Abhinavagupta's Portrait of a Guru: Revelation and Religious Authority in Kashmir

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Abhinavagupta’s Portrait of a Guru: 

Revelation and Religious Authority in Kashmir

A dissertation presented

by

Benjamin Luke Williams

to

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ABHINAVAGUPTA’S PORTRAIT OF GURU: REVELATION AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN KASHMIR

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to recover a model of religious authority that placed great importance upon individual gurus who were seen to be indispensable to the process of revelation. This person-centered style of religious authority is implicit in the teachings and identity of the scriptural sources of the Kulamārga, a complex of traditions that developed out of more esoteric branches of tantric Śaivism. For convenience sake, we name this model of religious authority a “Kaula idiom.” The Kaula idiom is contrasted with a highly influential notion of revelation as eternal and authorless, advanced by orthodox interpreters of the Veda, and other Indian traditions that invested the words of sages and seers with great authority. The purpose of recovering and contextualizing the Kaula framework for religious authority is to demonstrate the ways in which it makes Abhinavagupta’s representation of himself as a guru in his lengthy “autobiographical” excerpts intelligible. Although Kaula notions of religious authority and transmission—focused on the agency and intervention of perfected masters (Siddhas)—inform Abhinavagupta’s representation of himself as a guru, his self-portrayal also adds new elements to what an ideal guru should be. A close reading of the form, content, and didactic power of Abhinavagupta autobiographical passages suggests that the ideal guru should not only be a fully-enlightened Kaula master, but also schooled in the finer points of Indian
scholastic discourse and a connoisseur of Sanskrit poetry; in short, a cosmopolitan Siddha.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In South Asian tantric traditions, whether Buddhist, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, or Jain, the guru or religious preceptor is uniquely exalted. This added prestige undoubtedly relates to their authority to transmit a select corpus of scriptural teachings deemed esoteric and distinctly potent, but also emanates from their role as a medium for the divine power that is transferred to a disciple at the culmination of tantric initiation.¹ This study centers on one account of the defining features of the most preeminent tantric guru of all, and the capacities and requisite training that authorize such a guru, according to the teachings of a prominent exponent of tantric Śaivism, Abhinavagupta (fl. c. 975-1025).

Increasingly recognized as a major Indian intellectual and religious figure, over the last century the broad spectrum of Abhinavagupta’s thought has become the subject of a spate of scholarly interest. This wave of attention, it is worth mention, is not entirely unrelated to his legacy becoming an item of fascination in contemporary guru-lineages and Hindu-based religious organizations in India and abroad. And this fascination, I might add, is not unwarranted. A systematic theologian and learned exegete of Śaiva scriptures; a

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¹ On the importance of the “institution” of initiation in traditions of Śaiva tantra, see NEMEC (forthcoming), pp. 33-34: “Initiation was, from the perspective of the tradition, a significant institution, one that the tantric practitioner would have coveted and shared sparingly; and membership would have conferred not only a certain prestige but also a special form of knowledge that those within the tradition would have held to be paramount—access to the divine.” Chapter two of this study will further explore initiation as one of the constitutive elements of premodern Śaiva tantra.
literary critic whose views on aesthetic experience received a near unanimous
nod from generations of Indian poeticians; a savant of music theory and
dramaturgy; a formidable student of Buddhist logic whose axioms he
respectfully challenged with the analytic methods of Indian syllogistic
reasoning—the range and virtuosity of this intellectual from the Himalayan vale
of Kashmir are astounding.

The conception of an ideal guru in the writings of Abhinavagupta lays
stress on the guru’s capacity to awaken their disciple to an all-encompassing
grasp of reality. It also exceeds this requirement through an implicit argument—
modeled by Abhinavagupta’s narration of his own religious education—that the
guru should be scholastically trained and sensitive to the beauty of Sanskrit
literature. This vision of the guru as perfected in the mystical arts while also
being refined member of the “Kashmirian intelligentsia”\(^2\) is not simply the
product of an isolated and highly inventive intellect. This portrait of
Abhinavagupta’s ideal spiritual master is deeply indebted to a diverse portfolio
of scriptural teachings in dialogue with religious currents and literary trends in
the intellectual culture of post-scriptural Kashmir.

§ 1.1 Key Questions

In reading Abhinavagupta’s textual corpus closely, a striking feature of his
writings jumps to the surface: his rare inclination (among medieval Sanskrit
authors, anyways) to share a significant amount of information about his own
life and the provenance of his texts. In an epilogue to one of his definitive works,

“Light on the Tantras” (Tantrāloka), Abhinavagupta narrates his patrilineal descent, the sanctity of Kashmir, the premature death of his mother when he was a child, his wide-ranging education, and how he came to be a religious authority. Abhinavagupta even provides minute details on the exact location and circumstances in which he researched and composed the Tantrāloka.

This abundance of “autobiographical” data is peculiar for a number of reasons. For one, in the context of classical and medieval Sanskrit knowledge systems we rarely learn much more than an author’s name, a fact which makes it infamously difficult for Indian historians to adequately historicize texts and authors. In addition to Abhinavagupta’s rare attention to himself and the context of his textual production, he also makes not one, but multiple first-person claims that he is a fully-enlightened Śaiva guru. On top of that, he boldly assures his audience that they too can become liberated in this very life by the mere study of his words. These proclamations comprise authorial strategies that fly in the face of exaggerated authorial displays of modesty found across genres in Sanskrit literature, and therefore requires further research into the textual archive of Abhinavagupta’s religious sources to fully appreciate. These atypical traits of Abhinavagupta’s corpus inspire the following central questions this thesis seeks to answer: why does Abhinavagupta write so much about himself and the context of his compositions? How can we understand his first-person claims of enlightenment? And finally, how can we explain his description of the

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3 An exception to this truism can be found in medieval Buddhist and Jain Sanskrit sources, which display considerable biographical interest in their authors, and autobiographical passages found in Sanskrit courtly literature that predate Abhinavagupta, such as Bāṇa’s Harṣacarita and Daḍin’s Avantisundari. These exceptions will be returned to below.
transformative efficacy of his own texts given the apparent\(^4\) lack of precedent for these textual practices in earlier and coeval Sanskrit literature?

The dramatic elision of historical reference in the majority of classical and early medieval Sanskrit works led Oxford Sanskritist, Arthur MACDONELL, to assert at the turn of the twentieth century that “early India wrote no history because it made none.”\(^5\) Sheldon POLLOCK, in an oft-cited article,\(^6\) has identified a major reason for the lack of dates, biographical data, and interest in the social, political, and historical context of written works in brahminical Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit authors chose not to highlight these features of their world, he argues, in order to conform to a prevailing modality of textual authority derived from an orthodox conception of the Vedas—the paradigmatic scriptures of India—as authorless and beginningless.\(^7\) By claiming that the Vedas have no origin in time and are not human products, this school of interpretation guaranteed their authority by effectively dissociating them from history.

POLLOCK proposes that this ideal of truth that Vedic exegetes (Mīmāṃsaka) imposed upon the Veda had significant influence on future authors, given their deferral to the Veda as the archetype of authoritative knowledge. This

\(^{4}\) As we will demonstrate, particularly in chapter four, first person-claims of enlightenment and first person accounts of awakening do in fact have precedent in the post-scriptural Śākta Śaiva literature (particularly the Krama) that Abhinavagupta draws from.

\(^{5}\) This quote is cited and contextualized in POLLOCK (1989).

\(^{6}\) POLLOCK (1989), “Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of History in Traditional India.”

\(^{7}\) Ibid., p. 608: “Mīmāṃsā holds on empirical grounds that the tradition of the recitation of the Vedas must be beginningless... But that is not sufficient to prove its transcendence and thus infallibility... It is therefore argued that the Vedas are transcendent by reason of their anonymity.”
“hypothesis” provides a compelling explanation for Sanskrit authors’ consistent practice of divulging little to no information about themselves and the historical context of their compositions.  

Further arguments accounting for Sanskrit authors' general disinterest in mobilizing narrative attention towards the concrete details of their regional world and individual person are also on offer in Pollock’s more mature body of scholarship, particularly his magisterial Language of the Gods in the World of Men. The first half of this monograph maps the development and subsequent flourishing of a “cosmopolitan mentalité” in Sanskrit discourse, which enabled the language to serve as a powerful vehicle for articulating political power and projecting a transregional “social-moral order.” The reason that Sanskrit functioned particularly well in this manner, Pollock argues, is because it became “bound to no people and no place” inasmuch as it evoked “not ethnic linkages but social and linguistic processes... available for adoption across a virtually limitless space.” This cosmopolitan character of the language was achieved in part by shunning the parochialism of the “local,” viz., persons and

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8 Ibid., p. 609: “My hypothesis in essence is that, when the Vedas were emptied of their “referential intention,” other sorts of Brahminical intellectual practices seeking to legitimate their truth-claims had perforce to conform to this special model of what counts as knowledge, and so to suppress the evidence of their own historical existence.”


10 Ibid., p. 165.

11 Ibid., p. 113.
events situated in a particular time and place.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore, in addition to the influential standard of an impersonal and timeless understanding of religious truth (on the heels of the Mīmāṃsaka’s interpretation of the Veda), the Sanskrit cosmopolis offers yet another disincentive for authors writing in Sanskrit to vividly narrate their individual lives.

Unlike Sanskrit’s purported ability to pervade all space as a universal discourse, the explanatory power of POLLOCK’s account has a compelling limit case. Against the pressure of an authorless modality of textual authority or a cosmopolitanism intent on suppressing signs of its local or historical roots, Abhinavagupta chose to chronicle key events of his life, muse at length about the exceptional features of Kashmir, date three of his works, and effusively depict his ancestors, teachers, and disciples. Why? One answer that this dissertation proposes is that the acute self-awareness found in Abhinavagupta’s texts is not based upon this orthodox conception of the Vedic canon, but rather an altogether different rationale of what makes a text authoritative. This understanding of textual authority, adopted from a scriptural tradition that saw itself as entirely transcending the domain of the Vedas, was indexed to the agency individual authors, namely enlightened or perfected (siddha) teachers. Under the aegis of this framework of textual authority, a guru’s religious awakening was considered to be integral to the propitious transmission of knowledge. Therefore, religious masters were actually encouraged to retrace the conditions that made that auspicious transformative event possible.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 256: “To participate in the cosmopolitan order meant precisely to occlude particulars of place as well as particulars of time.”
This dissertation will chart the advent of this particular person-centered focus on revelation in the scriptures and post-scriptural literature of the Kulamārga, a tradition which, in Abhinavagupta’s estimate, boasts the highest and most subtle revelatory teachings. This will involve a preliminary study of the shifting structures of revelation found in the non-Vedic scriptural tradition that gave rise to the Kulamārga, the early Śaiva tantras, redacted between the sixth and tenth centuries A.D. The alternative schema of religious authority in the Kulamārga and its exegetical literature, with its distinctive valuation of individual agents of revelation and accentuated regional awareness, goes a long way toward solving the anomaly of Abhinavagupta’s decision to compose locally situated narrative accounts of his own accession to the position of guru.

It would be impossible to conceive of this study if it were not for the invaluable bedrock of the scholarship of Alexis SANDERSON and his students, which has done much to reconstruct the social and textual history of the Śaiva tantric religion. In addition to building upon this impressive foundation, this project is congruous with studies that consider the ways in which South Asian Śaiva tantra, particularly in its divergent models of selfhood and tradition,

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13 The close reader will notice, scattered throughout the footnotes of this study, numerous references to the excellent scholarship of Dominic GOODALL, Judit TÖRZSÖK, Shaman HATLEY, Somadeva VASUDEVA, Alex WATSON, Isabelle RATIÉ, Jürgen HANNEDER, John NEMEC, and Christopher WALLIS, who all studied with Alexis SANDERSON.

14 SANDERSON (1985) characterizes the Kālī-self as Abhinavagupta envisioned it as a compelling counterexample to earlier accounts of the Indian self. SANDERSON, in this article, also shows how the unlimited agency and power of this radical model of self is “accommodated” in the Kashmirian post-scriptural context through an integration of the values of social purity and a path of transgressive power. In the process, he contrasts this Kālī-self to other predominant Indic models of self, namely the atheistic autonomism of the Vedic ritualist, the depersonalized self of the Vedāntic renunciant, and the self-representation of the middle ground by theistic Vedāntins.
offers powerful exceptions to the theory and practice of Sanskrit literature associated with the Vedas or the “episteme”\(^{15}\) of the Sanskrit cosmopolis. An exemplary study along these lines, which has inspired the formulation of some of the central concerns of this dissertation, is a forthcoming article by John NEMEC.\(^{16}\) An earlier form of this study was presented as a talk at Harvard University in 2014, which I was fortunate to attend.\(^{17}\) In this article, NEMEC looks at the way Somānanda, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, and his commentator Jayaratha, accommodated, and even advocated, innovation in their religious tradition “over and against the ethos of Vedic religious authority.”\(^{18}\) NEMEC relates this positive embrace of innovation to the way in which this lineage of Śaiva exponents located a “transcendent” religious authority in the teachings and transmission of historically situated individual teachers considered “perfected beings” (siddha).\(^{19}\)

\(^{15}\) POLLOCK describes the Sanskrit cosmopolis as an “ecumene,” which is rather close in form and content to FOUCAULT’s understanding of an “episteme” elaborated in The Archaeology of Knowledge. For a reference to the Sanskrit cosmopolis as “ecumene,” see POLLOCK (2006), p. 257: “There was thus undoubtedly a concrete reality to the Sanskrit cosmopolis—it is no mere illusion of the historian’s retrospective gaze—this vast ecumene extending across a third of Eurasia over the course of a millennium or more, in which scholars, religious professionals, courtiers, and rulers everywhere shared a broad ‘community of outlooks’ and could perceive ‘ubiquitous signs’ of their beliefs.”

\(^{16}\) NEMEC (forthcoming), “Innovations and Social Change in the Vale of Kashmir, circa 900-1200.”

\(^{17}\) The talk was a part of the Hindu Studies Colloquium hosted at the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, on February 20, 2014.

\(^{18}\) NEMEC (forthcoming), p. 3.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 11: “[the] dimensions of textual production that complicate his [i.e. POLLOCK’s] view of the śāstra... the fact that ‘ahistoricality’—the very basis of the authorless and timeless transcendence that, POLLOCK has shown, furnished (religious) authority—was conceived in multiple ways, including, in the tradition placed under consideration in this essay, in a manner that allowed purportedly divine and timeless teachings simultaneously to
We will build upon the cogent insights of NEMEC’s study by plotting the emergence and development of this Siddha-centric model of religious authority in Abhinavagupta’s scriptural sources. We will also reflect on how this mode of religious authority is augmented in the exegetical literature of Śākta Śaiva authors of Kashmir with the appearance of first-person claims of enlightenment and biographical accounts of the transmission of the tradition. The model of religious authority embodied in these traditions, we will argue, throws considerable light on Abhinavagupta’s decision to represent his own career as a Śaiva student and guru.

Abhinavagupta has left us with lengthy autobiographical passages, which conclude three Śaiva texts that are extremely important in his corpus. With the exception of a single brief, albeit astute reflection on this phenomenon in an annotation to a translation, to my knowledge no one has ever attempted to be associated with the particular biographies of historically-located religious figures (‘perfected ones’ or Siddhas, in the present example).”

20 The first-person claims of the authors under consideration in NEMEC (forthcoming), we should mention, are also addressed therein, as well as the biographical account of Somānanda’s lineage, and its reference in Abhinavagupta’s commentary to the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā.

21 Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa, Tantraloka, and his vivṛtvimarśinī on the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā.

22 To explain Abhinavagupta’s rare tendency to write about himself and his world, HANNEDER explores Abhinavagupta’s doctrinal orientation and the role of the tantric guru, both of which are productive starting places for understanding Abhinavagupta’s logic of self-representation, which this study will significantly expand upon. Therefore, HANNEDER’s one-and-a-half page expository comment definitely informs this project. See HANNEDER (1998), pp. 128-129: “The sheer quantity of self-references in his works might be seen by some as an expression of a remarkable historical consciousness of the Kashmirian intelligentsia... but this is not the whole truth. In the case of Abhinavagupta we have to take into account the religious self-consciousness that expresses itself in statements like the following... ‘An intelligent person who always studies these thirty-seven chapters [that make up the Tantraloka] becomes Bhairava incarnate.’ The doctrinal point of one’s own self being Śiva is obvious in a non-dualistic system and can be found already in the work of
explain Abhinavagupta’s rare penchant for writing so prolifically about himself and the world outside of his texts. In grappling with the nature and intent of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages, there are a number of important methodological considerations, to which we now turn.

§ 1.2 METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This study utilizes Sanskrit primary sources from traditions spanning a millennium, but not with the intention of documenting an objective history of the world in which those texts circulated. This is partly due to the nature of our sources. The scriptural and exegetical literature of the Śaiva tantras, as well as the text traditions of Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, and the Purāṇas which will be examined, are all predominantly prescriptive (even if unevenly so). As for the more literary Sanskrit sources consulted, they might be considered to be predominantly performative. Although these literary works are traditionally characterized, on occasion, as morally edifying, their primarily performative

Abhinavagupta’s predecessor in the Pratyabhijñā school, Somānanda. Seen in the light that Śiva has to act through the guru in Tantric initiation, their identification is — for dualists and non-dualists alike — also a part of religious practice: the teacher grants liberation by being the medium for Śiva’s power of grace... [and] in the systems where liberation in life is the main aim — through a direct enlightening influence.”

23 For one description of how kāvya can engender, among other things, an ethical understanding, see Kāvyaprakāśa 1.2: kāvyam yaśase ‘ṛthakṛte vyavahāravide śīvatarakṣataye ∣ sadyāḥ paraniśrtaye kāntāśaṃmitatayopadesāyujaye ‘Courtly poetry is for the purpose of fame, wealth, expertise in worldly affairs, removing auspiciousness, supreme bliss, and furnishing [moral] instruction inasmuch as it is the same as a lover [in the way that it teaches].’ Commenting on what it is that kāvya teaches in the manner of a beloved mistress, Mammatā says, ad Kāvyaprakāśa 1.2: yat kāvyam lokottaravarnanānidhina kārīvat yat kātvē sarasatāpādānābhimukhāptya rāmādīvad varitātyaṃ na rājanādātav ity upadesām ca yathāyogam kaveḥ sahrdayasya ca karotiḥ ’That activity of cultivated poets, skilled in imaginative descriptions that are out of this world, is kāvya, which, like a lover, having grabbed one’s attention by filling them with affection [/ producing aesthetic sentiments], teaches poets and connoisseurs, as is fit, “one should act like Rama and not like Rāvana.”’ Bhāmaha gives the following list of outcomes that are produced from good poetry, Kāvyalāṅkāra 1.2: dharmārthakākāmabhideśu vaicākṣaṇaṃ kalāṣu ca ∣ pritiṃ karoti kirtiṃ ca sādhukāvya nābhandhanaṃ
nature is related to the way in which they are custom-built to delight and enthrall their audience, which often completely overshadows other possible textual aims of this literature, such as objectively documenting human life or the world of the poet. Although a social or political context can be extrapolated from these prescriptive and performative sources through learning to read them non-literally, i.e. as encoding inferable features of particular historical environments, what they immediately confront us with is an “ideal world.” Simply put, the texts in question, by design, are not geared towards providing their audience with a straightforward description of the world as it is, but rather envisioning the world as it should be.

These “ideal worlds,” however, are not unmoored from the practical lives of human agents living in particular social, cultural, and historical circumstances, and seeking to shape and transform those contexts. A history of ideal textual

‘A composition of good quality poetry produces proficiency in [the four goals of life:] duty, wealth, pleasure, and liberation, as well as in the arts, and it also produces pleasure and fame’. Dhanañjaya argues that the goal of theatre is not so much cultivation (vyutpati) but rather nothing but aesthetic pleasure. See Daśarūpaka 1.6: ānandanisyandisu rūpakṣu vyutpattimātram phalam alpabuddhiḥ | yo ‘ptihāsādivad āha śādhus tasmai namah svāduparānmuḥkhāya ‘Salutations to the good man of little intelligence who claims that the fruit of dramas that are dripping with bliss is merely cultivation, as in the case of the epics, [for] he has turned away from that which is charming.’ The latter two verses are mentioned in DEZSO (2007), which includes an excellent discussion of the relationship between śāstra and kāvyā.

24 However, unlike Sanskrit kāvyas which utterly ignore the world outside of the text, many of the poetic compositions of Kashmirian poets do in fact include enticing details about the author, their family, and their regional milieu, a point that will resurface in this dissertation for further consideration.

