Kellner's death his potential knowledge of Tantra cannot be considered to have had much of an impact. What is known is that after Crowley become affiliated with the O. T. O. he produced the ritual material and aligned the order to his vision of Thelema.⁴⁷

Crowley is often regarded one of the most important persons in synthesizing Tantra and Western esotericism. In his foreword to Crowley's autohagiography John Symmonds writes: "His greatest merit, perhaps, was to make the bridge between Tantrism and the Western esoteric tradition, and thus bring together Western and Eastern magical traditions."⁴⁸ Kenneth Grant also emphasizes the connections between Crowley's system and Tantra.⁴⁹ According to Hugh Urban, however, this interpretation is largely erroneous. While Crowley might have come into contact with Tantric practices on his travels,⁵⁰ and was very knowledgeable about different forms of Yoga, his knowledge of Tantra was severely limited.⁵¹ Similarly, the O. T. O. is often given a certain Tantric pedigree on rather dubious grounds. It

46 HUGH B. URBAN, "Unleashing the Beast: Aleister Crowley, Tantra and Sex Magic in Late Victorian England," *Esoterica* 5 (2003): 148.

47 See MARCO PASI, "Crowley, Aleister," in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF with JEAN-PIERRE BRACH, ROELOF VAN DEN BROEK & ANTOINE FAIVRE (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 281-287.

48 JOHN SYMONDS, "Introduction," in *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, ed. KENNETH GRANT & JOHN SYMONDS (London: Arkana, Penguin Books, 1979), 25.

49 See e.g. KENNETH GRANT, *The Magical Revival* (London: Skoob Books, 1991 [1972]), 121; KENNETH GRANT, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (London: Skoob Books, 1992 [1973]).

50 HUGH B. URBAN, "The Beast with Two Backs: Aleister Crowley, Sex Magic and the Exhaustion of Modernity", in *Nova Religio* 7:3 (2004): 12.

51 HUGH B. URBAN, "Unleashing the Beast", 140.

seems far more likely that the original inspiration for the sexual practices of the order lie in the teachings of Paschal Beverly Randolph, conveyed through the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor. For example, both Randolph and the O.T.O. entertain the idea that the magician should focus his/her will on the desired outcome at the moment of orgasm; an idea which is not present in Tantra. There are, however, some rather pronounced differences between the sex magical approaches of Randolph and O.T.O. as well. For the former sex magic was to be strictly limited to married heterosexual couples, whereas the latter had no such limitations and even opened up the possibility of homosexual magical practices – something Crowley himself practiced. In contrast to Randolph, and similarly to Tantric contexts, Crowley and O.T.O. included the ritual consumption of the combined male and female sexual fluids.

If Tantra was not the primary inspiration for Randolph, Crowley, or the O.T.O., it was for others. As noted by Hugh Urban,⁵² discourses on sexuality were in no way absent in Victorian England. Rather, they were a preoccupation. Sir Francis Burton (1821-1890) was an important figure in the construction of the idea of a sexualized tantric India. In 1883 he translated the Kama Sutra, a publication that came to be falsely associated with Tantra.⁵³ Another Brit, John Woodroffe (1865-1936) – working as a barrister for the High Court in British India, is regarded as the father of Tantric studies. Under the pen name Arthur Avalon he wrote several volumes on the subject of Tantra, and was to a large degree responsible for producing a moralized, “deodorized”, version of Tantra in both the West and the East.⁵⁴

The contemporary Western views of Tantra as “sacred sex” can largely be attributed to the influence of Pierre Arnold Bernard (1875?-1955) – also known as “the Omnipotent Oom.” Bernard had travelled in India in his youth, but probably came into contact with some Tantric teachings via an Indian yogi in California in the early 1900s. In 1906 he founded the Tantrik Order in America, which focused on the sexual aspects of Tantra.⁵⁵ Although Bernard and this early “Tantric movement” caused much controversy in its time, the sexual techniques introduced by him and the idea of sex as important for spiritual development and enlightenment have proliferated since the second half of the twentieth century.