25 The fact that prescriptive texts are engaged in the business of making interventions upon the world is theoretically expounded in İNĐEN’s concept of texts’ “articulative” nature. See İNĐEN, DAUD, & WALTERS (2000), p. 13: “Every text, no matter what claims its authors or users may make about its transcendence, is articulative with respect to specific actors and situations. It is not merely a “source” that passively records events, but an intervention on the part of an agent in the world. It calls on its readers as they read the text not only to
representation, furthermore, is vital for knowledge of human history in general, inasmuch as these representations and textual injunctions helped structure the normative framework that informed the actions of historical agents and helped configure religious communities.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, the way in which authoritative texts represent the world undoubtedly has meaningful impact on the rhythms of human life, especially, we must imagine, when the author of that text is perceived to be Śiva.\textsuperscript{27}

The first part of this dissertation is dedicated to understanding some of the conditions for the emergence of a framework for religious authority, deployed in diverse ways and degrees, that is immanent in the identity, doctrine, and practice of the Kulamārga, and was subsequently intensified in its post-scriptural literature. For simplicity sake, in this study we refer to the complex of attitudes, orientations, and practices related to this model of religious authority as the “Kaula idiom.” Above we mentioned how the influential Mīmāṃsaka model of truth can help us appreciate the pervasive elision of textual representations of the lives of authors who were—perhaps, unconsciously in

\textsuperscript{26} This paragraph is indebted to POLLOCK’s discussion of the “consequentiality” of textual representation as a focus of study in the practice of intellectual history. See POLLOCK (2006), p. 7. Cf. Ibid., p. 249: “Representation comprises an important element of reality—it is at least an index of existing structures of what is desirable if not always possible.”

\textsuperscript{27} This applies to Abhinavagupta, who tells us that after assuming the position of guru, his own family members regarded him, appropriately, as an embodiment of Śiva. See Tantrāloka 37.79: ambābhūdhānā kīlā sā guruṁ tāṁ svāṁ bhrātārāṁ sāmbhūdṛśābhāyapaṇyat | bhāciprabhāvo jjuvalabhavabuddhiḥ satō ‘vajānāti na bandhubuddhyā. ‘That [sister of Abhinavagupta], Ambā by name, considered her own brother as her Guru in the likeness of Śiva. One whose mind is luminous due to the power of their [divine] destiny is not discourteous to great beings by thinking of them as relatives.’
some cases—aligned with its presuppositions about textual authority. Likewise, the Kaula idiom helps explain a rather divergent set of textual phenomena that might otherwise be misinterpreted. For example, why do Kaula scriptures depict the arrival of their revelatory tradition in this world as the result of the intervention of an individual Siddha (Matsyendranātha) commonly associated with a particular place (Kāmākhya); why do Kubjikā scriptural redactors identify their Kaula transmission with “the lineage of Siddhas”; why are prominent Siddhas who are scriptural transmitters worshipped in the central maṇḍala in the Kula liturgy; why was Jñānanetra retroactively singled out as the sole revealer of the Krama tradition, which we are told he received in Uḍḍiyāna; why does this same tradition preserve biographical accounts of its authors, such as Eraka, which are recorded in a first-person voice; why does the Śivadrśti include a narrative of Somānanda’s paternal ancestry, the family’s migration to Kashmir, and espouse a vision of tradition highly reliant on the intervention of Siddhas? In part, we will argue, because of the Kaula idiom. This model of religious authority, as we will elucidate in this study, presupposes an integral relationship between the agency of individual enlightened Siddhas and the successful transmission of tradition. Therefore, it can be detected in all of the above examples, which in turn provide critical antecedents for interpreting the logic and structure of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages.

If the Kaula idiom offers one explanation of what motivated Abhinavagupta to compose extensive autobiographical passages, we must also reflect on a methodological strategy for how to read and interpret the passages themselves. An even more immediate issue, which it is also worthwhile to briefly
ponder, is what exactly are we referring to with the descriptor “autobiographical.” The only two scholars who have written substantively on Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka* autobiographical epilogue, K.C. PANDEY and Navjivan RASTOGI,28 summarize it as a useful historical anecdote faithfully portraying the author and his historical context. Their explanation does not inquire into the passage’s conceptual context or placement within the text, its rhetorical power, or the nascent sub-genre of first-person narrative in Abhinavagupta’s sources. Instead, PANDEY and RASTOGI opt for a documentary reading, taking the literal and denotative sense of each verse as a straightforward account. The unspoken assumption of this approach is that Abhinavagupta is simply and honestly reporting the details of his own life, that the purpose of these epilogues is maybe akin to a retrospective memoir. On this reading, there is no need to reflect on the way in which Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages are structured, their intended effect on a model audience, or even why he is writing in a first-person mode in the first place.

To take seriously some of these further considerations about the sources and purpose of Abhinavagupta’s penchant for narrating his life-story requires a closer look at the nature and scope of autobiographical writing in South Asia. A limited definition of “autobiography” as an independent genre that is dedicated solely to the narration of an author’s own life is not what we encounter in premodern India.29 What is available are “autobiographical modes” of writing30

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29 An exception may be Jain autobiographical literature, which is something of an independent genre.
embedded in genres with other purposes. The conceptualization of these autobiographical modes of writing in India needs to be approached with an eye towards the various quintessential characteristics of the (notably internally diverse and contested) genre of autobiography given by Western literary theorists. In addition, we must recognize that the practice of narrating one’s own life-story in Indic and other non-Western text traditions will naturally be based upon distinctive tropes, epistemic orientations, socio-historic conditions, and importantly, alternative conceptions of “self” and “person.” All of these elements inevitably invest “autobiographical” writing with highly context-sensitive, and thus distinguishing, properties and semantic aims. Sudipta KAVIRAJ shows that any meaningful discussion of “modernity” in India is dependent upon abandoning the approach of “social scientists [who] implicitly accepted a standard narrative whereby modernity was associated with a set of characteristic social practices that originated in the West from the fifteenth to eighteenth-centuries.” Likewise, identifying and characterizing “autobiographical” writing in India requires differentiating the conceptual and socio-historical factors that make writing about one’s own self a possibility from those same factors in the history of autobiography in the Euro-American context.

30 For this distinction, and a broad and theoretically fruitful study of autobiography in pre-colonial South Asia, see MARTINEZ (2013).

31 For an extremely productive exercise in thinking alongside Western literary theory to articulate the unique contours of Tibetan autobiography, See GYATSO (1998), p. 106ff.

In search of exemplary scholarship that brings to light distinctive conceptual and cultural horizons for autobiographical writing in South Asia, we need look no further than the scholarship of Janet Gyatso and Phyllis Granoff. In a study and translation of two “secret autobiographies” of Jigme Lingpa, Gyatso situates Lingpa’s texts in the understudied tradition of Tibetan “life-writing.” She illuminates a number of sources for the “life-writing impulse” in Tibetan autobiographers, related to specific elements of Tibetan literary practice, e.g., a “long tradition of record keeping,” the composition of meditation diaries, frequent accounts of religious epiphanies, dreams, and visions, didactic narration of previous lifetimes, and the adoption of “idealized patterns modeled on the hagiographies of the Buddha.” Gyatso also considers some of the unique historical and cultural conditions in Tibet that were fertile for the practice of composing first-person life-stories, in particular the nature of the reception and influence of Buddhism in Tibet (which, in marking a major civilizational transition, encouraged self-assertions of Buddhist identity conceived as “new” over and against an uncivilized pre-Buddhist Tibetan past).

Granoff elucidates the didactic nature of a tenth-century Jain autobiography, the Upamitibhavaprapaṇca-kathā of Siddharṣi, which is a voluminous narrative account of his past births. Siddharṣi’s narrative, Gyatso

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34 Granoff (1994).

35 These examples are culled from Gyatso (1998), pp. 102-114.

demonstrates, thematically draws on the Jain ritual of confession and is designed to bring to life perennial Jain teachings, such as retributioonal power of karma and the importance of renouncing worldly passions. The very structure of this extensive work, Granoff argues, participates in “a distinctive mode of religious autobiographical writing and experience in Jain literature.” Of particular relevance for our interpretation of Abhinavagupta’s self-portrayal is Granoff’s insight that autobiography in the Jain stories she surveys is “not just author-centered; the listeners become the autobiographical subjects in their own right.”

Both of these studies demonstrate the truism that South Asian autobiographies “do not necessarily conform to Western conventions and modes of expression... nor should one expect to find the peculiar forms of individuality that emerged in the West replicated in India.” They also invite scholars to particularize studies of autobiographical writing in South Asia through carefully scrutinizing, and accounting for, the decisive contexts (doctrinal, rhetorical, literary, historical, social, etc.) within which they arise.

Given the potential wealth of historical information contained in Abhinavagupta’s representations of himself and his world, it is natural that most scholars to date have wanted to harvest this bio data by separating the

38 Ibid., p. 48
40 An exception would be Martinez (2013), which places Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical in a much broader comparative frame of pre-colonial Indian autobiography, spanning many languages and centuries. Martinez’s treatment of Abhinavagupta is based upon the
“historical wheat from the non-historical chaff.”

This kind of discernment, however, is problematized by the fact that Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical verses completely lack an informative style or descriptive character that would lend itself to such a task. In attempting to identify features of early modern Telugu literature that are diagnostic of an emergent historical awareness and authorial intent to compose prose that are historically referential, SHULMAN et. al. point to a number of symptomatic stylistic, lexical, and syntactic “textures.” These textures encompass a writing style both colloquial and factual, more informative than performative, that does not participate in any of the literary styles prevalent in medieval Telugu, and a tone that is non-lyrical, that is to say, not aimed at generating a powerful affect. Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages are quite the opposite. They are theatrical, evocative, and regarding a point further addressed below, they definitely utilize literary tropes and styles of writing prevalent in Kashmir. Taking these stylistic features into account, if Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages are not primarily designed to document his historical life and world, what kind of affective responses or prescriptive teaching are they meant to convey? A basic premise behind this line of inquiry is that Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogues are to a large

summary of PANDEY and Jaidev SINGH’s translation of the autobiographical epilogue of the Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa.

41 SHULMAN, RAO, & SUBRAHMANYAM (2003), p. 23. An example of this reading strategy can be found in BÜHLER’s approach to the autobiographical portion of Bilhana’s Vikramāṇkadevacarita, about which he muses: “if this narrative is divested of its envelope of poetical bombast, the main facts, which Bilhana reports of his own life, are perfectly credible.” See BÜHLER (1875), p. 16.

42 SHULMAN, RAO, & SUBRAHMANYAM (2003), p. 10. For a barbed critique of this monograph, see POLLOCK (2007).
extent didactic, which, as this dissertation will demonstrate, only becomes fully visible when they are placed, as much as it is possible, in their original conceptual, religious, and literary contexts of composition.

In venturing beyond a documentary reading of these autobiographical epilogues, three approaches will be adopted. First, we will consider the way in which the Kaula idiom, which encourages authors to identify with the source of revelation and narrate the conditions for its emergence and transmission, both inspires and helps structure Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages. Second, we consider the particular juncture within chapter thirty-seven of the Tantrāloka in which Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogue arises, and how that context, read in light of Abhinavagupta’s theory of revelation, can help us better determine its rhetorical function. Third, the insights generated by these two reading strategies are corroborated by looking at the early reception history of the Tantrāloka autobiographical passage, which is on display in the interpretation and framing of Jayaratha, Abhinavagupta’s learned thirteenth-century commentator. Collectively these interpretive methods help demonstrate how Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages are designed to establish—not to mention vividly evoke—his own authority and capacity to transmit the Trika Śaiva tradition. The didactic purpose of this demonstration, we will argue, is to trace the ideal circumstances for future re-enactments of the event of revelation. At an esoteric level, this would involve a sudden detonation of enlightened awareness within Abhinavagupta’s ideal audience, who, transformed into illuminated agents of revelation, are in this way, and this way only, made fit to carry on tradition.
As anyone who is familiar with the style of our author might expect, Abhinavagupta is not content to remain within the bounds of the Kaula idiom when it comes to rhetorically portraying his own life as a Siddha guru. In narrating the circumstances for his own genesis as a trustworthy Kaula guru, he adopts the high literary register of courtly poetry, seen in his use of complex verses and technical poetic figuration. Additionally, by providing an inventory of the various elements of his own intellectual formation and making an argument for studying with multiple gurus, Abhinavagupta advances an ethos of an interdisciplinary and interreligious education, which is also conspicuously absent from his Kaula scriptural sources. These additional features of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages, we propose, are important measures for ways in which he developed and innovated the Kaula tradition. They are not completely obvious in the content of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical verses, per se. However, they can be distinguished by attending to shifts in literary style, unexpected combinations of genre, and a new pattern of scholasticism exhibited in his self-portrayal. Abhinavagupta’s modeling of a scholastic, literary, and interreligious training for an ideal Kaula guru, and his employment of both an ornate literary style and—in his ode to Kashmir—the tropes of regional poets, are all indicative of a significant update to the Kaula idiom. Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages provide us with glimpses into how he synchronized the figure of the “Kaula guru” with the intellectual

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43 Some of the criteria for charting “intellectual-historical development,” that we go on to list, are lucidly set forth by Lawrence McCREA in relationship to the intellectual history of Indian philosophy. See McCREA (2008a), p. 576.
demands and sophisticated tastes of his pluralistic and cosmopolitan environment of tenth- to eleventh-century Kashmir.

To conclude this introductory chapter, we will now touch upon some important caveats related to the scope of this project. Person-centered models of religious authority are a pervasive component of South Asian religious traditions, comprising an important, and necessarily comparative, area of study to which this dissertation aims to contribute. In this study we compare the articulation of a Siddha-centric model of revelation, and its sophisticated elaboration in Abhinavagupta’s exegesis, to the understanding of religious authority found in the traditions of Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, Pātañjala Yoga, the Purāṇas, and the Śaiva tantras. In this regard, the understanding that scriptural traditions are based on the “verbal testimony” of a trustworthy speaker, i.e., a Vedic seer or a Kaula Siddha, will become a central component of our analysis. In chapter four we highlight a crucial contrast in the way in which a notion of “verbal testimony” was deployed by Naiyāyikas, Sāṅkhya, and the early commentaries on Patañjali’s Yogasūtra on the one hand, and Abhinavagupta (based on his philosophy of revelation and nondual metaphysics) on the other.

Regarding other traditions in the religious history of the Indian subcontinent that embraced person-centered models of religious authority, of which Abhinavagupta’s was undoubtedly cognizant, Buddhism in particular stands out. Considering the Kaula idiom in light of the way Indian Buddhists argued for the omniscience of the Buddha, the authority of the Buddha’s speech (buddhavacana), the status of Buddhist scriptures, and the role of enlightened teachers in the perpetuation of Buddhist tradition, would definitely be germane
to our inquiry. This comprises an area of research I intend to pursue in the future, but which is, regrettably, beyond the scope of the present study.

Another compelling example of a “tradition of divine persons” is articulated by Vedāntadeśika in his Guruparamparāsāra. In Francis Clooney’s study of this text, he also refers to works of Maturkavi and Pinpalakiya Perumāḷ Jiyar, which deal with the lives of the Ālvārs, the Tamil Vaiṣṇava saints. A study of the Tamil devotional literature of the Ālvārs and Nāyanārs, and subsequent biographical accounts of their lives, would be highly pertinent to a better understanding South Asian models for how the agency of individual religious exemplars is indispensible for the irruption of divine teachings in this world. However, these broader considerations are also beyond the purview of our inquiry. The mention of Vedāntadeśika suggests yet another avenue for comparative study: a major complex of Indian traditions whose model of religious authority places great emphasis on the religious teacher, namely Vedānta. Given the highly peripheral nature of Vedānta in Abhinavagupta’s writings, and limitations of space, the literature of its many branches must also be bracketed. Nevertheless, a study of the nexus of religious authority and revelation across Vedāntic streams, as well as the hagiographical literature on the legendary career of Śaṅkarācārya, is a definitely a priority for future research.

44 For an incisive study of this text, and the person-centered variety of religious authority it advocates, see Clooney (2011).

CHAPTER TWO

Agents of Revelation in the Śaiva Tantras

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to a survey of the representations of scriptural revelation in the early Śaiva tantras, in particular the scriptures of the Siddhānta, Mantrapīṭha, and Vidyāpīṭha, which will all be discussed in detail below. These internally diverse Śaiva scriptural canons contain collections (saṃhitā) of prescriptive teachings and ritual injunctions that are said to be authored by Śiva and targeted for Śaiva initiates. These scriptural traditions, moreover, are significant witnesses of a pan-Indian initiatory religious movement extending well beyond Abhinavagupta’s center of literary activity in the vale of Kashmir. Nevertheless, in his post-scriptural exegesis, we find Abhinavagupta engaging and evaluating the frameworks of teacherly authority articulated in these revelatory sources.

Abhinavagupta interpreted⁴⁶ the doctrinal and ritual systems of these Śaiva scriptures most explicitly in his magnum opus, the Tantrāloka (‘Light of the

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⁴⁶ See SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 374-376, which describes how Abhinavagupta goes beyond his self-stated goal of basing the Tantrāloka entirely upon the Mālinīvijayottara. After listing scriptures that Abhinavagupta cites from the Trika, Kālīkula, Kaula, Yāmala, Dakṣina, and Siddhānta divisions of the tantras, SANDERSON goes on to say, “His purpose is to formulate a position for the Trika that enables its followers to see it not merely as the highest revelation but as that which pervades and validates all others.” See also SANDERSON (2005), pp. 106-110 on Abhinavagupta’s strategies and reasons for drawing on tantric scriptural sources from the Siddhānta, Bhairava and Yāmala tantras that are external to the limited canon of the Trika tradition, the essence of which Abhinavagupta asserts is the Mālinīvijayottaratantra.” See Ibid., pp. 110-114 for how Abhinavagupta reads features of a number of Kaula texts that transcend the doctrinal and ritual scope of the Mālinīvijayottara as essential to the innermost character of the Trika essentially embodied in the Mālinīvijayottara; these extrinsic features include non-dualistic metaphysics, the inclusion of the “ideal translation of external
In endeavoring to research, interpret, and historicize the ways in which Abhinavagupta conceived of the ideal Śaiva guru, the religious teacher par excellence, the great exegetical edifice of the Tantrāloka presents us with a significant challenge. What fills the pages of this somewhat speciously self-described “ritual manual” (paddhati) is a second-order Śaiva theology: a philosophically grounded, hierarchically organized, and synthetically integrated picture of almost half a millennium of religious practice and speculation. One difficulty that arises, then, is acquiring a nonpartisan view of the religious worlds of the first-order texts from which Abhinavagupta—an observance into a purely cognitive process of sudden enlightenment,” and “the convergence of the triads of the Trika into” the central Goddess of the Krama tradition, “Kālasamkārṣṇī.” On why Abhinavagupta chose the Mālinīvijayottara as his paradigmatic scripture even though it lacked the above features that are essential to Abhinavagupta’s understanding of the Trika, see Ibid., pp. 114-122.

Both of these meanings of the title of the text are suggested by Abhinavagupta’s commentator, Jayaratha. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 103, footnote 40.

On the use of “theology” as a cross-cultural category applicable to premodern Indian textual discourse, including seven helpful criteria for identifying a text as a work of theology, see CLOONEY (2003). Criteria that fit some of Abhinavagupta’s major preoccupations in the Tantrāloka include: the nature and time of liberation, the appeal to revelation, and ignorance as a theological category, although Abhinavagupta also tangentially deals with the other criteria that CLOONEY lists.

GOODALL, ISAACSON & SANDERSON (2016), p. 35, date the earliest portion of the Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā, the mūlasūtra, at c. 450-550 AD. From the terminus post quem of this dating of arguably the earliest surviving Śaiva tantra to the life of Abhinavagupta (c. 950-1025) is therefore approximately five hundred years.
exceptionally bold and self-possessed exponent of Śaivism—extrapolated his theology. The obvious solution to this challenge is supplementing research on Abhinavagupta’s exegetical writings with a study of the Śaiva scriptures themselves. A recovery of the scriptural sources, on their own terms, is imperative to accurately account for how major streams of tantric Śaivism conceptualized the process of revelation and the status and role of the mediators of this process.

To introduce how scriptural revelation functioned in relationship to religious teachers in the Śaiva tantras, we will first consider the relevant perspectives of Vedic exegetes (Mīmāṃsakas), and a divergent model discernible in the Purāṇas. An outline of these two major Indic paradigms of scriptural authorship and transmission will provide the basic vocabulary for understanding how the Śaiva tantras narrated the process of revelation. It is only in the light of the revelatory models envisioned in the Veda-based traditions and Śaiva tantric scriptures (this chapter) that the radical departure of the “person-centered” model of textual authority that emerged in the Kulamārga (chapter three) and informed Abhinavagupta’s ideal guru (chapter four) can be properly evaluated.

What specific trajectory will this chapter’s survey of the framework of revelation in Mīmāṃsā, the Purāṇas, and early Śaiva Tantras chart? A trend of increasing importance placed on individuals as consequential agents of

51 Although he did not independently derive a Śaiva theology from the Śaiva tantras, but rather built on the remarkable achievements of his predecessors, notably Utpaladeva. For a recent volume dedicated to Utpaladeva, see TORELLA & BÄUMER (2015), especially the introduction by TORELLA, “The Importance of Utpaladeva.”
revelation that presaged⁵² the model of revelation implicit in the scriptures of the Kulamārga, which Abhinavagupta creatively adapted. Adherents of Mīmāṃsā present a framework for revelation that radically deemphasizes and decenters individual religious teachers. The Purāṇas endow the Vedic seers with more responsibility in the process of scriptural transmission, especially in their role as interrogators whose curiosity prompts new and repurposed revelatory teachings. However, the Purāṇas cast these sages in an ideal typical light; they fulfill an important rhetorical function in revelation, but their portrayal predominantly centers on their role as recipients and effective mediators of Purānic lore.⁵³

One of the earliest texts of the Śaiva tantras, or Mantramārga, chronicles the inception of a scriptural corpus differentiated from and superior to the Vedas by narrating the mass conversion of a group of Vedic sages to initiatory Śaivism. The first stream of Śaiva tantra considered, Śaiva Siddhānta, the most Veda-congruent of all, modifies a basic pattern of revelation also found in the Purāṇas. This is accomplished through the inclusion of the Vedic seers in narratives of the original descent of scripture (tantrāvatāra) and in the dialogical frameworks of many Siddhānta scriptures. These deep parallels between Saiddhāntika and Paurāṇika models of revelation persist despite different intended audiences,

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⁵² Although historically determining and differentiating the complex roots of the model of religious authority articulated in Kaula scriptural sources is a difficult task, requiring further research, particularly into the major streams of the Atimārga, such as the Pāśupata and Kāpālīka traditions.

⁵³ We must admit, however, that an exhaustive treatment of the figure of the Vedic ṛṣi in the Purāṇas is well beyond the parameters of our study, and future research will help determine, with greater accuracy, their rhetorical function within the vast canon of Purānic literature. One additional source that features narratives of Vedic sages, which would also need to be consulted in such a study, is the Bhṛdhaddevatā. For more on this text’s ṛṣi narratives, see Patton (1996), particularly chapters 7-14.
theologies, and scriptural identities vis-à-vis the Vedic tradition. In the latest strata of early Siddhānta corpus the classical seers of the Purāṇas, now Śaiva converts, come to play a more theologically robust role as interlocutors and are subjects of sustained narratives, both signs of a greater emphasis on their agency as individual mediators of scripture.

The process of revelation envisioned in more antinomian streams of Śaiva tantra (for the most part)54 did not accommodate Vedic seers, and opted for a God-Goddess dialogical structure which may have been derived from a more archaic model.55 In one of the earliest scriptures of the Vidyāpītha, the Brahmayāmalatantra, tantric gurus are introduced as catalysts of revelation. Although cast in an idyllic prophecy about the future transmission of the scripture, the identities of these tantric gurus are filled out with biographical data. Many of these gurus are located in villages that have no real symbolic significance independent of their connection to this scripture. This revelation narrative foreshadows the model of revelation in the Kulamārga where enlightened gurus and perfected masters are extraordinarily accentuated as individual agents of scriptural transmission. Abhinavagupta himself will

54 One exception to this pattern is the Mālinīvijayottaratantra, whose inclusion of Vedic seers will be considered in chapter four. The Siddhayogeśvarimata also presents an interesting revelation narrative that is somewhat exceptional.

55 If the sūtras of the Niśvāsatattvaśānthitā are indeed the earliest tantric texts currently extant, then the way in which they structure their scriptural dialogue as the teaching of Śiva to the Goddess may be the most archaic form. In addition, the Viśāṣikhatantra, the only surviving scripture of the Left Current (vāmasrotas) of the Mantramārga also features a dialogue set on Mount Kailāsa between Śiva and the Goddess. For this latter reference to the Viśāṣikhatantra (an early Mantramārga source) and thoughts on the early pedigree of the devadevīsaṃvīlda model, I am grateful to Shaman Hatley. For an edition and translation of the Viśāṣikhatantra, see Goudriaan (1985).
contrast omniscient Śaiva masters, perfect emissaries of scriptural truth, to Vedic seers whose teachings, he submits, have marginal results at best.56

§ 2.1 REVELATION IN MĪMĀṂSA

The orthodox position on scriptural authority championed by the Mīmāṃsakas, that the Veda proper is both authorless and eternal, can be considered a limit case that contrasts with the theories of revelation found in the Purāṇas and Tantras. Kei KATAOKA57 has effectively elucidated the relevant views of Śabara, the oldest extant commentator on the Mīmāṃsāsūtra, and those of the eminent Mīmāṃsa philosopher, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, on the inherent deficiency of human speech when it comes to communicating dharma.58 Without scripture,

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56 Tantrāloka 37.10-11ab: śrīmadānandaśastrādau proktam ca paramēśinā | rṣivākyam bahukleśam adhruvalpaphalam mitam || nāivā pramāṇayed vidvān sāivam evvam śrayet 'Moreover, Śiva teaches this in the auspicious Ānandatantra and elsewhere: “a wise person should never consider as an authority the statements of the (Vedic) sages, given that they are full of affliction, have unstable and marginal results, and are [ultimately] limited. [A wise person] should [rather] take refuge in the Śaiva scriptures alone.’’


58 In the action-based orientation of the Mīmāṃsā interpretive enterprise, where the Vedic sacrifice takes center stage and the status of individuals and objects are “decentered,” the word dharma has a technical and specific semantic range. CLOONEY (1990), pp. 152-153 shows that in the majority of its usages in the Mīmāṃsāsūtras dharma denotes “that which characterizes some thing, word or text, person, or action in the ritual context.” Closer to the Buddhist concept of dharma as the property or essential feature of an object than other meanings such as ‘cosmic order’ or ‘personal duty’, Jaimini nevertheless departs significantly from this Buddhist connotation. He does so by speaking of these features as “functional properties” determined by the ritual: “By nature and apart from a Vedic context the calf has certain qualities, but only according to certain Vedic directives do these qualities entail dharmas as well. The properties of a thing are known through perception; its dharma is known through the Vedic text.” See Ibid., p. 155. Summarizing his discussion, CLOONEY relates this particularized notion of dharma to a more general meaning that Jaimini also utilizes that encompasses the overall sacrificial order in which scriptural injunctions, human purpose, and ritual aims are all integrated into a comprehensive whole: “According to Jaimini every element of the sacrifice, even the smallest, has its own dharma; this dharma is what is to be known about it, and the Mīmāṃsaka is compelled to keep his attention focused on the details of the performance. When every dharma is properly understood and all elements fit correctly into the web of relationships the action, the Dharma of the sacrifice is
Mīmāṃsakas contend, the ritual injunctions encapsulated in dharma are imperceptible; for dharma “cannot be cognized by a human being,” no matter how wise or learned, “without a [Vedic] revelation.” Thus verbal testimony, or the “word” (śabda), in the Mīmāṃsā sense of authorless revelation, is the preeminent source of knowledge. The authority of Vedic scripture, the Mīmāṃsakas insist, can never be supplanted by human knowledge based on other means of warranted awareness, such as perception or inference. The infallible contents of the Vedas are purported by the Mīmāṃsakas to be beyond even the illumined perception of yogis.

Given that verbal testimony (śabda) is defined in the Nyāyasūtra as the teaching of a trustworthy (āpta) speaker, such as the Vedic seers, or by implication, omniscient beings such as the Buddha or Jina, one might reasonably conclude that such exceptional human beings qualify as authors of scripture.

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60 The presumption of the Vedas being authorless motivates Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, in Mīmāṃsāślokaṁvārttika vv. 47-53, to argue that the verbal testimony of the Vedas possesses “intrinsic validity” (svataḥ prāmāṇyaṁ), because as “authorless” they cannot prove their validity by establishing the reliability of a trustworthy speaker, as is the standard procedure for authenticating śabda. See KATAOKA (2007b), Part II, p. 125.

61 See McCREA (2009).

62 Nyāyasūtra 1.1.7: āptopadesah śabdaḥ.
However, the theories of the Mīmāṃsakas are in complete contradiction with a model of religious authority based on verbal testimony. Kumārila defends Śabara’s hardline view⁶³ that all we learn from any merely human utterance is the intentional cognition of the speaker. Śabara famously phrases it in this way:⁶⁴

On the basis of a human statement there is the cognition: ‘this person understands it in this way’, not ‘this object is like this’. Some cognitions which arise from a statement authored by a person, as is well known, turn out to be false. However, regarding the false status of Vedic statements, there is never a valid proof [of that].

Mīmāṃsakas do admit that human speech based upon the Veda can be true, much in the way that inference, when based on empirical observation, communicates dependable and actionable information. Nevertheless, according to Kumārila’s more skeptical view adapted from Śabara’s statement above, human speech “has a limited power which enables it only to convey a speaker’s cognition.”⁶⁵ Thus even the verbal claims of the most trustworthy person are in the end liable to falsification. This fact is especially pertinent when it comes to speaking the treasured content of the Veda; human speech can only teach these truths indirectly (in the case of Veda-based tradition or smṛti) and ultimately presents what the speaker thinks is true,⁶⁶ not the object of dharma itself.

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⁶³ This is a second view on the limited scope of human speech even regarding worldly knowledge, which is proposed after an earlier view is proposed that argues that there is a measure of validity in human speech if based on perception or founded in Vedic knowledge. See KATAOKA (2007b), pp. 42-43.

⁶⁴ Śārabhāṣya ad Mīmāṃsāśāstra 1.1.2: api ca pauruṣeyād vacanād evam ayaṁ puruṣo vedeti bhavati pratyayo naivam ayaṁ artheti | viplavate khalu api kaścit puruṣaṅkṛtād vacavāt pratyanāḥ | na tu vedavacanasya mithyātve kiṃcana pramāṇam asīt. Cited in KATAOKA (2007b), p. 44.


⁶⁶ Interestingly, KATAOKA believes that this view originally set forth by Śabara presages, even more than Dignāga’s theory of apoha, Dharmakirti’s argument that speech “conveys only a speaker’s intention (vaktrabhiprātyasūcaka).” See KATAOKA (2007b), pp. 50-51.
Therefore, opposed to Vedic statements which require no corroboration, human speech entails “an additional process of confirmation in order to determine the object in question.” The truth claims in all texts authored by humans must be double checked. This automatically disqualifies them from the status of revelation.

But what if, as alluded to above, the human being under question is not just an honest or reliable transmitter of Vedic truths, but a perfectly omniscient being with direct access to the source code of revelation? Kumārila considers the possibility at length in his Mīmāṃsāloka-vārttika. In his critique of omniscience Kumārila is clearly preoccupied with and perturbed by extra-Vedic claims that ascribe scriptural authority to the words of the Buddha and the Jina. In a long series of arguments Kumārila tries to establish that it is impossible for a human being, even the historical Buddha, to be omniscient.

However, there is another set of contenders who could have presumably authored the Vedas, and who are much closer to home for learned interpreters of the Veda. These are the Vedic seers (ṛṣis) and sages (muni). Specifically associated with different Vedic hymns and branches of textual transmission, this group of highly respected teachers could reasonably be suspected to be legendary authors of the words of the Vedas. The fact that certain Vedic texts

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67 Ibid., p. 45.

68 Mīmāṃsāloka-vārttika vv. 110cd-155. This text is a verse commentary on Śabara’s bhāṣya on the theoretical introductory section (Tarkapāda) of Jaimini’s Mīmāṃsāsūtra.

69 For a translation of this section, based on his critical edition of the text, see KATAOKA (2011), part II, pp. 320-391.
appear to be named after the Vedic seers provides further evidence for this hypothesis. Jaimini himself puts this claim to rest with an artful distinction: “The names [connected with various texts] are due to expounding [and not due to composing] the texts.” Although the role of the Vedic seers is not negligible (they are commissioned with faithfully transmitting and thus ensuring the continuity of the textual and ritual tradition through time), they cannot be considered authors.

Kumārila actually highlights the indispensable role played by the Vedic sages in his argument for the Vedic model of scriptural transmission. Since the words of the Vedas are passed on by numerous sages, there is a safeguard against potential alterations to the letter of scripture. The interpolations of a maverick Vedic transmitter turned author would be instantly detected. But such independent corroboration of scriptural truths, Kumārila maintains, would not be possible if they are solely wedded to the divine intuition of an omniscient

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70 CLOONEY (1990), p. 167: “Śabara gives as examples... the names Kāṭhaka (connected with Kaṭhaka) and Kāḷāpaka (connected with Kalāpaka), etc. Kaṭhaka and Kalāpaka were great seers (ṛṣis) of the Vedic age, and the position taken in the Pūrvapakṣa is that these men are the authors of texts their names are connected with.”


72 We should note that contemporary notions of an author as a unique creator of a novel artifact, and as someone who has proprietary rights with respect to that artifact, is not what Mīmāṃsakas have in mind when they argue that the Veda is “unauthored.” I thank Francis CLOONEY for his suggestion to clarify this point, lest the anachronistic idea creep in that Jaimini, Śabara, and Kumārila were denying the Vedic seers a sense of authorship according modern conceptions of what it means to be an author. The question of how Mīmāṃsakas understood the nature and status of an author comprises an important line of inquiry in and of itself, which unfortunately exceeds the focus of this study.
individual who is the founding author of a tradition. Nevertheless, in the end even eminent sages of the Vedas, in Kumārila’s eyes, are “human, all too human,” and thus totally fallible as scriptural authors, that is to say, as anything more than teachers of a preexisting text. The inerrancy of the Veda cannot be impugned, Kumārila maintains, by claims that it is a human product, even in cases when a human being is considered to be divinely inspired.

The Mīmāṁsā position on scriptural revelation, which envisions the content of revelation as an impersonal and timeless correspondence between words and meanings, effectively dissociates religious truth from history and human persons. There is scope for respecting the Vedic seers as expositors and transmitters of Vedic knowledge. But this concept of impersonality (apauruṣeyatva) denies them any meaningful agency in the process of revelation, and consequently, independent authority in religious matters. “That they speak and teach is required; the remainder of their experiences and abilities is simply irrelevant.” Sheldon Pollock has argued, convincingly, that the Mīmāṁsaka’s

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73 Mīmāṁsāsūkta 149-151: anekapuruṣasthatvād ekatraiva ca jānmani | grahanasmaranād veda svātantryam vihanyate || anyathākaraṇe cāsyā bahubhiyāḥ svān nivāraṇām | ekasya pratibhānāṃ tu krtakāṃ na viśīṣyate || atāś ca sampradāye ‘pi naikāḥ pūruṣa āsyaḥ | bhavah paratantrāḥ syuh sarve hy adyātavān nrādā 'In the case of the Veda, because it resides in many people and it is [first] learned and [then] recollected in only one life, its independence is not destroyed. And, if [someone] changed the [Veda], [the change] would be warded off from many [sides]. On the other hand, a single person’s inspiration is not distinguished from an artificial product. And for the same reason one person is also not desired in transmission. For there should be many people, all of whom are dependent, as today.’ Translation of Kataoka (2011), pp. 383-385.

74 McCrea (2009), pp. 58-59: “Kumārila’s argument against the epistemic usefulness of yogic-perception claims is grounded in a pervasive skepticism regarding the reliability of human beings and their utterances, summed up in his bracingly cynical dictum that: ‘At all times, people are, for the most part, liars. Just as there can be no confidence in them now, in the same way there is no confidence in statements of things past’.”

eternalizing and depersonalizing of Vedic truth exerted significant influence on brahminical Sanskrit traditions throughout Indian history. This authorless conception of the Veda—a classical icon and standard of textual authority—discouraged classical and medieval Sanskrit authors from including details on their own identity and the historical provenance of their texts.

The Kaula model of religious authority explored in chapters three and four, as we will demonstrate, is antithetical to the Mīmāṃsaka’s theory of revelation. Therefore, we will need to look beyond Vedic understandings of scripture to identify the sources of this alternative modality of religious authority. A radical divergence exists between the scriptural theories of the Mīmāṃsakas and the Kaulas, despite their mutual concern with matters of revelation whose signification must naturally extend beyond the intentional products of an individual historical author.77

§ 2.2 REVELATION IN THE PURĀNAS

The Purāṇas propose an alternative solution to the problem of scriptural authorship outlined above: instead of being an impersonal and timeless truth or the creation of a human visionary, scripture is composed by God. Indeed, for a theistically oriented tradition one cannot imagine a more trustworthy (āpta) speaker of scriptural truth. In this way, God uniquely fulfills the Naiyāyika’s

76 POLLOCK (1989).

77 The stark contrast between Mīmāṃsaka and Kaula understandings of religious authority in this study admittedly excludes other traditions that inhabit a middle ground, so to speak. An important consideration in this regard would be a comparative look at Vedāntic understanding of the role of the individual guru or sage in authoritatively transmitting knowledge. This would need to include looking at the prestige associated with individual figures like Yājñavalkya.
criterion for valid verbal testimony (śabda). Kumārila, perhaps due to a prophetic anxiety that belief in God(s) will open floodgates of new scriptures and extra-Vedic devotions, but certainly in defense of the Mīmāṃsaka position of the Veda being authorless, refuted the existence of an all-powerful creator God.78

However, by the ninth century this compelling idea held by the Paurāṇikas—that their scriptures, in addition to the Vedas, were authored by God—also took firm hold of Indian logicians (naiyāyikas).79 Ironically, by the middle of the eleventh century even many Mīmāṃsakas had become theists.80

Popular religious works associated with bardic traditions, the Purāṇas were compiled, redacted, and revised over many centuries, making them infamously difficult to date.81 For this very reason the following summary of the

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79 McCREA (forthcoming), pp. 10-14. Although there is reference to God in Uddyotakāra’s commentary on the Nyāyasūtra, the “desecularization” of this tradition truly transpired, McCREA demonstrates, with the ninth-century works of Jayantabhaṭṭa, Vācaspatimīśra, and Bhāsarvaṇā. On Jayantabhaṭṭa’s proof of the existence of God, which takes Kumārila as one of its primary adversaries, see KATAOKA (2005).

80 Ibid., p. 15ff. Although some later Mīmāṃsaka authors may be better characterized as “intellectuals acknowledging theism.” I thank Francis CLOONEY for this subtle distinction.

81 Though Hans BAKKER in concert with a team of other excellent scholars has made significant progress in isolating a very early stratum of Purāṇic literature in the ongoing critical edition of the Skandapurāṇa based on a recension of ninth- to tenth-century Nepalese manuscripts, with other later manuscript witnesses. See the four volumes listed in the primary sources section of the bibliography below, under ‘Skandapurāṇa’. The evidence found in this level of Śaiva Purāṇic literature shows great awareness of and affinity with the Pāṣupata tradition (early Atimārga) practiced by brahmin ascetics, which does indeed predate and prepare the way for the Śaiva tantras, i.e., the Mantramārga. Even though we can reasonably propose, therefore, that the earliest layers of the Purāṇas predate the tantras, the frame-stories and narratives of revelation may very well belong to later periods of redaction. Determining the historical provenance of that stratum is well beyond the scope of the current study. For a learned, but highly criticized view on the relative chronology of different segments of numerous Purāṇas, see HAZRA (1940). ROCHER summarizes much of
structure of revelation in the Purāṇas is not presented as a necessary historical precedent for theories of scriptural transmission and authorship found in the Tantras; indeed, the literary activity of both traditions were mutually adoptive82 and largely coeval.83 Nevertheless, the models of revelation found in the Purāṇas, and the way they position themselves towards the Vedas, offers the perfect segue to understanding revelation and religious authority as it is embodied across various streams of the Śaiva tantras. This is because the early Śaiva tantras mirror the Purānic model of revelation, but, as we will see, with some very significant departures in their intended audience, fundamental theology, and sense of scriptural identity.

The Purāṇas as a genre abound in cosmologies, cosmogonies, sacred geographies, myth-cycles on the exploits of gods, semi-divine beings and sages, the subsequent speculation on dating, without coming to firm conclusions. See ROCHER (1986).

82 Frederick SMITH (1994), p. 122: “In the same way the Veda entered into the Purāṇa, or was absorbed into the Purāṇa, there emerged just as little distance between the Veda, which is to say the Purāṇaveda, and the Tantra. As if incorporating additional genetic information, the Bhāgavatapurāṇa on at least half a dozen occasions proclaims the equality of the Veda and Tantra, thus acknowledging and sanctioning what must have been an increasingly evident mixture of both ritual and philosophy.”

83 For an excellent study of parallels and the historical relationship between Śaiva Purāṇas and tantras, based primarily on sections that discuss the magical female spirits known as Yoginīs, see SERBAEVA-SARAOGI (2009), “A Tentative Reconstruction of the Relative Chronology of the Śaiva Purānic and Śaiva Tantric Texts on the Basis of the Yoginī-related Passages.” See also SANDERSON (2006b), which describes the adaption of Śaiva tantric teachings in the Purāṇas (p. 15): “…a substantial amount of Saiddhāntika ritual material has been propagated within the Purāṇas. The Uttarabhāga of the Liṅgapurāṇa is largely devoted to the prescription of rituals in this tradition; and the Agnipurāṇa contains almost the entire text of Somaśambhu’s famous manual of AD 1095/6. In the Liṅgapurāṇa we see that while ritual forms and Mantras are preserved, the distinctive features of Śaiva doctrine are mostly jettisoned. So, for example, the system of the thirty-six levels of existence (tattvam) that demonstrates to the Śaivas the superiority of their scriptural revelation reverts to the system of the twenty-six Tattvas taught in such brahmanical sources as the Mokṣadharmā in the Epic.”
royal genealogies, social and moral prescriptions, teachings on yoga, religious
donative practices, and much more, all aglow in a halo of revelatory lore. That
halo of authority is primarily drawn from the prestige of the Vedas with which
the Purāṇas pervasively identify, while also claiming to make Vedic knowledge
accessible to a much broader segment of society. Herein lies an essential creative
tension in the Purāṇas very self-conception. They are both repositories of
“ancient” (purāṇa) time-tested revelations of Vedic pedigree and ever-expanding
elaborations and translations of those revelatory truths for a much broader
audience of lay devotees navigating a new decrepit age (kaliyuga). The first
inclination of the Purāṇas, to firmly place themselves in the camp of the Veda, is
evidenced in the claim—also found in the Mahābhārata—of being a veritable
“fifth Veda.” The second is at play when the Purāṇas claim to be enlarging the
Veda, bringing it to completion or revealing new mysteries (rahasya) and

84 See the following references where the Purāṇas claim to be the same as (sama) or similar to (sammita) the Veda: Nārada-purāṇa 1.125.26, Agnīpurāṇa 383.46, Bhāgavatapurāṇa 12.4.4. For a study that examines this and other self-referential attitudes found in the Purāṇas in detail, see Bonazzoli (1983).