52 HUGH B. URBAN, “The Omnipotent Oom: Tantra and Its Impact on Modern Western Esotericism,” *Esoterica* 3 (2001): 219. See also Hugh Urban’s essay in the present volume, p. 457-494.

53 *Ibid.*, 222-223.

54 URBAN, *Tantra*, 136-147.

55 URBAN, “The Omnipotent Oom,” 218-259.

So, if the sex magical practices of the likes of Randolph, Crowley and Bernard are so different from South Asian Tantric practices, what is this “original Tantra” then? As this is an issue of considerable scholarly debate, and as I am not myself an expert on the subject, I will keep my discussion short. According to David Gordon White, the origin of Tantra lies in the Kaula practices of rural India. The female deities/demonesses identified first as “seizers” and later as Yoginīs were terrible and frightful entities. They needed to be calmed by the sacrifice of foodstuff or they would feast on unborn babies and the vital energies of men instead. In conjunction to this there existed the idea that the truly heroic individual (a *vīra*) could instead make an offering of his vital male fluids, semen, and be rewarded by receiving supernatural powers through the intake of the Yoginīs’ female fluids. Rites where human women represented, and indeed worked as manifestations of, the Yoginīs emerged. These rites culminated in sexual rituals at the end of which the mixed sexual fluids of the male and female practitioner were consumed.⁵⁶

White, and other scholars of Tantra such as Hugh Urban, stress that sexual rites have always been a very small part of Tantra as a whole, and references to such practices are few and far between in classic tantric literature.⁵⁷ It could be argued, as Traditionalist Julius Evola does, that Tantra is more about power than about sex.⁵⁸ The main goal of the Tantric practitioner would then be to achieve bodily supernatural powers, Siddhis (where the word Siddha, the person who has achieved such powers, means perfected being), such as immortality and flight. According to White, ideas about spiritual enlightenment came only in later theological speculations from the twelfth century onwards. These were attempts to sanitize Tantra so that even more orthodox Indians could engage in its practice. Here, the sexual elements, and the importance given to actual women, were sublimated and ideas of the internal feminine power of the male practitioner, the Śakti, and the symbolic reading of the forbidden elements of Tantric practice were instituted.⁵⁹ The act of sexual intercourse became internalized as the symbolic union of the masculine Śiva and the feminine Śakti,

56 DAVID GORDON WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric Sex” in Its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 27-93. It should be noted that White’s ideas are in no way uncontested in the scholarly community.

57 *Ibid.*, 13; Urban, *Tantra*.

58 JULIUS EVOLA, *Yoga of Power: Tantra, Shakti and the Secret Way* (Rochester, V.T.: Inner Traditions International, 1992).

59 WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, 219-257. Again, White’s views here are contested, and some have noted that the opposite development may actually have been the case, with symbolic interpretation preceding sexualized rites.

all occurring internally in the body of the Tantric practitioner. The feminine energy of man came to be represented as the coiled Kuṇḍalinī serpent which could be awakened in meditation and thus activate energy point, chakras; and all this was incorporated as central elements of Tantric philosophy and practice. White calls this theological speculation on Tantra *tantrism*,⁶⁰ whereas he prefers *Tantra* as a term representing the broader field.

It should, of course, be noted that in Tantra just as in Christianity the theological forms were never the most widespread ones. Hugh Urban also notes that it is in the complex interplay between orientalists, scholars, and native Indians, that the view of Tantra and tantrism that is predominant today arose.⁶¹ Thus, this dialogical process created a new form of Tantra which affected philosophies and practices in both the West and South Asia. Tantrism, before being constructed as such in the modern period, was never a singular monolithic category and became such as a result of the meeting of East and West.⁶²

The Sexualized Feminine Divine, Tantra, and Positive Orientalism in the Western Left-Hand Path

When Tantra is appropriated in Western Left-Hand Path contexts, it can be attributed in part to experienced misrepresentations of the feminine in Western religious history, but also to the appeal of a positive orientalism where the “East” is valued for both its exotic qualities and imagined spiritual virtues. The appropriation and positive reappraisal of the feminine in the Left-Hand Path is linked to the idea of antinomianism, discussed earlier. In Western culture the feminine has traditionally been considered impure, worldly, potentially evil, and thus separated from the divine. In Jewish mysticism the character Lilith is sometimes regarded as the first woman who was created equal to Adam.⁶³ However, when she was not willing to submit to Adam she was cast out of or fled from the Garden of Eden and became the mother of numerous demons and things evil, as well as seducing men as a succubus.⁶⁴ In some accounts Lilith is said to have

60 Ibid, 16.

61 URBAN, *Tantra*.

62 Ibid, 40

63 RAPHAEL PATAI, *The Hebrew Goddess* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1967), 218; PINCHAS GILLER, *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of Kabbalah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 65.

64 PATAI, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 210.

become the consort of Samael/Satan after she left Adam, and in still others the existence of two Liliths who wage war on each other is proposed.⁶⁵ In the West woman has come to symbolize lust and sin (as lust is regarded a Christian sin), as well as the active agency in enticing man to sin and impurity. This is clearly noted in Abrahamic views on menstruation as well as in the importance of male dominance over all aspects of female sexuality.⁶⁶ In cosmic dichotomy the feminine often represents the dark, negative and passive aspects of the supernatural. At the same time, she is often represented as playing the active part in things evil, or simply more prone to the temptations of the devil.⁶⁷

Similarly, the left side has in many cultures been regarded as the side of evil and wrongfulness, and often also the feminine. The Sanskrit *vāma*, denoting left, adverse, wicked, adverse, opposite etc. is similar to the word *vāmā* which can be translated as woman.⁶⁸ In India the right hand was used when eating and the left hand when cleaning oneself after visiting the toilet. Thus the left hand symbolized impurity, in physical as well as in spiritual matters, and its potential connection to the female has by some been interpreted as suggesting that the woman was seen as impure. In the Western world the left and left-handed people come to symbolize a broad range of undesirable qualities, such as weakness, clumsiness and dishonesty. The word *left* in the English language originates from Old English *lyft*, which meant weak or worthless.⁶⁹ The Italian word for left-handed, *mancino*, has connotations of treacherousness. The Latin word *Sinister* translates as *left* or *wrong, perverse*.⁷⁰ Not to forget the fact that we shake hands with our right hand, not our left. Earlier Western psychology did consider the left-handed person to be a bearer of all sorts of unwanted social behaviors

65 SCHOLEM, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, 295-296.

66 JONATHAN KLAWANS, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 29, 39-40, 104-108.

67 See ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 82.

68 MONIER-WILLIAMS, Sanskrit-English Dictionary (2008 revision), "vāma", <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier>, accessed 1 December 2010. It should be noted that the word *vāmā* can also be translated as "lovely, dear, pleasant, agreeable, fair, beautiful, splendid, noble", and that an etymological connection between the words *vāma* and *vāmā* has not been established. Such a connection is, however, argued by Western Left-Hand Path groups as it fits their antinomian goals.

69 Online Etymology Dictionary, "Left", <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=left&searchmode=none>, accessed 30 June 2009.

70 Latin Dictionary and Grammar Aid, <http://www.archives.nd.edu/cgi-bin/lookup.pl?stem=sinist&ending=er>, accessed 30 June 2009.

and qualities, such as homosexuality, incestuous desires, impotence, and mental disorders.