85 This tension is explored in Bonazzoli (1983).

86 FitzGerald (1985), “India’s Fifth Veda: The Mahābhārata’s Presentation of Itself.”


88 Kūrnapurāṇa 2.44.146: mumukṣūṇām idaṃ śāstram adhyetavyam viśeṣataḥ | śrotavyam cātha mantavyam vedārthaparibhṛṣṭam | ‘For seekers of liberation this scripture, which is an enlargement of the meaning of the Vedas, should be studied closely, listened to, and reflected upon’. Cited in Bonazzoli (1983), p. 91.

89 Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa 1.1.171: itihāsapurāṇābhyaḥ vedam samupbrṃhyet | bibhety alpaṣrutād vedo māṃ ayaṃ praharisyati ‘The Veda is completed by the Epic and Purāṇa, [since] the Veda
secrets (guhya). These novel and hidden teachings, we will see, are prompted by the curiosities of the premier interlocutors of the Purānic canon, the Vedic seers.

This brings us to the models of revelation exhibited in the Purāṇas. Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and sometimes Śiva are indeed identified as the authors of individual Purāṇas. But God as authorial source—a claim which largely looms in the narrative background where it is surprisingly inconspicuous—is just the first stage in a dialogical revelatory process that makes dizzying use of two literary techniques highly prized in Indian literature: genealogies and frame-stories.

The next stage of revelation centers on the mediating role of the Vedic seers, including but not limited to Vasiṣṭha, Parāśara, Sanatkumāra, Bhṛgu and his descendants, Mārkaṇḍeya, Sanaka, Aṅgiras, the divine sage Nārada, and occasionally Manu, the mythical progenitor of the human race. This stratum on occasion also features Brahmā’s mind-born sons, the notorious collective of seven seers (saptarṣi), and minor deities like Dharma and Dakṣa. This diverse cast of legendary beings receive the Purāṇas en masse from Brahmā and then hand them

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91 The following summary is based largely on themes and citations found in BONAZZOLI (1980), “Purānic Paramparā.”

92 On genealogy in the Purāṇas, in particular the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, see SMITH (1994), p. 100: “Infallibility is also traced through genealogies. This strategy, taken from the Brāhmaṇa texts themselves, both divinizes the cosmos and the Veda and establishes an interdependence between them and the Lord and his agents, the sages.” See also Ibid., p. 122: “What the Purāṇas tell us is how far into conceptualized reality genealogy burrowed. It became a mechanism for investigating the mysterious origins of all name and form, a prism for viewing history and all of its objective and subjective contents. All objects, entities, beings, and notions had origins, roots that stretched into the indeterminate past.”
over to the most immediate dialogical stage of revelation. This is the inner frame of the revelation narrative, where we learn of the compilations and redactions of the Purāṇas in the hands of Vyāsa, who on rare occasion is also described as an author. Also included in this third stage of revelation is the recitation or narration of the Purāṇa by Vyāsa’s disciples, most famously Sūta, at various auspicious locations, most frequently the fabled woodlands of Naimiṣa. In this final dialogical frame the Purāṇas gives clues of their character as a performative tradition linked to the recitations of bards. Further evidenced in this phase of revelation is the active adaption of the message of the Purāṇas to the needs of new (non-brahmin) audiences.

These three levels of revelation, which are reconstructed on the basis of patterns found in a large sample of genealogies of Purānic transmission, overlap in telling ways. One result of this overlapping is a special emphasis placed upon the intercession of the Vedic seers and sages at each phase. Given that they often serve as the audience of God’s initial revelation, they help elicit the original

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93 ROCHER (1986), p. 48: “[In Mahābhārata 1.57.73cd-74] the tradition that it was Vyāsa who composed the Purāṇasamhitā and “divided, arranged” it into several parts may well represent another attempt at establishing an analogy between the Purāṇas and the Vedas, which were equally vyāsta by Vyāsa.

94 Ibid., pp. 55-56: “As to the intellectual and social status of the Sūta, opinions vary. He was obviously a scholarly person, and a Sanskrit scholar at that. When he arrives in an assembly, even an assembly of ṛṣis, he is given a special seat, he is duly honored by the sages... In the Mahābhāṣya the Sūta is a victorious participant in a grammatical discussion. In short, the Sūta seems to know everything, with one exception: he is not entitled to know the Veda. To complicate matters further, Sūta is also the term for a member of one of the mixed castes, the son of a pratiloma marriage between a kṣatriya father and a brahman mother. The mixed caste element explains how the Sūta could simultaneously fulfill a kṣatriya function, that of charioteer and equerry, and a purely brahmanic role, that of bard and singer.”

95 Identified by BONAZZOLI (1980).
disclosure of scripture. But in addition to handing down these revelations to Vyāsa in smaller and more digestible editions, they also reappear in the third layer of Purānic compilation and recitation. Here the sages figure as interlocutors of Vyāsa, Sūta, and Śaunaka whom they reverently welcome to various abodes of recitation (Prayāga, Kurukṣetra, Naimiṣa forest etc.), inviting them to narrate the Purāṇa. Indeed, new stories, teachings, and Purānic lore are often prompted by the endless curiosities and doubts of these very sages. Therefore, they are indispensable to each phase of transmission; they receive hallowed truths, pass them down, and stimulate the generation of new or repurposed revelatory matter.

The Purāṇas give some indication as to why the Vedic seers must negotiate and mediate such an elaborate process of scriptural transmission. The original Purāṇa taught by God and housed in heaven is massive, often tallying one billion verses (śatakoti). In order to have any beneficial effect on humanity this repository of Purānic wisdom must undergo substantial abridgement.

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97 See Agnipūrāṇa 382.64-68, which also provides interesting injunctions for patronage and performance of the Purāṇas: idam pañcadasaśahasraṃ śatakotipravistaraṃ | devaloke daivataiś ca purāṇam pathyate sadā || lokānām hitakāmena saṃskipyodgitam agrinā || sarvam brahmeti jñānītvam munayaḥ saunakādaivaḥ || śṛṇuyāc chrāvayed vāpy yah pāthet pāthayed api || likhel lekhāpayed vāpi pājayet kṛtayed api || purāṇapāṭhakam caiva pājayet prayato nrpaḥ || gobhāhiranyadānādayair vastrānākāratarpaṇāḥ || taṁ samāpiṣya labheca caiva purāṇaśravaṇat phalam || purāṇante ca vai kuryād avasyaṃ dvijabhajanaṃ ‘This fifteen thousand verse text extends to one billion verses in devaloka where it is perpetually recited by the gods. Before teaching it, Agni abridged this [Purāṇa] out of a desire to benefit humanity. O sages headed by Śaunaka, know that all this is brahman. A pious king should worship a public teacher (pāṭhaka) of the Purāṇa who listens to or proclaims, recites or organizes a recitation, copies or has others copy, worships or sings [the Purāṇa]. Upon honoring him with donations such as cows, land, and gold, and pleasing offerings such as clothing and jewelry, that (King) will attain the results promised from listening to the Purāṇa. At the end of the Purānic recitation, he should invariably feed all the twice-born.
Successively reduced in each epoch\textsuperscript{98} as it is disseminated to seers, sages, and Vyāsa, it finally reaches a human audience, whose lack of strength and vigor,\textsuperscript{99} mental capacity, and fleeting lifespan necessitate a highly condensed and simplified version. The device of revelatory genealogies, transmitted by myriad agents of revelation, forges a tap-line to the boundless Ur-Purāṇa residing in its full glory in the celestial realms. That said, it also creates an epistemic distance between the contemporary moment of recitation and the original revelatory dialogue, and thus follows a regressive model of time that culminates in a scriptural form appropriate to an age of decadence. Although these themes are also evidenced in many of the revelation narratives of the early Śaiva tantras, in post-scriptural exegesis of Abhinavagupta there is a radically different valuation of time accompanied by a much more positive estimation of human capabilities and potential. This results in a corresponding sense of revelatory immediacy in Abhinavagupta’s understanding of scriptural transmission. This immediacy is accompanied by a celebration of the flourishing regional and historical conditions that help ensure the continual irruption and successful assimilation of

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Padmapurāṇa} 2.125.38-45. This passage is condensed in BONAZZOLI (1981), pp. 50-51: “The \textit{Padmapurāṇa}, it is said in this passage, had one hundred thousand \textit{sloka}-s in Krta \textit{yuga}, fifty-two thousand in Tretā, twenty-two thousand in \textit{Dvāpara}, twelve thousand in Kali \textit{yuga}. And even these last twelve thousand \textit{sloka}-s will disappear at the end of Kali \textit{yuga} and the first number, one hundred thousand, will appear again.” A similar process is also described in \textit{Liṅgapurāṇa} 1.2.1-5.

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Viṣṇupurāṇa} 3.3.6: \textit{vīryam tejo balaṃ cālapaṃ manusyaṃ avēṣya ca | hitāya sarvabhūtānām vedabhidān karoti saḥ} ‘Seeing that the strength, energy, and power of humanity are all limited, he divvied up the Veda for the sake of all beings.’ Cited in BONAZZOLI (1983), p. 110.
liberating teachings in this world. In the intellectual culture of medieval Kashmir, it seems, the Age of Kali is momentarily eclipsed. But the allegorical significance of the Vedic sages in the Purānic model of revelation is not univocal. Although the need for sagely mediation across vast cycles of time does indeed mark an attenuation of scriptural truth, these agents of revelation also help provide the scriptural canon of the Purāṇas with an open-ended and dynamic form. The ever expanding scope for new revelatory material ushered in by the Purāṇas is rhetorically linked to the insatiable curiosity of the sages and seers. A small sample of citations of their petitions will be instructive:

100 We find this very theme in the works of Kashmirian poets, although it is also a cliché of Sanskrit literature and inscription more broadly (a point which Dominic GOODALL kindly shared with me). See Śrikanṭhacarita 3.3: vibhānti yatrānaghadairghyasauhradāh ahāmyubhibhā yūpaparigrahaïr disāh | kaleḥ praveśānāvākāśasiddhyayā svayam mukhesv ankuritārgalā īva ‘In that [region of Kashmir] where the directions appear lined with rows of lofty sacrificial posts on account of their lack of blemish and height, it is as if wooden door bolts had sprouted forth in front of all of the [valley’s] entrances to ensure that Kali [yuga] had no space to enter.’ Bilhaṇa, writing before the Maṅkha, deployed the same trope with his own variation in a description of his local village in Kashmir. See Vikramānṅkadevacarita 18.71: yasyāsti khonamukha ity upakaṇṭhāṣṭāmī grāmāḥ samagrayaṇasaṃpadāvāṣṭākārītāḥ | ālāṇārāpabahūyāpvavati praviṣṭāṁ no yatra bandhanabhīyevā kalidvipāṇā ‘In close proximity is the village “Khonamukha”, famed for possessing every excellence. Filled with sacrificial posts shaped like tying posts, the elephant Kali never enters that place in fear of being bound.’ Cf. Bāna’s Harṣacarita, ucchvāṣa 4: yasminś ca rājani nirantarair yāpanikarair āṅkuritam īva kṛtyugena diṁnukhaṁvisarpibhir adhvāradyāmaiḥ pāläẏitam īva kalinda ‘During his reign the Kṛta age appeared to sprout forth with a multitude of closely rowed sacrificial posts, the Kali age to make an exit with the smoke of sacrifices gliding into the sky.’

101 For an excellent description of this expansion of the Vedic canon in the hands of revelatory models like those found in the Purāṇas, see HALBFASS (1990), p. 4, footnote 44: “The theistic traditions... view the Vedas as the word of God, and as a stage in an open-ended process of revelation. In this view, they are susceptible to, and even call for, continued revisions, explications, adaptations, and other forms of divine supplementation and renewal.” Cited in SMITH (1994), p. 105.

For the sake of the devotee endowed with faith, please tell me about his birth in minute detail. O sage, my mind is not satisfied, for I have this supreme curiosity.103

Destroy this doubt of mine! Indeed, I possess utmost curiosity.104

Please tell me everything about this, o sinless one, at great length. I desire to hear it since my curiosity surpasses all!105

Upon hearing this, dear uncle, a supreme curiosity has arisen in my heart. Please narrate that [tale].106

The trope is pervasive,107 combining doubt, burning curiosity, and the inability of the interlocutors ever to be satisfied108 with what has been taught thus far.

Furthermore, these pleadings often evoke teachings or stories styled “secret” (guhya, rahasya).109 BONAZZOLI interprets this Purānic strategy in the following manner.110

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103 Bhāgavatapurāṇa 3.14.4: ṛṣe na ṭṛpyati manah paraṃ kautāhalaṃ hi me.

104 Mātasyapurāṇa 108.7cd-108.8: imaṃ me samśayaṃ chinddhi param kautāhalaṃ hi me.

105 Vāyuṣpurāṇa, Revākhanda 38.3: etad vistarataḥ sarvam kathayasva mamānagha | śrotum icchāmy ahaṃ sarvaparam kautāhalaṃ hi me.

106 Vāyuṣpurāṇa, Revākhanda 4.5abc: etac chrutvā tu me tāta paraṃ kautāhalaṃ hṛdi | jātaṃ tat kathayasveti.

107 We find the same theme at the beginning of the Rāmāyaṇa where Vālmiki asks Nārada if he can identify a human being who is a perfect embodiment of dharma in this world. See Rāmāyaṇa 1.5: etad icchāmy ahaṃ śrotum paraṃ kautāhalaṃ hi me | mahārṣe tvam samarthe ‘si jiñātum evaṃvidham naram ‘I desire to learn about this. Indeed, I have supreme curiosity. O great seer, you are able to recognize a person of this caliber.’

108 Śīvapurāṇa 1.10: tatvam śrutaṃ sma naḥ sarvam pūrvaṃ eva śubhāsubham |

na ṭṛptim adhicchāmāḥ śravaṇecchā muhur muhuḥ ‘Previously we heard the entire truth, both auspicious and inauspicious. We are not satisfied. We desire to hear it again and again.’

109 Śīvapurāṇa 1.11: idānāṃ ekam evāsti śrotavāyaṃ sūta sanmate | tad rahasyam api brūhi yadi te ‘nugraho bhavet ‘Now, o noble-minded Sūta, only one thing is worth listening to. If you would favor us, teach us that secret.’

The push towards such a revelation, indeed, is found in the radical unsatisfied yearning of the ṛṣis, munis, prajāpatis etc., even after having heard so many kathās, for more... This concrete need of the ṛṣis and munis etc. is the real cause of revelation of new things, and therefore, of the increase in the bulk of Purānic literature.

Apparently, then, the Purāṇas have been enlarged along the centuries because people were not fully satisfied with what was transmitted to them through tradition. They wanted something more, i.e. a fact, a kathā, a vrata, a stotra etc. not yet revealed, still unknown.

Interestingly, it seems as though the Purāṇas—not barring their adaptiveness and elasticity, which can be sharply contrasted with the inclination to fix or seal a canon—were in the end insufficient for the curiosities of the Vedic seers. That would be a literal reading, in any event, of the notable fact that they reappear as interlocutors in a new revelatory context: the Śaiva scriptural corpus of the Mantramārga, albeit principally in the Saiddhāntika scriptures. In these new revelatory scenes and narratives the Vedic seers seem to have developed a novel taste for initiatory religious teachings that claim ascendancy over the Vedas. The seers of the Veda came to fix their gaze on the Tantra.

But before entering into the textual archive of initiatory Śaivism, it will be worthwhile to reiterate how the foregoing analysis contributes to this dissertation in light of some important discussions in secondary scholarship.

Frederick Smith contrasts the scriptural logic of the Mīmāṃsakas and Paurāṅikas:

Relative to the Mīmāṃsā discourse, at least, the Purāṇas were consciously historical; they dealt with worlds and eras; with the lives of deities, celestial beings, sages, and kings; with morals, renunciation, and yoga; with all aspects of life and human purpose... The Veda, including the deities Agni and Soma, the details and institutions of sacrifice, and the issue of its infallibility, is, as we have seen, but a

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111 This disposition is also found in numerous Purāṇas that include lists of the eighteen canonical Purāṇas.

single element in this grand matrix of human history and purpose, placed in the
service of higher organizing principles. The consciously ahistorical Pūrva-mīmāṃsā,
on the other hand, dealt with the Veda as the only true authority, the centrality of
which was the sacrifice. The Veda, the sacrifice, and the universe dependent on it
stood outside of history.

These insights and distinctions should be familiar, given that they inform and
agree with much of the above analysis. The only point of contention is exactly
what Smith means by the Purāṇas being “consciously historical.” He does
qualify this point with “relative to Mīmāṃsā discourse.” Sheldon Pollock offers
another perspective that somewhat counteracts this one element of Smith’s
thesis; he identifies a “consanguinity” between Mīmāṃsaka’s ahistoric makeover
of the Veda and Purānic discourse on revelation that effectively eliminates a
sense of history from the latter.113

I have argued elsewhere at length that virtually all Sanskrit learning in classical and
medieval India comes to view itself in one way or another as genetically linked to
the Vedas (a process, which we may call vedicization, that is in fact culture-wide)...There are several routes to establishing this consanguinity: through some formal
convention embodied in the text—a śāstra will explicitly claim status as a Veda, or
establish for itself a paraṃparā reverting to God, or present itself as the outcome of
divine revelation directly to the author or of successive abridgements from an all-
comprehensive Veda... Discursive texts that came to be composed under the sign of
the Veda eliminated historical referentiality and with it all possibility of
historiography.

Each technique that Pollock has identified for establishing a genetic link
between a śāstra and the Vedas, with the exception of a “divine revelation
directly to the author,” can be identified in the Purāṇas’ modes of self-
authorization as we have demonstrated above.

The Purāṇas do place the Vedas in an expanded temporal horizon, as
Smith points out, and customize their message to the needs of individual

devotees focused on God over the exigencies of Vedic sacrifice. But they do not necessarily promote an independent interest in historiography, and I agree with POLLOCK that this is largely due to their desire to include themselves, through genealogies and pervasive identifications with the Veda, in the great dynasty of the Vedic canon. What POLLOCK does not take into account here is a body of scriptural literature that does not “view itself as genetically linked to the Vedas” and that was therefore not “composed under the sign of the Vedas.” Unlike the Purāṇas, the Śaiva tantras typically do not characterize themselves as Vedic abridgements or supplements, but rather as revelations that transcend (and, in largely varying degrees, include) the religious sphere of the Vedas. Therefore, to understand an author like Abhinavagupta, who consciously highlights his own personhood and the world outside of his texts, we must look to an alternative model of textual authority; a model that imagines a different relationship between scripture, time, and persons; a model that emerged “under the sign of the Tantras.”

§ 2.3 Revelation in Early Śaiva Tantra

In the early Śaiva tantras we find significant commonalities with the frameworks of revelation presented in the Purāṇas and discussed above.\(^{114}\) God, namely Śiva,

\(^{114}\) The reasons for this commonalities may have to do with the fact that the Śaiva Siddhānta is the most accommodating of brahminical orthodoxy. Therefore, although Saiddhāntikas contend that their revelation is higher than the Vedas, the presence of the Vedic seers, and the trope of their curiosity for more definitive teachings, may be interpreted as a part of a strategy of supercession, which invites Vaidikas to adopt their more specialized injunctions and become the beneficiaries of liberating initiation without needing to radically confront or sacrifice their brahminical values.
is identified as the principal author of all scripture; the original form of revelation is colossal in size and must be condensed through a succession of transmissions before reaching a human audience; this descent of scripture is narrated; the justification for this mediation is occasionally the Age of Kali and the limitations and variable capacities of human beings; the transmission narratives make use of complex genealogies; they often characterize their teachings as “secret”; and, finally, we re-meet the Vedic seers as key interlocutors of scripture (although, almost exclusively in the Siddhānta division of the Śaiva scriptures).

To varying degrees these commonalities are visible in the Śaiva tantras in conjunction with some compelling divergences in the understanding of the nature of scripture, its intended audience, and the status of its divine author. Whereas the Purāṇas claim to be equal to, the essence of, or an elaboration of the Vedas, the Śaiva tantras, at least before the twelfth-century, invariably position themselves as beyond and superior to the Vedas. This is expressly visible in the

115 The great Kashmirian exegete of the Śaiva Siddhānta, Rāmakaṇṭha, directly targets Mīmāṃsā in his proof of the divine authorship of his scriptural tradition. See Flood (2006), p. 63: “The tantric theology rejects the Mīmāṃsaka proposition that scripture is without authorship. The Tantras are composed and revealed by a transcendent theistic reality for the sake of suffering souls... Rāmakaṇṭha, the Śaiva Siddhānta commentator on the Kiranatātra, says that a teaching (śāstra) is authoritative ‘only because it is the creation of the Lord, not because it is unauthored [as the Mīmāṃsakas assert in the case of the Veda] since that is impossible’.” Here Flood is citing the Kiranatātritī, critically edited and translated by Dominic Goodall. See Goodall (1998), pp. 176-180. For other instances of Rāmakaṇṭha’s dismissal of the Mīmāṃsaka conception of scripture as unauthored, see Ibid. (1998), p. 180, footnote 62.