In many ways, Left-Hand Path philosophies present the feminine in ways which have been common in Western religion in general. There is a difference, however, in how these characteristics are valued. In the Left-Hand Path order Dragon Rouge, for example, Lilith – who figures strongly in the order’s material – is portrayed as sexually aggressive and dangerous, but this is not seen as a negative thing.⁷¹ In Tantric vocabulary, it is only the true *vīra* who can manage to approach the dangerous divine feminine unscathed. In his book *Mörk magi* [Dark Magic], long-time Dragon Rouge member Tommie Eriksson writes that “the feminine primal force has been deported to the darkness and the dark goddess has become nothing more than a symbol of death and decay.”⁷² One of the goals of the Dragon Rouge magician is to approach this negative symbol, understand the “true meaning” of it, and thus reevaluate it. Dragon Rouge vocabulary includes many references to the sexualized feminine divine. For example, the starting point of the black magician’s road to self-deification entails the magician symbolically “stepping into the womb of Lilith.”⁷³ When the magician’s development reaches its climax the womb is represented as the staring eye of chaos, through which the magician steps out. By stepping into the “Womb of Lilith” the magician in essence impregnates him- or herself, and by stepping out through the “Eye of Lucifer” he/she gives birth to him-/herself as a god. Symbolic representations of Lilith’s womb are also displayed prominently in the alchemical sigil of the order. The sigil portrays achieved divinity as the union of the male and female in the form of a stylized Śiva-Liṅgam (also termed the Eye of Lucifer). Official Dragon Rouge material holds that the darker aspects of spirituality are feminine: “She represents the gate to the dimensions of magic. She is Mother Earth and through her womb life is born and dies. She is the gate to the underworld and the goddess that the witch and the warlock step down into in order to be initiated. She is the realm of death and the mother to all life.”⁷⁴

The feminine aspect of the divine is so important to Dragon Rouge largely because it is felt that this is an area of the human experience which has been neglected and demonized by the dominant religion in the West, Christianity. When this religion is criticized, it is often on the grounds of it

71 See GRANHOLM, *Embracing the Dark*, 140-141.

72 TOMMIE ERIKSSON, *Mörk magi* (Sundbyberg: Ouroboros produktion, 2001), 6. My translation.

73 DRAGON ROUGE, *Magikurs 2, brev 6*, 2-3. Unpublished internal document.

74 DRAGON ROUGE, *Magikurs 2, brev 3*, 3. Unpublished internal document. My translation.

having legitimated the repression of women and presenting her as an evil and dangerous other.⁷⁵ This rhetoric needs to be understood in the context of contemporary Sweden and the importance attributed to the notion of equality between the sexes in this country. As in all of contemporary the West, the aspiration in Sweden has since the mid 1900s been to forge a society where individuals of both sexes have equal opportunities and possibilities. The Scandinavian societies have been forerunners in the ideology of equality and Sweden has taken a particularly active role in the process. In addition, this discourse of women's liberation is to be understood in the context of the reappraisal of the feminine aspects of the divine. As most groups with neopagan influences, the order has a notion of the dichotomy of masculine vs. feminine, with the former representing civilization and the latter representing nature. When the order at the same time strives for a reappraisal of nature, the feminine quite naturally assumes a prominent position and becomes something to be revered.

As stated earlier, a form of orientalism where the exotic and far away – in space and/or time – is a foundational aspect of Western esoteric discourse. Considering this, and the centrality of antinomianism for Left-Hand Path spiritualities it is easier to understand why Tantra appears so attractive to a group such as Dragon Rouge. Tantra provides an avenue for “double rebellion.” As I have shown, the turn to the feminine divine in groups such as Dragon Rouge is to a high degree motivated by antinomian concerns. The common demonization of the feminine in Western culture provides ample opportunity for utilizing the feminine in antinomian pursuits. The feminine divine represents aggressive sexuality and power, which is dangerous, but if approached in the right manner it can be a great asset for one's magical development. Tantra provides a religious tradition which has models for this aggressive and dangerous sexualized feminine divine, at the same time as it provides the added allure of being an exotic other. Indian feminine deities in Tantric contexts such as Kālī, Durgā, and Tārā are often represented as dangerous, and as apparent reversals of the passive feminine in Western contexts. Dragon Rouge, for example, has adopted a view on spiritual gender from (Western representations of) Vāmācāra Tantra, and uses the Indian example to reinterpret Western demonic femininities. In comparing Lilith with Kālī similarities can be found, and the interpretation that the former can represent the same positive qualities as the latter can be made. This can furthermore be used in discourses where the dominant religious traditions can be criticized on the grounds of repressing

75 DRAGON ROUGE, *Philosophy*, <http://www.dragonrouge.net/english/philosophy.htm>, Accessed 30 June 2009.

the feminine, and given added legitimacy for positive reinterpretations of existing Western notions and traditions. The exotic other, viewed in the light of positive orientalism, becomes a lens through which the familiar can be seen in new ways.