116 On the later association of the Śaiva tantras with the Veda, see Brunner (1980-1981).
tantras’ representation of their unique soteriological efficacy. Only Śaiva initiation paired with post-initiatory observances taught in the Mantramārga can definitively guarantee liberation at the time of death, and for later tantric streams, before leaving the body (jīvanmukti). This also marks a distinction in audience. The Purāṇas, although multivocal and of great thematic breadth, appeal to a broad and popular base, including lay devotees and householders, and do not flaunt initiatory rites as the cost of entry. The Śaiva tantras, on the other hand, continually remind us that their doctrines and practices should never be uttered in the presence of the uninitiated. Finally, underlying the analogous claim that both the Purāṇas and the Tantras are authored by God are radically different conceptions of deity as author. Jurgen HANNEDER gives an excellent summary of this distinction with reference to Abhinavagupta’s theory of revelation:

It is difficult to ascertain how Śaiva theology conceived the production of scripture by Śiva, i.e. to which degree the abstract description given by Abhinavagupta in the Vārttikā was meant to evoke the popular image of Śiva speaking to Pārvatī. Although such a model of communication is inherent in the dialogue form of the Tantras and in the accounts of the descent of the Śāstra into the human realm

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117 SANDERSON (2007a), p. 238: “Central in all this was the enactment of the belief that while brahmanical ritual can affect only the body or status of the individual, Śaiva ritual works directly on the soul, that through intense imagination reinforced by incantation, breath-control, and a choreography of hand gestures the soul itself can be grasped, manipulated, and transformed. This is the driving force of all the rituals of the Mantramārga, and it is most clearly displayed in the ‘fusion with Śiva’ (śivayojanikā) at the climax of initiation.”

118 Svacchandabhairava 5.51ab: adikṣitānāṃ purato noccarec chāstrapaddhatim ‘One should never utter the procedures of the [Śaiva] scriptures in the presence of the uninitiated.’ Cf. Tantrālokaviveka ad Tantrāloka 1.44: adikṣitānāṃ purato noccarec chivasanahhitāṃ ‘One should not utter a scripture of Śiva in the presence of the uninitiated.’ See also the Mrgendravṛttī of Nārāyanakanṭha ad Mrgendratantra 1.1.2: adikṣitānāṃ tantrādiśravanānadhikārāt ‘The reason is that the uninitiated are not eligible to hear the [Śaiva] tantras, etc.’

through different divine and semi-divine beings, it is also clear that the mythology of deities plays no important role in Tantric Śaivism. Basically Tantric Śaiva practice is not a cult of images, but a cult of mantras and consequently the descriptions of aspects of deities do not involve mythology as known from Purāṇas. For the Śaiva practitioner the iconic form of a deity is subordinate to the mantras that ‘express’ it. This [...] is in fact quite appropriate for this theology, in which deities are first of all mantras. Only in a second step are these mantras used to create a form for the formless Śiva, be it for the benefit of the practitioner, or for Śiva himself in order to manifest the world, or create the scriptures.

This is a crucial contrast with the Purāṇas that must be kept in mind, even if their model of revelation has significant parallels with that of the Tantras.

Moving from the Mīmāṃsakas’ view of the Veda to the Purāṇas and then the Śaiva tantras can be characterized, in admittedly sweeping generalizations, as a shift in focus from ritual injunctions embedded in a divine authorless Word, to devotions to an image-based understanding of God who is the subject of countless narratives, to a Path of Mantras (mantramārga)—mantras that engender initiation and constitute the very body of scripture and deity.

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120 An exception to this point may be found in Kubjikā corpus of the Śaiva tantras, including but not limited to the Kubjikāmatā, Saśāhasraśamhitā, and Maṭhānabhājiravatantra, all of which elaborate upon a shared origin story about the Goddess Kubjikā. I should clarify here that I do not see the transitions between these frameworks for scripture and deity from the Purāṇas to the Tantras as constituting a natural evolution or causally linked historical development, but rather as contrasting models with varying degrees of mutual awareness.

121 This important distinction between Paurāṇika and Tantric notions of deity is not registered in the polythetic definition of “Hindu Tantrism” given in BROOKS (1999), p. 55ff. E.g. see ibid., p. 66: “Tantrism does not differ significantly from Purānic Hinduism in the ways it conceives the world and God.” For an insightful demonstration of the limited scope of this definition, see HATLEY (2013), p. 22, footnote 2.

122 For an obvious statement on the supreme reality as mantra-deity and author of tantras, see Dīkṣottara 1.10bcd: śīva vai mantramūrtimān | mantratantraprakāśakaḥ Śiva, the embodiment of the mantra, is the author of the mantras and Tantras and He illuminates them.’ See also Kauravasūtrasangraha 3.28: sārve mantramukā devaḥ sārve mantrāḥ śivātmukāḥ | śivātmakām idam jñātvā śivam evānicintayet ‘All deities have the nature of mantra and all mantras are one with Śiva. Having known this true nature of Śiva, one should contemplate Śiva alone.’
Before proceeding to the structure of the scriptural transmission as it is represented in the Śaiva Tantras, a brief outline of some basic features of this complex\(^\text{123}\) of religious practice and thought will help orient our textual analysis. There have been a number of scholarly assessments\(^\text{124}\) of the many attempts made at defining and classifying Tantra or “Tantrism,” the details of which need not be rehearsed here. One step that immediately simplifies the task is delimiting the scope of what it is we are speaking about.\(^\text{125}\) In identifying some basic features and central metaphors of the Śaiva Tantras redacted between the sixth and tenth centuries C.E., which classify themselves with designations such as the Siddhānta, Mantrapīṭha, or Vidyāpīṭha, we are bracketing Vaishnava, Jain, and Buddhist forms of Tantra. We are also bracketing late medieval “Hindu” Tantrism, many iterations of which flourished in South India and the greater Bengal region. Furthermore, in contrast to local folk religious traditions, we are

\[^{123}\text{A “structural unity” persists between the many sects and scriptural streams of the Śaiva tantras that can grouped under the designation ‘Mantramārga,’ and this justifies describing them as a single “complex of religious practice and thought.” See SANDERSON (2007a), p. 238: “The features that differentiated the divisions of the Mantramārga, such as the choice of deity propitiated, the specific character of the visualizations (dhyānam), Mantras, Maṇḍalas, Mudrās, substrates of worship, and offerings that these choices entailed, were surface features that did not affect significantly this deeper structural unity.”}\]


\[^{125}\text{Following the advice of HATLEY (2013), p. 22: “Polythetic classification appears to remain useful for approaching problematic categories in the study of religion, provided that its intended scope is clearly demarcated and contextual nature recognized. (Does one seek, for instance, to elucidate the contours of ‘tantra’ in a given textual corpus and historical period, or to define a far more elusive, indeed dubious, ‘Hindu Tantrism?’).”}\]
also referring to religious doctrines and cults associated with clearly delineated scriptural corpuses.\textsuperscript{126}

Although the variable lists of constituent features listed in “polythetic”\textsuperscript{127} definitions of Śaiva tantra include multiple items found in non-tantric contexts, three characteristics have great pervasion in the “demonstrably early”\textsuperscript{128} Śaiva Tantras under consideration;\textsuperscript{129} the necessity of initiation, the centrality of mantras, and self-identification with the deity. Alexis SANDERSON provides a summation of some essential suppositions and ritual methods of the Śaiva scriptures included in the Mantramārga that gives greater specificity and precision than can be gleaned from lists of prototypical characteristics.\textsuperscript{130}

Both the Saiddhāntika and non-Saiddhāntika scriptures offered the attainment of two goals: (1) the liberation of the soul from the beginningless cycle of birth and death (mokṣa), insisting that this could be achieved only by those who followed their

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{126} Seeing the tantras as a distinct scriptural corpus is in fact a common technique of delineating them in premodern India. See PADOUX (2002), p. 18: “The usual reference to the Indian use of the term tāntrika derives from Kullūka Bhaṭṭa’s formula when commenting on Mānavadharmaśāstra 2.1, where he juxtaposes vaidika/tāntrika as two forms of revelation (śrutiś ca dvidvidhā vaidikī tāntrikī ca) and, consequently, two different approaches to the ultimate reality (the first based formally on the Veda and the Brahmanic tradition and the second on other texts). The distinction has remained a basic one throughout Indian thought, but without a particular category of “Tantrism” evolving... In fact, Kullūka’s formula shows, on the one hand that, even though there is no inside definition of Tantrism, Tantrism was at least perceived by Indians outside it as different from the Vedic tradition. It evidently was similarly perceived by those inside who deprecated Vedic rites and notions.”}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{127} On polythetic classification, which provides a set of characteristics, traits, “family resemblances,” or prototypical features that characterize a phenomenon being defined, but all of which need not apply to any of its given instantiations, see NEEDHAM (1975). NEEDHAM’s approach to polythetic classification is mentioned in HATLEY (2013).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{128} On a basic set of criteria for determining the pedigree of an early scriptural witness in the Śaiva Siddhānta division of the Mantramārga, see GOODALL (1998), pp. xxxix-xlii.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{129} These items are adapted from the useful collation of multiple definitions in WALLIS (2014), pp. 96-97.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{130} SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 237-238.}
precepts, and (2) the bringing about of the lesser benefits termed siddhiḥ... they taught a single ritual system... all set out the same elaborate procedures for the initiation (dīkṣā) of recruits and the consecration (abhisekāh) of officiants, the same ceremonies for the installations of images and other substrates of worship (pratiṣṭha), and the same rituals of obligatory regular worship (niityakarma) comprising the summoning of the deity into the person of the worshipper, the deity’s worship first there (antaryāgaḥ) and then externally (bahiryāgaḥ) by projection into a material substrate such as a Linga, Maṇḍala, or anthropomorphic image, followed by the repetition of the deity’s Mantras (japaḥ)... with inflections and elaborations of all these for the attainment of siddhiḥ.

Here SANDERSON offers one of the most lucid and precise explanations of the basic ritual program of pre-tenth century Śaiva Tantra. Moreover, self-identification with the deity is an exceptionally important component of the many procedures listed in SANDERSON’s illuminating depiction. Indeed, it is singled out in another method of distinguishing Śaiva Tantra from other religious currents in India, namely, the discernment of a central metaphor.

Amidst a vast spectrum of doctrinal positions, post-initiatory observances, and ritual substrates, Gavin FLOOD isolates self-divinization as a metaphor that paradigmatically characterizes Śaiva tantra.131

More fundamental than the metaphor of kingship is the metaphor of transformation into a deity. The idea that to worship a god one must become a god is a notable feature of all tantric traditions, even ones which maintain a dualistic metaphysics... While the idea of liberation as becoming one with the absolute (brahman) has a long history in Brahmaṇical thinking from the Upaniṣads, the ritual construction of the body as the deity through the use of magical phrases or mantras is prototypically tantric.

The process of fusing with or identifying with the deity through yogic and ritual homologization132 of the “body” of the deity with that of the practitioner is a

131 FLOOD (2006), pp. 11-12.

132 For an interesting description of the process of self-divinization that fills out some of the essential ritual and yogic techniques utilized in this tantric procedure (tāntrikavidhi), see DYCZKOWSKI (2009), vol. 2, pp. 253-254: “Worship requires the ritual purity of the worshipper, which can only be achieved by some form of identification with the deity,
preeminent component of many tantric rituals, including daily obligatory rites (nityakarma) and the all-important rite of tantric initiation. This central metaphor will help orient us to the significant internal diversity within Śaiva tantric scriptural streams that we are about to confront. This general portrayal of Śaiva Tantra will be provided with greater granularity in due course as we turn to the particular lineaments of revelation in each tantric stream.

The first of those streams, the Śaiva Siddhānta, provides a critical transition in our narrative from Veda-based modes of revelation to those found in the Śaiva scriptures, because it betrays the greatest continuity with the spirit of Vedic dharma in its social observances and concern with ritual purity. This analysis of revelation in the Śaiva tantras will culminate with a consideration of revelation in Śaiva sects that display an extraordinary antinomian character accompanied by an uninhibited rejection of Vedic values in their private ritual practice and doctrines. The Śaiva Siddhānta, by contrast, fashions itself as congruent\textsuperscript{133} with Vedic revelatory traditions, even while claiming to supersede however this may be conceived (whether total oneness or conjunction in some way). Moreover, this requires, by necessary implication, that the body of the worshipper, not just his or her ‘Self’, be identified with that of the deity. This is generated by the projection onto the body of the worshipper of the mantras that constitute the limbs of the body of the deity. The body of the deity is identified with the totality of the universe. Thus, the body of the worshipper must contain all the principles, energies and the like, along with the deities and beings into which the system orders the deployment of the cosmic order in all its aspects...

The universe is the deity’s body. It is alive. This is because the vital breath streams down into it from the disembodied, transcendental aspect of deity ‘above’ it and beyond the cosmic order and moves in the channels and through inner vital centres of the body. Just as the physical and subtle body of the officiant must be homologized to that of the deity, so must the movement and activity of the vital breath. This is linked to consciousness and Speech, which is the inner energy of mantras. To bring that about involves identification with the inner vital activity, consciousness and Speech of the deity.”

\textsuperscript{133} See the Mokṣakārika of Sadyojyotis 145c-147d, translated in SANDERSON (2012), handout 7, p. 11: na ca svagocare tāśāṇi bādhate tat pramāṇatāṁ || tāśu varnuśramācārān abhyanujñatavac ca tat || na cānyena pramāṇena saṃruddhas tasya gocarāḥ || śrotīyair apy ato grāhyāṁ tat
them.\textsuperscript{134} This is evident not only in the Saiddhântikas’ incorporation of a greater degree of brahminical norms in their social and religious praxis (as compared with all other Śaiva cults considered below), but also in the their structure of revelation, which to a large degree parallels revelatory narratives found in the Purāṇas. This overlap, I will argue, is not incidental.

§ 2.4 SIDDHÂNTA

Thanks largely to the scholarship of Dominic Goodall, the extant Siddhânta scriptures that predated the twelfth-century Saiddhântika commentator Aghoraśiva have been identified\textsuperscript{135} and also arranged into a relative

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phalâdhikasâdhanam ‘This [teaching of Śiva (śaivam)] does not challenge the validity of the [non-Śaiva teachings] in their domains; it has ruled that the observance of the caste-classes and disciplines [taught] in [the brahmanical among] those [teachings] apply [equally to Śaiva initiates]; and no other means of valid knowledge[, either perception or inference,] contradicts the teachings of Śiva in the domain [of knowledge] proper to it. Therefore it should be accepted as valid by [all, including those who are learned in the Veda (śrotriyâḥ) [and also], by those whose brahmanical observances include the Śrauta], as the means of achieving a greater benefit [than can be achieved through the Veda alone].’
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\textsuperscript{134} See the Mohacûḍottara ff. 21v6-22rs (4.275-281), translated in Sanderson (2015b), pp. 181-182: ‘Tradition declares that the king is the protector of his subjects. Therefore it is right that he should protect the caste communities and ensure that they are instructed in their duties, each according to its station. The sources that convey these duties are Śruti, Smṛti, Purâṇa, and the [Śaiva] scriptures (āgamāḥ). If the king abides by these he enjoys a long reign. [The correct order of authority in which they should be applied is as follows.] The Vedas [comprising both the Śruti and Smṛti] take precedence over the Purâṇas, and the [Śaiva] scriptures take precedence over the teaching of the Vedas. There is the common [brahmanical authority of Śruti, Smṛti, and Purâṇa] (sāmânyam), and then there is the special (viśeṣam). The Śaiva [scriptures] (śaivam) are the latter (viśeṣikam vacah). [So] the learned should not doubt their authority when they find that they conflict with [a brahmanical injunction]. The all-knowing [master] should adjudicate each case objectively [by this criterion]. Given the plurality of scriptural authorities, whenever there is a question as to which of two [conflicting] statements take precedence, he should adopt that which has been taught by Śiva. He should reconcile the two, whether self-sufficient or depending on the understanding of its meaning on [examination in light of] other sources of the same kind, related sources, and [and, where they fail,] learned exegesis, by applying such modes of reasoning as presumption.’

\textsuperscript{135} See Goodall (1998), pp. xxxix-xlvi: “Three criteria provide certain proof of the relative antiquity of a Siddhântatantra: (a) its being transmitted not just in South India but also in early Nepalese and Kashmirian manuscripts (b) the existence of substantial attributed
chronology. The latter task is based on number of criteria that are speculative on an individual basis, but compelling when considered together. We will follow this general chronology in our presentation of the structure of revelation in Siddhānta scriptural sources in order to trace putative historical transformations, adaptations, and departures.

Notwithstanding the fact that early Śaiva Tantra can be appreciated as a unified complex of religious thought and practice, the divergences in doctrinal positions, social norms, mantra-deities, and substrates of worship are considerable. SANDERSON gives an excellent précis of the principal metaphysical postulates identified in the Siddhānta tantras by early exegeses intent on systematizing their scriptural corpus. These postulations, as we will see, collectively comprise one of the central counterpositions to Abhinavagupta’s theological and philosophical arguments.

quotations by demonstrably early authors (i.e. up to and including Aghoraśīva) that are still traceable in the extant work that bears the same name (c) the survival of commentaries by demonstrably early authors (i.e. up to and including Aghoraśīva). By applying these criteria we are left with a very short list of demonstrably early Śaiddhāntika scriptures... the Rauracāsūtrasaṅgraha, Svayambhuvaśūtrasaṅgraha, the Kīraṇa, the Parākhyā (or Saurabhēya), and the Niśvāsātattvaśāhita (under which head might be included also the Niśvāsākārikā and the Dīkṣottara. The Pārāmeśvara is known from a single ninth-century Nepalese manuscript... [which] has recently been identified as the original Pauṣkara... Other early siddhāntas of importance that are not in the canonical list of twenty-eight, but which were known to the Kashmirians, are the Mṛgendratantra, the Matangapārāmeśvaratantra, and various recensions of the Kālottara.”

136 Ibid., pp. xlvi-lxiv.

137 For a list of these criteria, see Ibid., pp. xlvi-xlvi: “cross references; discrepant lists of the principles (tattva) with which the universe is structured; the structure of the tantras; oddities of doctrine; peculiarities of language; and positioning within the traditional lists of twenty-eight Siddhāntas.”

(1) Śiva, (2) souls, and (3) the rest of reality, mental and material, are essentially and eternally distinct from each other. According to this view Śiva is only the efficient cause (nimittakāraṇam) of the universe. Its material cause (upādānakāraṇam), that out of which it is fashioned, of which it consists, and into which it dissolves, is not Śiva but māyā. The latter is the single, eternal, and unconscious source of the worlds and everything in them, including bodies and faculties of each soul... When Śiva judges a soul to be ready for release he liberates it into a state of omniscience and omnipotence in which it is his equal (śivasamaḥ, śivatulyaḥ). Even in this state of enlightenment and liberation each soul remains distinct from every other and from Śiva himself... Liberation cannot be achieved through mere knowledge of reality without recourse to ritual. This is because the state of bondage, in which the soul fails to realize its innate omniscience and omnipotence, is not caused by mere ignorance. The ignorance that characterises the unliberated is the effect of an imperceptible Impurity (malam) that acts on the soul from the outside; and this Impurity, though it is imperceptible, is a material substance (dravyam). Because it is a substance, only action (vyāpāraḥ) can remove it; and the only action capable of removing it is that of the rituals of the initiation and their sequel taught by Śiva in his Tantric scriptures.

There are a few exceptions\(^{139}\) to the otherwise thoroughgoing dualistic orientation of the Siddhānta scriptures. It should also be mentioned that these doctrinal positions of the early Saiddhāntika commentarial tradition are largely subordinated to ritual matters in the scriptures themselves, given that ritual is their central concern.\(^{140}\) Furthermore, the conviction that the basic impurity that shrouds the soul in ignorance is a substance that can only be removed by ritual action contributes to a pervasive ideology of ritualism in early Saiddhāntika commentarial literature. This ritual-centric approach goes hand and hand with a skepticism towards subitist methods of awakening through direct insight. A final note on the ritual disposition of the Siddhānta scriptures: they center almost exclusively on the benevolent deity Sadāśiva, utilize lacto-vegetarian offerings,

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\(^{140}\) On the primacy of ritual in the Siddhānta tantras, see BRUNNER (1992), p. 25ff.
and marginalize the ritual propitiation of female divinities. These orientations are all compatible with the other congruencies with the general features of brahminical orthopraxis mentioned above.

We begin our survey of revelation in the Siddhānta scriptures with the earliest strata of texts in this canon, the Niśvāsa corpus. The first four texts in this corpus refer to themselves as the Mūlasūtra, Uttarāśutra, Nayasūtra, and Guhyasūtra, respectively. They present themselves as interconnected and chronologically ordered components of a scriptural compendium known as the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā. The Mūlasūtra opens with an inquiry on the part of an unnamed group of seers (ṛṣi); the respondent is not visible due to textual corruption, but the text’s editors propose Nandi, one of Śiva’s chief assistants. The sages want to know about that previous occasion when Lord Śiva transmitted supreme and secret knowledge to the Goddess. This gives Nandi the cue to recall that original teaching, drawn forth by the Goddess’s query, along with a brief description of the teaching’s setting and divine audience on Mount Kailāsa. Unlike the Purāṇas, which mostly background the original teaching of God and forefront the dialogical mediation of Vedic seers and figures like Vyāsa

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141 On the murky identity and some of the disparate forms of worship of Sadāśiva’s consort in the Siddhānta scriptures, see BRUNNER (1992), pp. 20-22.

142 For an introduction to this corpus and a critical edition and annotated translation of its three earliest books (mūla-, uttara-, and naya-sūtras) see GOODALL, SANDERSON & ISAACSON (2015).

143 This proposal squares with the frame-story of the Niśvāsamukha, which is composed later as an introduction to the original sūtras. This frame-story will be considered below. See Ibid., p. 233.

144 Niśvāsatattvasamhitā, mūlasūtra, 1.1-13.
and Sūta in the main frame-story, the early sūtras of the Niśvāsa do the opposite. Once we are transported to that original stage of scriptural teaching we remain there, listening in on the goddess’ questions and Śiva’s replies. This model of structuring a tantra, which will be considered in depth below, invites the audience to witness the paradigmatic scriptural dialogue held between God and Goddess (devadevasamvāda).

At the outset of the second book of the Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā, the Uttarasūtra which comments upon and elaborates the teaching found in the Mūlasūtra, the goddess becomes curious about the source of the letters of the mantra and by extension how many tantras are currently in existence and who is charged with their dissemination. The response constitutes what may be the earliest extant version of an account of the descent of Śaiva tantric scriptures (tantrāvatāra). From the quiescent and transcendent Śiva, the Supreme Cause (paramakāraṇa), the Śaiva revelation emerged in its most subtle sonic form.

Contrary to the depiction of the original moment of revelation as the teaching of an embodied form of God (such as four-faced Brahmā) in the Purāṇas, this

\[\text{\textsuperscript{145}} \textit{GOODALL, SANDERSON \& ISAACSON (2015), p. 20.} \]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{146}} \textit{Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.18: devy uvāca \textbar akṣarāṇāṃ kutotpattiḥ sarvavarnna \ldots \textbar \{tantrāṇāṃ kiyati saṃ\}khyā guravaś ca kati smṛtāḥ ‘The goddess spoke: From where do the letters arise ... ? How great is the number of tantras? And how many teachers [of those tantras] are taught?’ Translation of GOODALL et al.} \]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{147}} \textit{Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.23: adṛṣṭavigrahe śānte śive paramakāraṇe \textbar nādarūpaṃ vinīkṛntam śastraṃ paramadurullabhām ‘From the inactive Supreme Cause Śiva, of whom no body can be seen, came forth the scripture in the form of sonic energy, extremely difficult to grasp.’ Translation of GOODALL et al. For parallels to this verse in later Śaiva tantras, see GOODALL, SANDERSON \& ISAACSON (2015), p. 342.} \]
highest form of Śiva—as source of the great descent of scriptural wisdom—is described as “without a visible form” (adrṣṭavigraha). The pure flow of revelatory sound (nāda), “difficult to grasp,” was deciphered by Sadāśiva, who then taught it to the form of God narrating this account, Īśvara (Śiva), sitting on Mount Kailāsa with the Goddess and surrounded by his terrific entourage. Śiva of the Purāṇas, who sports in the Himalayas and is the subject of numerous myth cycles, here finds himself in a new cosmic hierarchy two levels removed from the ultimate source of revelatory knowledge.

From this verse onwards the account of revelation displays themes reminiscent of the Purāṇas: the Lord dwelling on Kailāsa redacts this subtle mass of sound into metrical form for the gods; the gods transmit this knowledge to the sages who pass it on to humanity in a highly abridged form. Much like the lists of eighteen canonical Purāṇas this grand transmission is then codified into

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148 This dissertation often translates jñāna as “scriptural wisdom,” especially when this common connotation is readily apparent. This is based on a suggestion personally communicated by Shaman HATLEY.

149 Niśvāsataṭtvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.23.

150 Niśvāsataṭtvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.24: sadāśivas tu vettā vai sa ca māṃ prati bodhakaḥ | nādarūpasya sāstrasya aham granthanibandhakaḥ || anusṭupchandabandhena devebhyaḥ pratipāditam | risibhiṣ ca punaḥ prāptam te bhyo martyeṣu santatih ‘Now Sadāśiva understood it and he enlightened me; I redacted [this] scripture [that I had received] in the form of sonic energy into books.’ Translation of GOODALL et al.

151 Niśvāsataṭtvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.25-40.

152 Niśvāsataṭtvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.25: anusṭupchandabandhena devebhyaḥ pratipāditam | risibhiṣ ca punaḥ prāptam te bhyo martyeṣu santatih ‘It was expounded for the gods in the form of metrical composition in anusṭupāḥ. [From them] it reached the sages; and from them the tradition [came] among mortals.’ Translation of GOODALL et al.
(possibly the earliest) list of twenty-eight scriptures of Śiva.\footnote{Niśvāsatattvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.26-30. For other versions of lists of the twenty-eight Siddhānta scriptures, see GOODALL (1998), Appendix III, pp. 402-417.} The names of each scripture are associated with the person who learned and expounded it, and there is an acknowledgement of thousands of subdivisions of these canonical works. This great cascade of scripture becomes reduced and epitomized on each plane of its grand descent, and at the culmination of the process the sages make the final cut, miniaturizing the scriptures for human beings of “little life span, little energy, little intelligence.”\footnote{Niśvāsatattvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.40: alpāyuṣāḥ smṛtā mātrīyā alpaivaśālpadvaddhyāḥ \textit{ato} \textit{rthasaṅgrahoktam tu mṛtyebhyāḥ ca [prakā]śitatam} ‘Mortals have little span of life, little energy, little intelligence, and so a summary of the meaning [of scripture] has been revealed for mortals.’ Translation of GOODALL et al.} Who are these sages? The Uttarāsūtra of the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā gives an inventory of Vedic seers,\footnote{Niśvāsatattvasamhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.37-39 lists Śukra, Dadhīci, Durvāsas, Ruru, Kaca, Vasiṣṭha, [conj: Sanaka], Sanandana, Rṛka, Ûrva, Angrīyas, Anta, Śveta, Rāma, Vāhlika, Mārici, Ḫupamanyu, Ṛkkaṇda, Agasti, and Kāśyapa.} all prominent sagely mediators of the Purāṇas, who in this early narrative of the descent of the scripture are intermediaries of a new scriptural corpus. Once the Lord describes how scripture came down into this world, the Vedic seers are forgotten and the rest of the Uttarāsūtra and the Nayāsūtra continue with the Goddesses’ queries and Śiva’s replies.

The Niśvāsa corpus also includes a unique scripture, likely composed after the original sūtras and designed to introduce them,\footnote{On the relationship between the Niśvāsamukha and the four sūtras of the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā, see KAFLE (2015), pp. 8-9. See also SANDERSON (2006), pp. 152-153.} the Niśvāsamukha. The text has been the subject of a recent study, critical edition, and annotated...
translation in the doctoral thesis of Nirajan KAFLE.\textsuperscript{157} In this independent “entrance” (mukha) to the earliest texts of the Niśväsa compendium we discover a fascinating narrative that explains how the Vedic sages became involved with a new initiatory teaching revealed by Śiva. This narrative self-consciously bridges the Vedic and Tantric traditions while legitimizing the latter’s claim of superiority and explaining how the Vedic seers’ endless curiosity for new teachings (discussed above) transformed into religious promiscuity.

The Niśväsamukha begins with the burgeoning curiosity of the Vedic sage Ricīka (or Ṛcīka). He is wonderstruck upon witnessing a marvel in Naimişa forest, the celebrated environment of the outermost frame-story of the Great Epic (Mahābhārata) and the most common setting for the final dialogical moment in Purānic revelation narratives. He asks the sage Mataṅga to explain why eighty thousand sages suddenly departed the Naimişa woodlands for another forest, Devadāruvana.\textsuperscript{158} Mataṅga explains that they migrated to this new destination upon hearing that Brahmā and Viṣṇu received an initiation in that abode. This news fills them with astonishment and, as the recurrent trope goes, intense

\textsuperscript{157} KAFLE (2015).

\textsuperscript{158} On the significance of this forest, which has fascinating links to early Śaiva traditions, see KAFLE (2015), pp. 18-19.
The Vedic sages immediately give verbal form to that curiosity:\(^\text{159}\) How could one obtain an initiation outside the Vedic tradition? For there is nothing else higher than the Veda. How is it that Viṣṇu also, the knower of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, was initiated?

The prospect of an extra-Vedic tradition that has reduced two central deities of Purāṇas, Brahmā and Viṣṇu (themselves divine authors of scripture) to entry-level initiates, is a source of great intrigue to the sages. They promptly set off from Naimiṣa to this forest of new possibilities, Devadāruvana, a journey from the famous haunt of the Purāṇas to a new Śaiva world of scriptural revelation.

The Gods are no longer there, but Śiva’s attendant Nandi has remained behind and is authorized to transmit the initiatory teachings to the rṣis, and by proxy, to all humanity. The sages question Nandi: “Tell us all how Brahmā and Viṣṇu were initiated, both of them being knowers of knowledge about initiation in all scriptures.”\(^\text{161}\) How could a teaching exist that was not on the radar of these omniscient Gods, who are themselves the divine fountainheads of all scripture?

The sages arrive and are all initiated by Nandi who proceeds to deliver the teaching he overheard between Śiva and the Goddess, a teaching that delineates five streams of knowledge and practice. Each stream emerges from

\(^{159}\) Niśvāsānukha 1.6-7: --- naumi naimiśāraṇyaśvābhiḥ \| tatraiva dīkṣito brahmā keśavaḥ ca rīcīkaka \| kautūhlahanviṣṭas sarvve vismayaṃ paramaṅgatāḥ ' [...] by those [sages] residing in the Naimiṣa forest in the very place Brahmā and Keśava were inititated. O Ricīka! [Thus,] they were all full of curiosity [and] were extremely astonished.’ Translation of KAFLE

\(^{160}\) Niśvāsānukha 1.8-10: parasparaṃ vadanty evaṃ sarvvaśāstraśraviṣāradāḥ \| kathamdiśśāṃ prapadyeta muktvā vedoktam āgamam \| na hi vedāt parāṇī cāṇyadyoga ca \| sāṅkhya-yogasya vettāasu kathām viṣṇuḥ ca dīkṣitaḥ. Translation of KAFLE.

\(^{161}\) Niśvāsānukha 1.16cd-17ab: ‘asmākaṃ kathaya sarvaṃ brahmā-viṣṇu tu dīkṣitau \| yathā te sarvaśāstranāṃ dīkṣāyādāsya vedākau. Translation of KAFLE.
one of Śiva’s five faces. In addition to the tantrāvatāra (descent of the tantra) framework for narrating the entrance of scriptures into the world, the five-fold “streams” offers an alternative means of depicting revelation that the redactors of Śaiva scripture use to differentiate, classify, encompass, and rank religious systems. This five-stream model is immediately continued and adapted by other early Śaiva tantras\textsuperscript{162} and commentators, including Abhinavagupta. The five streams\textsuperscript{163} are given in the Niśvāsamukha as the Laukika (lay religion related to Purāṇas\textsuperscript{164}), Vaidika (“practice of the celibate life-stages”\textsuperscript{165} related to the legal and socially prescriptive literature of brahminical traditions [dharmaśāstra]), Ādhyātmika (the teachings of Yoga and Śāṅkhyā), Atimārga (teachings of the early ascetic tradition of Pāśupata Śaivism\textsuperscript{166}), and finally the Mantramārga (initiatory tantric Śaivism).

\textsuperscript{162} SANDERSON (2006a), p. 157: “The same classification is seen elsewhere in Āgamic literature: in the Mrgendra, the Pauskarapārameśvara, the Svacchanda, and the Jayadrathayāmala.”


\textsuperscript{164} SANDERSON (2006a), p. 157: “The Niśvāsamukha’s description of Mundane Religion (laukiko dharmah) is of the ordinary observances of the uninitiated but regenerate (upanīta-) householder devoted to Śiva, comprising the pūjā of Śiva and other deities on the lunar days sacred to them, donations to worthy recipients (dānam), pilgrimages to Śivakṣetras and so forth.”

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p. 157.

\textsuperscript{166} This Pāśupata system is taught as twofold (Niśvāsamukha 4.131), the Atyāśrāmas and the Lokāṭītas (Niśvāsamukha 4.88). See KAFLE (2015), pp. 26-28. The analysis of the Atimārga in the Niśvāsamukha is major source for Alexis SANDERSON’s article on the structure of the Atimārga that makes a significant advance in our knowledge of the divisions of this tradition, moving beyond and updating the pioneering work of David LORENZEN. See SANDERSON (2006a).
Each stream is higher than the previous one, with the Mantramārga, unsurprisingly, enshrined at the pinnacle. KAFLE makes an astute observation on the logic of this presentation:¹⁶⁷

The most innovative feature of the Niśvāsamukha is that all these teachings are associated with Śiva, as they come out of his five faces. This means that the Niśvāsamukha gives scriptural and traditional authority to all the other four systems. The text at the same time accepts the Mantramārga as the highest authority. We are told by Nandikeśvara that the Mantramārga is issued from the fifth, upper-most face (Īśāna), as the “highest stream.”

In addition to this insight about the Niśvāsamukha’s inclusivist strategy of encompassing these “lower” traditions into the authoritative ambit of Śiva’s teaching, I would add one point. The five streams envisage a greater religious environment that elucidates key teaching traditions that lead up to and give a ritual and metaphysical “address” to the Mantramārga, “locating” it relative to earlier traditions.

Sāṅkhya and Yoga (Ādhyātmika), together with the Pāśupata traditions (Atimārga), are important in this process of pinpointing the position of the Mantramārga for two reasons. The orthodox Vaidikas deem these traditions to be outside the Vedic fold, while the Niśvāsamukha places them above the Vedic tradition, which both distances and uplevels the Mantramārga relative to the Vedic canon. Secondly, many of the practices and metaphysical premises found in Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Pāśupata Śaivism form the basic superstructure upon which the Mantramārga articulates its cosmology and soteriology.¹⁶⁸ Therefore


¹⁶⁸ On how the Siddhānta scriptures built upon the tenets and principles of Sāṅkhya, see GOODALL (1998), pp. li-lii: “The Śaiva Siddhānta appears to have inherited the structure of its dualist ontology from Sāṅkhya thinkers (or from the same sources from which Sāṅkhya
this frame-story, and the unique program\textsuperscript{169} of the \textit{Niśvāsamukha} dedicated to an analysis of the four streams leading up to the Mantramārga (taught in the sūtras of the Niśvāsa corpus), reads much like a charter myth for initiatory Śaivism.

Once the teaching is underway, the \textit{Niśvāsamukha} flashes back and forth between both frame-stories, the sages and Nandi,\textsuperscript{170} and the original teaching Nandi is recapitulating, that of God and Goddess.\textsuperscript{171} In the earliest sūtras of the thinkers inherited it). Classical Sāṅkhya thinkers held the soul to be the topmost principle, fundamentally different from that of matter and all the principles that derived from matter... The tantras of the Śaiva Siddhānta modified this structure in two ways: they added principles to the top, demonstrating that the Sāṅkhya had correctly grasped the nature of only the inferior levels of the universe, and they attempted to place worlds inherited from older Śaiva scriptures on the levels of these various principles (tattva). The latter change meant that \textit{tattva} in some contexts approximates to a ‘reality level’ of the universe in which various worlds are placed rather than a constitutive ‘principle’ of the universe.” See also Torella (1999), p. 555: “We find Sāṃkhya doctrines in the very core of the metaphysics, cosmology and psychology of Tantrism, and we are not talking of single details but of a fully structured system of beliefs—such as the \textit{tattva} theory—, which are so perfectly integrated into the tantric speculation that, most likely, we would never have thought of a derivation, had we not been aware of the remote origin of Sāṃkhya. This is particularly true for the Śaiva side of Tantrism.” Regarding the Atimārga, the second division of that system, the Lokātitas or Lākulas developed a form of initiation that bridges the Atimārga and the Mantramārga (designated Āgamic Śaivism in the following citation), and is a clear predecessor to the latter. See Sanderson (2006a), pp. 190-192: “Evidently, then, the Lākula initiation departs from the Pāñcarthika [Atyāśrama or the first division of Pāśupata Śaivism] both in procedure and in purpose and in both these respects stands with the Āgamic Śaiva tradition over and against the Pāñcarthika... The Lākula system added to this proto-dīkṣā an early version of the \textit{nirvāṇadīkṣā} and in so doing departed from the Pāñcarthikas... For whereas the Pāñcarthika rite was essential a rite of passage, here it has become, as in Āgamic Śaivism, an \textit{ātmasamskāraḥ}, a rite that bestows or prepares the soul for liberation... Details apart, about which we know almost nothing in the Lākula case, it differs from the Āgamic in only two respects. The terminus of its cosmic hierarchy is lower than that of the Āgamic systems, because those have extended their own beyond it in their bid for supremacy within the greater religion; and they appear not to have developed the \textit{hautrī dīkṣā}, the Dīkṣā through the placing of offerings in a consecrated fire, that is the principal formal characteristic of the Āgamic rite. In this respect the Pāñcarthika and Lākula systems stand together against the Āgamic.”

\textsuperscript{169} Kafle notes that the \textit{Niśvāsamukha} is the only extant Mantramārgic scripture that extensively treats non-tantric religious systems.

\textsuperscript{170} This dialogical frame predominates in chapters one and two.

\textsuperscript{171} The \textit{devadevīsaṃvāda} (God-goddess-dialogue) predominates in chapters three and four.
Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā the sages make a brief appearance in the “descent of the tantra” (tantrāvatāra) and then are relegated to the background as we become privy to the dialogue between Śiva and his divine consort. The Niśvāsamukha gives a remarkable narrative at its outset that explicates why the Vedic seers are involved in receiving and mediating a scriptural corpus that claims to supersede the Vedas. In the process, the Niśvāsamukha marks a continuity with the structure of revelation in the Purāṇas attested by the parallel literary strategy of narrating the reduction of a massive scriptural source text down to more digestible versions suitable to the “decreasing faculties of the recipients.”¹⁷² This parallel structure, however, is reproduced in a new ritual, scriptural, and theological universe, the Mantramārga, whose particular sub-traditions and phases of ritual practice and theology we will continue to explore.

Many of the themes and frameworks for revelation highlighted in the above discussion of the earliest strata of the Siddhānta continue in later extant scriptures of this tradition. The Vedic sages and seers commonly figure as key mediators of revelation and they are presented as being eager for teachings that are extra-Vedic and superior to the Vedas. But unlike the Mūla, Uttara, and Nayasūtras of the Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā, which unfold through the dialogue of God and Goddess, in some important Siddhānta tantras it is the questions of the Vedic seers that constitute the primary interlocutional structure of scripture.

Moving from earlier Siddhānta scriptures to those composed closer to the eighth century, many of the Vedic seers cast in the dramatic revelatory setting of

the Niśvāsa corpus make reappearances. In the Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha (‘Ruru’s Compendium of Pithy Scriptural Teachings’)\textsuperscript{173} we meet the luminous seer Ruru, the exceedingly wise namesake of the scripture, who is invited by a group of sages—Bhārgava, Āṅgirasa, Ātreya, Paulastyā, and Maṛcī—to share his knowledge about the quiescent cause of Śiva scriptural wisdom.\textsuperscript{174} At a certain point in Ruru’s scriptural discourse, the sages become curious as to how this scriptural wisdom came to assume its current form and who the gurus responsible for its transmission were.\textsuperscript{175} This version of the “descent of scripture” (tantrāvatāra) begins with highest form of Śiva, the supreme guru and universal cause, as the first in a line that continues through Śrīkaṇṭha, the Goddess, Nandīśa and Skanda, and then the sages Śukra, Ěrva, Rṣīka, and finally Rāma,\textsuperscript{176}

\textsuperscript{173} Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha is one of the earliest extant Siddhānta scriptures independent of the Niśvāsa corpus. The text is the basis for many of the texts of the earliest Saiddhāntika exegete, Sadyojyotis, including his Āgamaśāmanya, Māntravārttika, Bhogakārika, Mokṣakārika, and Paramokṣanirāsakārika. The text is named after the Vedic sage Ruru who features as the teacher of this redaction of the scripture.

\textsuperscript{174} Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha introductory verses 2-3: tejarāśīṁ mahāprājīnaṁ ruruṁ munivaratamam | prasannamanaṁ saṁtāṁ śivajñānaikākāraṇam | | bhārgavāṅgirasātreyapaulastyāḥ samarīcayāḥ | papracchur vinayānamṛdṛṣayo hṛṣītanāḥ ‘The seers Bhārgava, Āṅgirasa, Ātreya, Paulastyā, together with Maṛcī, bent over in modesty, their faces filled with astonishment, quizzed that radiant and exceptionally wise Ruru, the foremost of excellent sages whose mind was graciously disposed, who was tranquil [and] a unique source of Śiva’s scriptural wisdom.’ It should be noted that Ruru was listed as one of the sagely interlocutors in Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.37-39, cited above.