Western Left-Hand Path groups are not uniform in their use of Tantra. Some groups and individuals, such as Dragon Rouge, Kenneth Grant, and the former Church of Satan and Temple of Set member Nicholas and Zeena Schreck, make much use of Tantra. In other groups, such as the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set, Tantra receives almost no treatment, at least on an official level. I will here focus primarily on the appropriation of Tantra in Dragon Rouge and the publications of Kenneth Grant.

Kenneth Grant builds on Aleister Crowley's magical system and, as said earlier, presents the latter as very knowledgeable concerning Tantra. Grant is the single-most significant individual in the Left-Hand Path when it comes to cementing the idea that the Western Left-Hand Path is largely analogous to, or even a direct descendant of, Indian Vāmācāra Tantra.⁷⁶ In *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* he distinguishes between "Vama Marg" and "Dakshina Marg," in a move central to Western esoteric discourses where the former is presented as the esoteric and the latter as the exoteric aspects of Tantra.⁷⁷ Most of Grant's "Typhonian Trilogies" are abundant with references to Tantra. His *Cults of the Shadow* (1975) deals predominantly with groups and "traditions" that are either Tantric or which Grant interprets as having a close affinity to Tantra. Interestingly enough, the only chapter in the book which does not refer to Tantra in any way is chapter six which deals with Aleister Crowley. In addition to Aleister Crowley, Grant regards the artist-magician Austin Osman Spare's ideas as having an affinity to Tantra, and even existing in "straight line" of tradition related to it.⁷⁸ Grant's fascination with Tantra appears to have developed sometime in the late 1960s, as the Carfax Monographs, published between 1959 and 1963, do not mention the subject. A possible influence from Tantra can be glanced on a 7" vinyl record of Aleister Crowley reading his poetry released in 1970. The B-side of the record contains Grant and associates, performing under the name of "Chakra," singing the song "Scarlet Woman."⁷⁹ Grant depicts Tantra as a dark, ancient, and potentially

76 KENNETH GRANT, *Cults of the Shadow* (London: Skoob Books, 1994 [1975]), 199. See also NICHOLAS SCHRECK & ZEENA SCHRECK, *Demons of the Flesh* (London: Creation Books, 2002).

77 GRANT, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*.

78 GRANT, *Cults of the Shadow*, 199, footnote 7.

79 See HENRIK BOGDAN, *Kenneth Grant – A Bibliography – from 1948* (Gothenburg: Academia Esoterica Press, 2003), 25.

very dangerous form of esoteric religiosity which has manifested in various forms in many pre-Christian cultures, and even in legendary centers of esoteric wisdom such as Atlantis. Thus, Tantra becomes something of *the* perennial religion, prior to and elevated from all other traditions.

In Dragon Rouge as well, Tantra has a very prominent position, to the degree where Vāmācāra Tantra is presented as one of the four foundational pillars of the order's magical system. In the introductory correspondence course of magic the order makes available for its members, Tantra is one of the first subjects discussed.⁸⁰ The subject receives treatment even before Klyphothic Kabbalah – which is after all the model for the order's initiatory structure – and the Old Norse runes. Furthermore Kuṇḍalinī-meditation is prescribed as one of the most basic techniques of dark magic,⁸¹ several books on Tantra are on the list of recommended reading, and articles on Tantric subjects are published frequently in the members' paper of the order.

Interestingly, neither Grant nor Dragon Rouge pay much attention to the more explicitly sexual practices of Tantra, and focus more strongly on the pursuit of power. In this, they differ from most other Western appropriations of the idea of Tantra. Nicholas and Zeena Schreck's discussion of Tantra in their *Demons of the Flesh* is, on the other hand, strongly focused on the sexual aspects, but this is to be expected in a book dedicated to sex magic. In all three contexts Tantra, in its *vāmācāra* variant(s), is presented as something which only the truly brave and spiritually strong can use. In this sense, the discourses found in these Left-Hand Path philosophies are similar to "traditional" Tantric rhetoric⁸² in that they stress that the teachings are for an enlightened elite, not for the masses. In Dragon Rouge, Tantra, and particularly the Kuṇḍalinī, are strongly linked to sexual energies. However, sexual intercourse is regarded as just one manifestation of the internal life-force that the Kuṇḍalinī represents, and not the primary one in a Dragon Rouge context. Thus, explicitly sexual practices are not considered necessary. Sex rituals are discussed, but are secondary to other magical techniques and never practiced in group settings.⁸³