\textsuperscript{175} Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha 3.3: kendovatārītaṁ hy etat tantrapatraṇaṁ vara | guravah katidhā tāntre tantrasaṅkhyā ca kā smṛtā ‘How did this scripture descend [into this world] through the knowers of the scripture, O best [of seers]. In this scripture, how many gurus [are transmitters]? What is the traditional enumeration of the scriptures?’

\textsuperscript{176} Rāma here is most likely not the son of Daśaratha of Rāmāyaṇa fame, but rather Paraśurāma who is often described as a descendant of Bhṛgu (Bhārgava). This makes sense of the account of revelation found in chapter ten where Ruru redacts the scripture into twelve-hundred verses after he fully comprehended it from Bhārgava’s compilation of the scripture into twelve-thousand verses. See Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha 10.104-105: kotyā nibaddhaṁ paramesaṁ saivam padaṁ mātrgyaṁ upetam | tad eva sarvaṁ kṛtvāṁ mahātmā bhṛgūttamo dvādaśabhiḥ sahasraṁ | | tad eva buddhāṁ nikhilāṁ hi bhārgavāt parāparaiṇānam anukrameṇa |
the teacher of Ruru himself.\textsuperscript{177} Interestingly, the \textit{Raurava} includes intertextual allusions to other accounts of scriptural transmission found in another Siddhānta āgama, the \textit{Śvāyambhuva}.\textsuperscript{178}

The necessity of this mediation of gods, the goddess, and sages, a story of progressive condensation of scriptural wisdom,\textsuperscript{179} is represented in the \textit{Raurava}, in consonance with the Purāṇas and the \textit{Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā}, as the limited capacities of human beings. Endowed with feeble intellects, human beings could never fathom the pure mantric revelation in its original form and thus require a discursive encapsulation of that truth in the form of a “scripture.”\textsuperscript{180}

\textit{sahasram ekaṃ dviśataṃ ca so ‘vadad rurur mahātma jagato hitāya.} Given that this figure represents the immediately preceding guru before Ruru in both accounts of scriptural transmission, [Paraśu]Rāma and Bhārgava are, in all probability, the same seer. It should be noted that Ruru himself is described as son of Bhṛgu (\textit{bhṛgunanda}) in \textit{Rauravasūtrasaṅggraha} 3.2, which admittedly complicates matters when it comes to clear identification of Bhārgava and Rāma.

\textit{Rauravasūtrasaṅggraha} 3.6-3.9: \textit{śivānalaviniśkrāntam adhūmāijotirāpiṇam | jagataḥ kāraṇaṁ devam ananteśaṁ paraṁ gurum | tenoktaṁ parameśānaśrikanṭhāya mahātmane | surāśurāṇaṁ gurunā devyai sarvam udāhytaṁ | deva ca prāha nandīsakandayor guhyam uttamam | nandīśād brahmaṇāvāptaṁ śakreṇa ca mahātmanā | tasmād avāptaṁ ūreṇa rīkṣena tataḥ punah | tasmād avāptaṁ āmeṇa rāmaṁ cāham adhītavān.} N.R. Bhatt, the editor of this text, opts for \textit{śakreṇa} in 3.8, but notes manuscript witnesses that give \textit{śukreṇa}, which I find to be the better reading. This is because the name is followed by a number of Vedic seers, all of whom are found listed in the \textit{Niśvāsatattvasaṁhitā}, uttarasūtra, 1.37-39; and in that list we also find Śukra.

\textit{Rauravasūtrasaṅggraha} 3.14ab: \textit{ye ca te guravāḥ prōktās tantre śvāyambhuve purā.}

\textit{Rauravasūtrasaṅggraha} 10.104-106 describes the contraction of scripture from ten million verses to twelve-hundred, the final redaction being Ruru’s teaching.

\textit{Rauravasūtrasaṅggraha} 3.27: \textit{na māṁśya vicāryā vā mantrāḥ svalpadhiyā naraiḥ | pramāṇam āgaṇaṁ kṛtvā śraddhātuvaṁ hitaśibhiḥ} ‘Human beings are not able to examine or inquire into the nature of mantras given their impoverished intellects. Taking scripture as an authority, [those mantras] should be taken to heart by those who desire to benefit [the world].’
The Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha (‘Svayambhū’s Redaction of Pithy Scriptural Teachings’), before enumerating\textsuperscript{181} the classical Saiddhāntika division of the Śaiva scriptural corpus into twenty-eight revealed texts, ten (Śivabhedas) and eighteen (Rudrabhedas), describes God as a deity of the letters (śabdarāṣi).\textsuperscript{182} This formulation of God as pure sound is consistent with the tantric conception of deity as mantra and the characterization of the transcendent aspect of deity found in both the Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā and Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha. This sonic nature of the deity encompasses all the syllables, the sixteen vowels (or ‘seed’ [bīja]) and thirty four consonants (or ‘womb’ [yoni]).\textsuperscript{183} The power of this supreme deity permeates the universe and His scriptural wisdom is the most subtle and efficacious when it comes to liberation.\textsuperscript{184} In light of the unique distinction afforded to Śaiva revelation, this supreme sonic deity, similar to a wish-fulfilling gem on earth, is described as the universal cause (kāraṇa) of

\textsuperscript{181} Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha 5.6-12. See Appendix III of GOODALL (1998) for a critically edited version of these verses.

\textsuperscript{182} svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha 5.1-3: athādāv abhavac chabdaḥ kāraṇād aksaraṃ tataḥ | kāraṇām mokṣadān brahma brahma brāhma brāhmavido viduh || tasmāt sarvaprāto devaḥ śabdārāṣir iti śrutaḥ | navaparvaṃśatārdhātmā yonibījātmakaḥ parah || akārādivisargāntaṃ bijaṃ tattvadaśāksaraṃ |

śeṣā yoniś catuṣṭrimśat avayāḥ hy aksarātmikā ’Now in the beginning there arose the word. From this [primordial] cause there was the [divine] syllable[s]. Those who know brahman understand that [primordial] cause as the absolute, brahman, which bestows liberation. Therefore, God, who gives forth everything, known [in this form] as the “mass of syllables,” has the nature of the fifty divisions [of the letters] characterized as both the supreme “womb” and “seed.” The “seed,” beginning with the letter ‘a’ and ending with ‘ḥ’, totals sixteen letters. The remaining members [of the syllabary], the “womb,” consists of thirty-four letters.’

\textsuperscript{183} See the immediately preceding footnote.

\textsuperscript{184} Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha 5.4: sā śaktir devadevasya tāyā vyāptam idam jaṭat | jñānaṃ śaivaṃ paraṃ sūkṣmaṃ yat tat tārakam uttaman ’That is the Śakti of the Lord of lords; this universe is pervaded by Her. That Śaiva scripture wisdom, which is supreme and subtle, is the best vehicle of liberation.’
speech and language. The Svāyambhuvasūtraśaṅgraha here follows the Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā in characterizing the supreme reality as a formless causal deity, which Saidhāntika scriptures often designate as the source of revelatory sound (nāda) that needs to be decoded and transcribed into scriptural teachings. The main teacher in the Svāyambhūva is the eponymous deity Svayaṃbhū or Brahmā who mediates the revelatory descent of scripture between the Rudra Nidhanēśa and a group of Vedic sages known as the Vālakhilyas.

In contrast with the Rauravasūtraśaṅgraham, which presents itself as the condensed

185 Svāyambhuvasūtraśaṅgraha 5.5: vedādībijānabhedena śivajñānavibhedataḥ | cintāmaṇir ivātrāsva sthitah sarvasya kāraṇam ‘This [God], existing like a wish-fulfilling gem in this [world] as the different types of knowledge found in [scriptures] like the Veda, [and] as the various types of the scriptural wisdom of Śiva, is the [divine] source of everything [or all scriptures].

186 Recall Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā, uttarasūtra, 1.23, which is cited above: adṛṣṭavigrāhe śante śive paramakārane | nādarāpaṃ vinīkrāntam śāstraṃ paramadurlabham. This understanding of supreme reality likely harkens back to the designation of Śiva as kāraṇam in Pāṇḍupata literature.

187 The identity of the teacher of the Svāyambhuvasūtraśaṅgraha as the Rudra Nidhanēśa or Nidhana matches the description of the transmission of this text, one of the Rudrabhedas, given in Kirāṇatantra 10.16c: nidhanasya svayambhūtaṃ.

188 Svāyambhuvasūtraśaṅgraha 1.1: śivaṃ praṇāmya paramaṃ nidhanēśam atah param | jñānādikṣe pravakṣyāmi te śṛṇudhvaṃ samāhītah ‘I will teach both knowledge and initiation having first bowed to supreme Śiva and Nidhanēśa. With great focus, [O disciples], listen to these two [topics].’ In his commentary Sadyojyotis clarifies the identities of the interlocutors, which is not supplied by the scripture itself. See Sadyojyotis’s śīka ad Svāyambhuvasūtraśaṅgraha 1.1: svagurum nidhanēśam praṇāmya ... evaṃ devagurunamaskriyāḥ pratijñāṇaṃ ca (kṛto) seavīyāṃ bālakhiyānāh mādāhāvasthāpya tadavabodhāya sakalatantrārthasaṃgrāhakāṃ guṇavrātraṃ pathati ‘First bowing to Nidhanēśa, his own guru ... after bowing to God and guru and stating the topic in this way, first causing his own disciples, the Vālakhilyas, to be established in a state of concentration in order to teach them, [Svayaṃbhû] recites the pithy teaching of his guru which is a summation of the meaning of all the tantras.’ On the identity of the Vālakhilyas, including references to them in the Vedas and Purāṇas, see Filliozat (1994), p. 123, footnote 6: “They are mythical beings, designated as rṣis, having the size of the thumb, shining like the sun and numbering 60,000. According to Taittirīyāranyakā (I.23.3) they were born from the hair of Prajāpati who was performing penance for the creation of people. According to Viṣṇupurāṇa they were brahmacārins born from the Prajāpati Kratu and his wife Santāti. See also Mahābhārata, ādi; Padmapurāṇa, sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa ad 47.” There are actually some inconsistencies in the interlocutors throughout the Svāyambhuvasūtraśaṅgraha, which require further examination.
teaching of the Vedic sage Ruru, the dialogical structure of the Svāyambhuvasūtrasangraha brings the reader one step closer to the original revelation. It does so by presenting pithy teachings as they are *received* by the Vedic sages, the final mediators to humanity of the scriptural wisdom of the Siddhānta tantras.

The Kīraṇatantra, together with the other extant Siddhānta scripture identifiable from the canonical list of twenty-eight, the Parākhya, shows evidence\(^{189}\) of being later than the Siddhānta scriptures treated above. One factor that corroborates a later dating is the dialectical prodding of the main interlocutor, Garuḍa, the legendary chief of birds, who—instead of simply accepting the statements of Lord Śiva as unquestioned dogma—interrogates “inconsistencies” in the Lord’s teaching.\(^{190}\) The revelatory setting of the Kīraṇa is the same peak as the Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā, the iconic Kailāsa, where the praise

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\(^{189}\) Goodall (1998), p. lxxiv.

\(^{190}\) Watson (2006), pp. 74–75: “Although there is little śāstric discussion in the Svāyambhuvasūtrasangraha, the Rauravasūtrasangraha, the Niśvāsa, the Pauskarapārmeśvara, the Sārdhatriśatikalottara or the Sarvajñānottara, when we move to the Kīrana, we find at least that the questioner, Garuḍa, points to what he perceives as inconsistencies in the sermon he is hearing from the Lord, prompting him to clarify. Then in the Purākhyas, the Mutanga and the Mṛgendra the dialectical dimension becomes more pronounced, and we find the questioners putting objections from the point of view of non-Śaiva traditions such as Buddhism, Śāṅkhya, Vedānta, Nyāya, Lokāyata and Mīmāṃsā. Garuḍa’s questions confine themselves to the details of the system, but the questioners in these three Tantras challenge fundamentals such as the existence of God and Self. The former challenge is not in fact completely absent in the Kīrana, Garuḍa had there asked Śiva how he could be known. One verse of Śiva’s response asserts that the universe, being gross and diverse, is an effect, and thus requires a cause. That the cause could be past actions is ruled out owing to them being insentient... But apart from that one verse, there is nothing by way of argument that would need to be addressed by those traditions that denied the existence of God. The rest is theology for the already committed: Śiva explains to Garuḍa his nature, his activities at the time of creation, his dispensing of grace, his three forms, and his mantra-body. In the Parākhyas, by contrast, the theology is supplemented by lengthy śāstric digressions.”
eighteen Rudras and taught them the Rudrabheda tantras totaling ten, were transmitted. Then

Śivas who were his sons, divided the unitary scriptural wisdom into that same.

In the tenth chapter of the *Kiraṇatantra* Garuḍa requests an explanation of the descent of tantras. Śiva commences his account by describing how the unitary scriptural wisdom first differentiated into twenty-eight Śiddhāntra scriptures, which were transmitted from Śiva to ten Śivas and eighteen Rudras that he specifically created as recipients and teachers of each tantra. This

191 On the identity of Śiva, the teacher of the Kiraṇa that Rāmakaṁṭha distinguishes as Śṛiṇkaṁṭha, see GOODALL (1998), pp. 163-164, footnote 10. Śṛiṇkaṁṭha’s prominence across narratives of scriptural descent in Śiddhāntra scriptures, Śiddhāntra, Mantrapiṇḍa, and Vidyāpiṇḍa, is notable. It will also become evident in the course of this chapter that Śṛiṇkaṁṭha’s position in the sequence of scriptural transmission is not fixed. This is likely due to the variability of cosmological models in these scriptures, which differ considerably in their enumeration of reality levels and arrangement of cosmic beings. On “discrepant lists of principles of the universe” in the early scriptures of the Śaiva Śiddhāntra, see GOODALL (1998), pp. li-lv. Śṛiṇkaṁṭha as an iconic figure in revelation in early Śaiva tantra is also conspicuous in a statement of Abhinavagupta, which associates him with the entire Mantramārga, in contrast to the Atimārga which is associated with Lakulīśa. See *Tantrāloka* 37.14cd-15: dvāṁ āptau tatra ca śrīmāchāriśṛiṇkaṁṭhalakuleśvarau || dvipravāham idam śāstraṁ samyaṁ niḥśreyasapradam | prācyasya tu yathābhūṭabhogadatvam api sthitam ‘In that Śaiva scriptural system there are two qualified teachers: the auspicious Śṛiṇkaṁṭha and Lakuleśvara. This scriptural tradition, containing these two streams, completely bestows the highest beatitude, but the prior one additionally grants supernatural enjoyments according to one’s desire.’

192 This introduction of the context of the scriptural dialogue begins the *Kiranatantra*, vv. 1.1-13.

193 *Kiraṇatantra* 10.1: kimarthanāṁ tāṇi vaktiṣaḥ kasmin kāle kiyanti vā | ke te keśaṁ braṇīya evaṁ sarvaṁ etad braṇihi me ‘For what purpose, at what time, and how many of them did the Lord teach? What was the identity of those who taught [them], and whom did they teach? Please explain this all to me.’

194 On the ten Śivabhedas, see *Kiranatantra* 10.3: sṛṣṭyanantaram eveśaḥ śivān sṛṣṭvā daśātmajān | jīnānam ekaṁ vibhajyāsu teṣāṁ tataṁkhyayāśvat ‘Immediately following creation, the Lord created ten Śivas who were his sons, divided the unitary scriptural wisdom into that same number [of tantras] and then taught [them]…’ On the eighteen Rudrabhedas see *Kiraṇatantra* 10.12-13ab evaṁ ete samākhyātāṁ śivabhedā daśādya te | daśāśṭasaṁkhyayā rudrān pūrvam utpādya buddhimān || śivas tatasamkhyayaiveha punas tāṁ bodhayet khaga ‘In this way the Śivabhedas, totaling ten, were transmitted. Then Śiva, endowed with intelligence, first produced the eighteen Rudras and taught them the [Rudrabheda tantras] totaling the same number, O Garuḍa.’

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description of the descent of scripture and the dialogical structure of the Kīraṇatātra introduces a model of revelation where Śiva creatively emanates diverse forms in tandem with the differentiation of the unified scriptural wisdom. There is a conspicuous absence in the Kīraṇa of the main transmitters of Saiddhāntika scripture to humanity, the Vedic sages. In fact, they are only briefly mentioned at the end of this account as associated with the vast canon of highly redacted supplementary scriptures (upabheda) based upon these officially recognized twenty-eight Siddhānta scriptures.¹⁹⁵

Garuḍa, curious to know the logic of this narrative of scriptural transmission, asks why the twenty-eight scriptures were further subdivided. The answer that Garuḍa himself suggests is that these divisions are based upon differences in the mentalities or human capacities of the recipients of a given scriptural form or redaction.¹⁹⁶ Although Śiva’s response undercuts the importance of divisions with a grand unified theory of Śaiva revelation,¹⁹⁷ the customization of scriptural wisdom to the mental capacities of various audiences confirms a fundamental proposition incipient in the logic of the descent of

¹⁹⁵ Kīraṇatātra 10.28cd-29ab: eṣu bhedeṣu yo bheda upabhedaḥ sa ucyate || atisāṃksiptavātīrṇa rṣidevaganātmakāḥ ‘The [further] division of that [original] division [of twenty-eight tantras] is known as the “supplementary” [scriptures]. That supplementary corpus has a vast amount of highly condensed texts and consists of [various text transmitted by] Vedic sages, gods, and [Śiva’s] entourage.’ I am grateful to Dominic GOODALL, whose suggestions helped improve this translation.

¹⁹⁶ Kīraṇatātra 10.29cd-10.30ab: kasmāt khyāto ‘tra bhedas ca bhedo ‘yam cītah bhedaḥ sa phalabhedaḥ. || puṃpravṛttaḥ ayaṁ bhedaḥ śrotṛgān tu vībhedaḥ.

¹⁹⁷ Kīraṇatātra 10.30cd-10.31ab: bhedo ‘yam upacāreṇa kalpitaḥ sa yatas tataḥ || phalabheda na kalpyo ‘tra jñānabhedaḥ prakalpyate ‘This division should be understood as [purely] metaphorical. Since that is the case, you should not imagine a division regarding the results [of these Tantras]. [All that is] propounded here is the division of [the unitary] scriptural wisdom.’
scripture. The source of scriptural wisdom is an extremely subtle and pre-discursive resonance (nāda),\(^{198}\) incomprehensible to a human intellect, which emerges from on high, well beyond the form of Śiva seated on Kailāsa. Only subsequently is this purely sonic revelation versified into a massive scripture propounded by this form of Śiva to either the Goddess, a Rudra, one of his chief attendants (i.e. Nandi or another Gaṇeśvara), or his regents (i.e. the Vidyeśa Ananta). The self-differentiation of the pure sound progressively contracts into more manageable abridgements of tantric knowledge and practice. Thus, the further away from the source of revelation an auditor stands, the weaker his or her capacity for comprehension, which in turn demands a more contracted and simplified version of the original revelation.\(^{199}\) Following this logic, the early sūtras of the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā that are dialogically driven by Śiva’s answers to the Goddess’s inquiries are more intimate with the source of revelation, but Nandi, who received that transmission and initiation from the Goddess and taught it to the Vedic sages in the Niśvāsamukha, represents a more ontologically distant expression of revelation. The same would apply to Ruru’s compilation

\(^{198}\) This original subtle revelatory sound (nāda), in addition to being featured in the revelation narratives of the Niśvāsatattvasamhitā and other Siddhānta scriptural sources, is treated in chapter eleven of the Kiranatamtra.

\(^{199}\) This fact does not necessarily decrease the fundamental value and eminence of the extant scriptures presented as redactions of an original mass of scriptural wisdom. See BRUNNER (1992), p. 5: “These texts therefore have Śiva as their author; and though their content has suffered progressive simplification during the handing down process, to allow for the decreasing faculties of the recipients, it is assumed that they are composed of the very words of Śiva and nothing else.” With this in mind, I will continue to interrogate the underlying logic of this model of revelation, reflecting on the significance of the various choices of main interlocutors, especially as a way of tracking developments in the Bhairava, Yāmala, and Śakti tantras in this chapter, and the Kaula model of revelation in chapter three.
and teaching of the *Rauravasūtrasaṁgraha* to Vedic sages, which is at an even greater remove from the celebrated dialogue of Śiva and the Goddess.

Two more Siddhānta scriptures, likely among the latest\(^{200}\) of the early extant revealed sources of this tradition (in its pre-twelfth century stage), provide comparatively elaborate frame-stories: the *Mrgendranātra* and the *Mataṅgapārameśvara*. The *Mrgendra* begins in the Himalayan setting of Nārāyaṇa hermitage (*āśrama*), a sacred residence known for ascetic discipline in the Purāṇas, where a group of Vedic seers led by Bharadvāja are performing austerities.\(^{201}\) Indra, disguised as an ascetic, challenges the sages’ devotions to the deity Rudra, asking why they ignore the scriptural injunctions to observe Vedic sacrifices.\(^{202}\) When the sages cite the Vedic pedigree of devotional worship of Rudra,\(^{203}\) Indra (disguised as an ascetic) presents a standard *Mīmāṁsā* critique, reminiscent of Kumārila’s position explored above, which reduces God to

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200 Goodall (1998), p. lviii: “Both the Mrgendra and the Mataṅga are polished works of śāstra in comparison with all other demonstrably early Siddhāntas. Their sophistication and the fact that the organisation of their subject matter shows that they were conceived in four sections, each dealing with one of the four pādās of jīvāṇa, kriyā, yoga and caryā, suggest that they are later compositions than the other early works listed above.”