There are several differences between Western Left-Hand Path appropriations of Tantra and Tantra in its South Asian contexts. As presented by White, the use of sexual fluids is essential in Indian Tantra. In the Western

80 DRAGON ROUGE, *Magikurs I, brev I*, 3. Unpublished internal material.

81 *Ibid*, 15.

82 WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, 24-25.

83 There is one exemption from this. In the year 2000 one of the Swedish Dragon Rouge lodges organized a practical course on sex magic, for heterosexual couples. It is not known how many, if any, couples participated.

Left-Hand Path, sexual fluids are hardly ever mentioned. Also, whereas sex polarity is essential in Indian contexts, as the women participating in the rituals are manifestations of the Yoginīs, the situation is different in the Left-Hand Path. The idea is that the opposing forces of male and female exist within each practitioner, and so sexual rituals may be employed with different sex partners, same sex partners, as solitary practice, or even as abstinence from sexual practices (as a form of sublimation of sexual energies).

Conclusion & Discussion

In a way, the Western Left-Hand Path appropriation of Tantra as represented by Kenneth Grant and Dragon Rouge is more in the vein of “Tantrism,” i.e. theological speculation on Tantric practices. Nowhere is the consumption of sexual emissions mentioned, and the individual practice of Kuṇḍalinī-meditation, in integrating the internal feminine Śakti with the internal masculine Śiva through methods other than sexual stimulation, is the predominant approach. However, sexual practices in the form of hetero-, homo-, or autoerotic nature are definitely not discarded as immoral or wrong in any way. Far from it; sex is regarded as very suitable tool for magical work, and even more so, as an important avenue for enjoyment – which is regarded as having a value in itself. One could argue that the approach of Dragon Rouge, and other Western Left-Hand Path groups and individuals, is an attempt to escape the hypersexualized discursive reality of the modern West described by Michel Foucault. Sex is important both as enjoyment and as a possible path to magical enlightenment, but intercourse and other acts associated with sexual stimulation are not the only expressions of the sexual energies, or “life force,” of the human being. One could see the practices as a synthesis of the Kaula-practices of medieval India and their “deodorized” forms as presented by e.g. Woodroffe. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is a critique and an opposition to modern Western appropriations of Tantra, presented as more “traditional” and “authentic” than that of “New Age Tantrism”.

It should be noted that Left-Hand Path spiritualities generally stress the importance of basing practice in solid scholarship. Thus, an author such as Tommie Eriksson of Dragon Rouge, while earlier referring mostly to authors such as Julius Evola and Robert E. Svoboda, is very much aware of and knowledgeable about the works of scholars such as Hugh B. Urban and David Gordon White. It should also be noted that the Left-Hand Path is highly eclectic and infused with individualist discourses. The impression one gets of an order like Dragon Rouge is quite different if reading

works by founder Thomas Karlsson, who is primarily influenced by rune mysticism and Kabbalah, than by reading works by Tommie Eriksson, more influenced by Evolian Traditionalism (albeit bereft of the worst fascist excesses) and Tantric scholarship. It is by reading works by all of the central ideologists, and the synthesis provided in the general material, that one arrives at a complete (or at least less restricted) interpretation of an organization such as Dragon Rouge. Tantra and “tantrism” are indeed at the centre of Dragon Rouge, but if only focusing on material by Tommie Eriksson it will seem to be more at the centre than if reading the totality of the order’s material and engaging in discussion with its members.

One way of approaching the Western Left-Hand Path appropriations of Tantra would be to see it as a critique of both negative orientalism and the modern West and its problematic discourses on sexuality, both the restrictive and the ones that overemphasize the centrality of sexual intercourse. At the same time Left-Hand Path groups are often engaged in positive orientalist discourses that cast a longing gaze to the exotic orient, a feature so central to much esoteric discourse.

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