201 *Mrgendranātra* 1.1.2: nārāyaṇaśrame puṇyey bharadvājādayo dvijaḥ | tepuḥ śivaṁ pratiṣṭhāpya tadekāhitamānasāḥ ‘In the hermitage of Nārāyaṇa, the twice-born led by Bharadvāja, upon installing Śiva, their minds set upon the [Lord] alone, performed their austerities.’

202 *Mrgendranātra* 1.1.3-1.1.4: atha tān bhāvitān matvā kendācit tridaśāḥhipaḥ | tadaśramapadām bheje svayaṁ tāpaśavesabhr | sa taiḥ samājītaḥ prṛṣṭvā tāṁś ca sarvān anāmaṇām | provīca codanādharmāḥ kimartham nānuvartyate ‘Now one time Indra, thinking about their good disposition, himself assuming the garb of an ascetic, went to their hermitage. Worshiped by them, having confirmed they were all in good health, [Indra in disguise] said: what is the reason that the dharma that is commanded [in the Vedas] is not practiced [here]?’

203 *Mrgendranātra* 1.1.5-1.1.6: ta ācur nnav āyaṁ dharmas āharṇāvihīto mune | devatāhrāñcā阮ṣa tapasābhīṣṭasiddhayā | vedē ‘stī samhītā raudrī vācyā rudraś ca devata’ | sāṃniśyakāraṇe ‘py asmin vihitāḥ kālpico viḍhip ‘They replied: O sage, surely this dharma is prescribed through Vedic injunction. It is a means of propitiating God in order to realize the desired goal through [this] austerity. There is a scripture in the Veda that is referred to as pertaining to Rudra and Rudra is the deity [there]. And the appropriate ritual procedure is performed with respect to this [Rudra] who is made present [by it].’
nothing more than a name (serving as a “eulogy” [arthavāda] that functions only to motivate the performance of Vedic rituals). Indra proceeds to question the very existence of the referent of that “deity-name,” mainly through an epistemological argument about the lack of any source of knowledge that could warrant the conclusion that God exists. The Saidhāntika commentator of this text, the Kashmirian Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa, confirms this connection with the Mīmāṃsā argument against the existence of God by citing the Ślokavārttika of Kumārila to elucidate the force of Indra’s critique of the sages.

At this point in the debate, the Mrgendra gives us a lovely poetic image of the sages response:

Thus assailed by this tide of waters of this godless speech by the ocean-like Indra, that mountain of the (sages’) mind did not waver because of the weightiness of its (material / intellectual) substance.

From this point forward, the Vedic sages provide a comprehensive response to

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204 *Mrgendratantra* 1.1.7-1.1.9: ity ukte ’pi paraṃ bhāvanā jījñāsuḥ praḥasan prabhuḥ | tān āha mithyā jñānam vah śabdamātraṃ hi devatā || śabdantaravve yugapadbhinmadeśeṣu yaṣṭṣu | na sā prayāti sāṃnidhyāṃ mūrtatvād asmadādīvat || na ca tāsādhakaṁ kiṃcit pramaṇaṁ bhāty abādhitam | vākyam tad anyahāśiddham lokavādāḥ kva sādhāvah ‘When addressed in that way, Lord [Indra], testing them regarding the supreme state, said to them while laughing, “your knowledge is false for the God [you describe] is nothing more than a word. If [the deity] were different than a word [i.e., if it were a bodily form], given that the worshippers [of that deity] are in different places simultaneously, that [deity] cannot be present [in each of them] because of having a form like us. And there is no valid means of knowledge that proves him in a way that would not be subject to contradiction. That statement [of the scriptures] can be accounted for in other ways. How can these worldly doctrines [about Rudra that you propound] be correct?

205 *Mrgendratantra* 1.1.10: ity anitāvavavārivelānunno ’bdhīneva saḥ | śakreṇa na cacālaṁśāṁ dhiśailaḥ sāragauravāt.

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each component of Indra’s critique, utilizing technical tools of justification from the canons of classical Indian epistemology (Nyāya) to do so. Indeed, the highly dialectical nature of this tantra combined with its highly polished Sanskrit, distinguish it from earlier Siddhānta scriptures treated thus far. Impressed by the sages thorough refutation of his deconstructive challenge, and their enthusiasm in praising the Lord, Indra, disposing his guise as an ascetic, decides to reveal his true form, radiant as “the sun at daybreak.” He immediately offers them a boon. Bharadvāja, electing himself to be the sages’ spokesperson, asks to learn the scriptural knowledge of Śiva, and specifically how, and for what purpose, those teachings first entered the world.

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207 Mrgendratantra 1.1.11: na jātu devatāmūrtir asmadādiśarīrvavat | viśiṣṭaiśvaryasampannā sāto naitan nidarsānam ‘By no means does the embodiment of our Lord, that is endowed with particular sovereignty, possess a body like us. For this reason, this is not a (proper) logical illustration [to refute the existence of the Lord].’ The counter-position of the sages to the claim that God is only a word also worth citing: Mrgendratantra 1.1.12-1.1.13: athāstv evaṁ ghaṭe nyāyaḥ śabdavād āndraśabdavat | nādattē ghaṭaśabdō ‘mbhaś candraśabdō na rājate | | athānyavāṣaṁ vākyam astu śakrādivācakam | karmarūpādiśabdānāṁ sārthakaṁvaṁ kathāṁ bhavet ‘Let this maxim of yours [Indra is nothing but the word] also apply to a pot, because of the fact that a [pot] is a word, like the word Indra. [This is wrong because] the word “pot” does not hold water and the word “moon” does not shine. Now if a Vedic statement expressing “Indra” had another objective, it could be [an artha, i.e. nothing but a eulogy that motivates the sacrificer]. [But then] how do words such as “ritual action and form etc.” become meaningful [i.e., how do they translate into the enactment of Vedic injunctions]?

208 Watson (2006), p. 75: “In the Parākhyā, the Mātaṅga and the Mrgendra the dialectical dimension becomes more pronounced, and we find the questioners putting objections from the point of view of non-Śaiva traditions such as Buddhism, Śāṅkhya, Vedānta, Nyāya, Lokāyata and Mīmāṁsā.”

209 Mrgendratantra 1.1.17-1.1.18: iti vādānuṣṭaṅgaṇaḥ haraśaṁsāpraḥarṣitān | sāṣṛuṣadgadavācas tān vikṣyā prito ‘bhavadd hariḥ | | svān rūpaṁ darsāyaṁśa vajrī devaḥ śatakratuḥ | taruṇādityasamkāśanāṁ stūyaṁnaṁ marudgaṇaḥ ‘Seeing those [sages] enrapured by praising Śiva by closely adhering to their thesis, tears in their eyes and voices stammering, Indra became pleased. That God Indra, wielder of the thunderbolt, revealed his true form, being praised by the host of the gods, shining like a new sun.’

210 Mrgendratantra 1.1.22: kathāṁ mahēśvarād etad āgataṁ jñānam uttamaṁ | kiṁ ca cetasi saṁstāhyāṁ nirmame bhagavāṁ idam ‘How did this supreme scriptural wisdom emerge from
proceeds to map out the cosmic hierarchy of tantric agents that bridges the highest reality of scriptural emission and divinity to Lord Śiva in the form of the husband of Umā (Umāpati), the subject of numerous Purānic tales (such as the incineration of Kāmadeva).

The original scriptural revelation is an invisible mass of knowledge or pure revelatory awareness that supreme Śiva “made visible” as five streams. He then manifested various agents at the uppermost reality levels of the Śaiva cosmology who eventually transmitted it to the Purāṇa-styled Śiva, who taught the tantra to Indra in eleven thousand verses. The fact that Indra, arguably the most important deity of the early Vedic pantheon, is chosen as the teacher of this scripture is of rhetorical interest in itself. Furthermore, Indra’s Mīmāṃsaka challenge to the Purānic Vedic sages, which is refuted according to the theological tenets of their tradition, then introduces the more esoteric tradition of tantric Śaiva revelation. Thus this narrative tracks the move from the original Vedic religion (marked by Indra’s presence), to its early ritualistic interpreters (Mīmāṃsā), to the grand theistic supplement of the Purānic devotions to Śiva-

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Maheśvara? Did the Lord, after establishing it in his heart, compose this [scriptural wisdom]?’

211 Mṛgendratantra 1.1.23: srṣṭikāle maheśānāḥ puruṣārthaprasiddhaye | vidhatte vimalaḥ jñānaṃ pañcasroto 'bhilakṣitam ‘At the moment of creation, Maheśvara made that which was pure knowledge [in the form of awareness] visible as five streams [of scriptures] for the realization of the aims of human life.

212 Mṛgendratantra 1.1.27-1.1.28: śivodgīrṇam idaṃ jñānaṃ mantramantreśvareśvaraiḥ | kāmadatvāt kāmiketi pragītaṃ bahuvistaram || tehhyo 'vagatya drgyotirjvālālādhasmaradrumaḥ | dadāv uṇāpatir mahyaṃ sahasrār bhavasammitaiḥ ‘This scriptural wisdom that issued forth from Śiva was taught as vastly manifold by Īśvaras (Mantramāheśvaras), Mantras, and Mantrēśas; [that was taught] as the Kāmika because it grants their desires. After learning it from them, Umāpati whose fiery [third] eye engulfed Kāmadeva like a tree with its flames, imparted [that scriptural wisdom] to me [in a contracted form] as eleven thousand [verses].’
Rudra (the sages’ worship and reverence of Rudra), finally culminating with characters from these lower scriptural echelons embracing the highest scriptural source descended from the pinnacle of the universe, the Śaiva Tantra.

The Mataṅgapārameśvara also begins with an elaborate introductory frame-story. Like the Mrgendra it displays an exceptional degree of narrative development adorned with charming poetic flourishes, but it also provides suggestive elaborations on the identity of the main interlocutor, the sage Mataṅga. Mataṅga, a marginal figure in the Purāṇas and an enigmatic ascetic of questionable family origins featured briefly in both Indian epics, the Mahābhārata213 and Rāmāyaṇa,214 becomes the focal figure of the revelation frame-narrative and the eponymous sagely mediator of this scripture. We met him briefly in the Niśvāsamukha as the sage who reported to Rṣīka the great marvel of the Vedic sages departing from Naimiṣa forest for Devadāruvana, where both Brahmā and Viṣṇu had received initiation into a new revelatory tradition.

213 For the story of Mataṅga in the great epic, see Mahābhārata 13.28.1-13.30.16. The tale is narrated by Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira in response to Yudhiṣṭhira’s question about the possibility of transforming one’s status from a lower caste into a Brahmin. Bhīṣma replies with the story of Mataṅga. While fetching sacrificial materials for his father, Mataṅga came to know from a female donkey that he was born of a female Brahmin who, in the heat of the moment, copulated with a Śūdra (vrṣala) barber (Mahābhārata 13.28.16). As a result, the female donkey proclaims him a Caṇḍāla. This initiates Mataṅga’s superhuman quest to achieve the status of a Brahmin through ascetic practice. After thousands of years of asceticism and multiple boons on the part of Indra (with the exception of transforming Mataṅga into a Brahmin, which Indra reiterates, again and again, is impossible), Mataṅga finally settles for the power to roam freely, assume any form, take flight, become the object of worship of Brahmins and Kṣātriyas, and enjoy deathless fame (Mahābhārata 13.30.13).

214 The mention of Mataṅga in the Rāmāyaṇa is brief. In the Āraṇyakāṇḍa Mataṅga is presented as the venerable sage and guru of a group of seers whom Śabarī served. See Rāmāyaṇa 3.69.16-3.69.19. Rāma and Lākṣmaṇa are sent by Kabandha to the “grove of Mataṅga” (mataṅgavana) by the river Pampā to meet Śabarī en route to Rṣyamūka mountain where Śugrīva is in residence.
At the outset of the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* Mataṅga is described as dwelling on the auspicious mountain Himavat, where he is ardently meditating upon Śiva.\(^{215}\) His contemplative composure is disturbed by the melodious sound of the wind striking a bamboo reed with apertures naturally formed by bees living inside it. This charming sound captivates Mataṅga’s mind. Upon recovering from his amazement, Mataṅga grabs a shapely reed of bamboo, fashions it into a flute, and proceeds to play music spanning the seven notes of the Indian classical scale as an offering to Lord Śiva.\(^{216}\) Śiva manifests his own form with his wife Pārvatī before the very eyes of sage Mataṅga.\(^{217}\) Overcome with emotion,\(^{218}\)

\(^{215}\) *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.1-1.2 & 1.4-1.5: himavaty acale ramye siddhacāraṇaśevite | nāḍāścaryagunopetan śikharaṃ cātu nirmalam | śiddhinām udhavo yatra yatra nāpy āpamṛtyutvah | yatānyonyyaviruddhānāṃ prṛtir bhavati tatkšaṇāt | yatra saṁnihito nityaṁ bhagavān paramēsvarah | tatrāsā muniśārdulās tapasotkṛṣṭaṃūrītaṃ | jñānāgniḍaḍhadakaluṣo vṛttāmbhaḥksālitaṃvān | śivādhyānaikacittātmā samādhāv āśhītaḥ sudhīḥ ‘On the charming mountain Himavat, which is frequented by Siddhas and Cāraṇas, there is a lovely peak that is pure, boasting countless amazing qualities. In that place where there is the manifestation of siddhis, where no accidental deaths occur, where there is instant affection between [creatures] that were [previously] hostile to each other, where blessed Paramēsvara is forever present, there is a tiger among sages [Mataṅga] with a form that is excellent thanks to austerity. All his impurity incinerated by the fire of knowledge, his nature cleansed by the pure water of virtuous conduct, his mind one-pointedly focused upon the visualization of Śiva, that wise man was firmly established in meditative absorption.’

\(^{216}\) *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.6-1.10: yāvan mārutasamparkān mumoca madhuraṃ svaram | kīcakaḥ śaṭpaddeśavaisvareṇa śaṇāh śaṇāh | tāvan muner mataṅgasya sahasā śuṣhītaṃ manah | bhūyo bhūyo nīnādena śrotramāvacuṣṇaṃ | karinyāryamātāngaḥ sa vaśikṛtya niyate | vanāt parāṁnuhhas tadvac cīttaṃ lakṣyāc chīvātmaṅkāt | tataḥ cāsu muniḥ śrīmān jñātvā bhraṣṭaṃ manah śicāt | āḍāya tarasā veṇuṇaḥ susamam rjum avraṃ | śakṣaṭvatvacaṃ suniṣṭaṃ kṛtvā chidrair alanikṛtam | tatoṣṇādityavānī leśād dhvāṇiḥ saptasvarāṇvītām ‘Due to contact with the wind, a bamboo reed gently intoned a delicate note, by virtue of clefts [in the bamboo formed] by the bees dwelling [therein]. As a result of that the mind of the sage Mataṅga was held captive by that repeating sound which has the beauty of nectar for the ear. Just as a forest elephant (*mataṅga*) drawn towards a female elephant, being overpowered, turns away from the forest, so [Mataṅga’s] mind [became distracted] from the goal that is Śiva. And then this illustrious sage, upon recognizing that his mind was slipping away from Śiva, immediately grabbed a bamboo reed that was well proportioned, straight, and without blemish. Adorning the smooth surface of that perfect [reed] with holes, he gently produced a sound that encompassed the seven notes of the scale.’

\(^{217}\) *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.12: tataḥ sa bhagavān nāthaḥ pārvatyaḥ sahito haraḥ |
Mataṅga offers a paean\textsuperscript{219} to the Lord and is favored with the boon of his choice. He asks for scriptural wisdom.\textsuperscript{220} Śiva narrates to Mataṅga how he received the revelation he is about to impart as one hundred thousand verses from Ananta who received it from Sadāśiva as ten million verses.\textsuperscript{221} Here, as we have observed before, Lord Śiva appears as the husband of Pārvatī, sometimes identified with Śrīkanṭha in tantric revelatory narratives. In this text he is ranked at a cosmic plane below not only Sadāśiva, the central deity of the Siddhānta, but also Ananta. The ensuing exchange between Mataṅga and Śiva (or Paramēśvara) organizes the text, which is named after their divine conversation (Mataṅgapārameśvara).

For many reasons the scriptures of the Śaiva Siddhānta provide a critical transition from Veda-based modes of revelation to those found in the other major svām vapur darśayāmāsa mataṅgāya tapasvine ‘On account of that [performance], the blessed Lord Hara, accompanied by Pārvatī, revealed his own form to the ascetic Mataṅga.’

\textsuperscript{218} Mataṅgapārameśvara 1.14: tadbhaktimanyor āveśān nayanāmalavārīnā | pādau prakṣālīya tam ataḥ stotum ārabdavān muniḥ ‘On account of being possessed by intense feelings of devotion to Him, bathing [the Lord’s] feet with the pure tears in his eyes, the sage began to sing his praises.’

\textsuperscript{219} Mataṅgapārameśvara 1.15-1.21ab.

\textsuperscript{220} Mataṅgapārameśvara 1.26: jñānam ajñānahaṁ tāraṁ sukhabodhyam anākulaṁ | vipulārtham asamādhgāmaṁ samāstoktya brāvīhi me ‘Teach me, with certainty and concise expression, that scriptural wisdom that destroys ignorance, which is salvific, easy to comprehend and not subject to doubt, and whose meaning is vast.’ This translation benefits from consulting with Dominic GOODALL.

\textsuperscript{221} Mataṅgapārameśvara 1.32-1.33ab: anuṣṭupchandasā pārvan nibaddhaṁ koṭiṣaṁkhyayā | sadāśivena devena tato ‘nantena dhīmatā | bhāṣitaṁ lakṣāmātreṇa tad evāhaṁ tavādhumā | upasaṃhṛtya samākṣepāṁ vāksye vai pārameśvaram | sahasrānāṁ trayeṇātha pañciṣaṁkhiś ca śataiḥ param ‘Previously Sadāśiva composed [this scripture] in the anuṣṭup meter, totaling ten million verses. After that it was taught by the wise deity Ananta as a mere one hundred thousand [verses]. Now, I will concisely teach that (Mataṅga)pārameśvara, having redacted it into three thousand and five hundred [verses].’
streams of the early Śaiva tantras about to be considered. The Siddhānta scriptural corpus demonstrates the greatest proximity with the ways in which revelation was represented in the Purāṇas: God or Śiva is presented as the scriptural author, the first versified manifestation of revelation is colossal in size and must be successively scaled down in subsequent phases of scriptural transmission, and it is the Vedic seers who act as a bridge between that revelatory transmission and humanity. Indeed, their dialogues in some instances form the interlocutional structure of the text.

These convergences between revelation in the Purāṇas and the Siddhānta scriptures have been noted along with significant divergences: the early Siddhānta scriptures all display a scriptural identity distinct from and superior to the Vedic canon. This superiority is established through various conceits and textual strategies. A few instances are worth reiterating. The Niśvāsamukha frame-story of the conversion of Brahmā and Viṣṇu to initiatory Śaivism, and in their wake, the Vedic seers, unequivocally signals the ascendancy of initiatory Śaivism or the Mantramārga. This assertion of superiority was also highlighted in the model of the five-fold streams which encompassed lay Śaivism, the Vedic religion, Yoga and Sāṅkhya, as well as the Pāśupata ascetic traditions in a grand hierarchical schema, with Sadāśiva granting authority to all lower streams as their ultimate source. The Siddhānta tantras also make a radical departure from the Purāṇas in their theorization of the nature of the deity as a formless cause and their identification of it specifically with sound. Śiva as divine source is identified with pure mantric resonance that effectively demotes the Purāṇic form of Śiva, accompanied by his consort and retinue, to a subservient position as a
lower “form” of divinity. In the expanded cosmic architecture of the Śaiva Tantras we even occasionally find Supreme Śiva’s regents of cosmic emanation and maintenance, the Vidyēśas, most notably Ananta, stationed above the husband of Umā (Umāpati) seated on Kailāsa. This vertically augmented cosmology is yet another bid to effectively transcend the ultimate form of God in the Purāṇas. Finally, the Śaiva Tantras emphasize the paramountcy of Śaiva initiation, which gives votaries access to a more restricted domain of esoteric teaching and practice, delineating a more select audience, as well as an exclusive soteriological program represented as uniquely efficacious.

In early Siddhānta revelation narratives and interlocutional structures, the Vedic rṣis serve as emblematic intermediaries for a transition to a new revelatory tradition that supersedes but nonetheless builds on the Vedic canon, broadly construed. In the Purāṇas the Vedic seers not only act as intermediaries between revelatory deities and Vyāsa and his disciples, they also serve as questioners at the final stage of revelation, and it is their burgeoning interest and curiosity that drives the narration of new stories, teachings, etc. Thus, their presence in the final stage of revelation has a powerful rhetorical purpose directly connected to the Purāṇas dynamic and ever-expanding character. It makes sense that the compilers and redactors of the Siddhānta tantras and the revelation narratives of its earliest scriptural corpus (Niśvāsa) would choose to include the Vedic sages as key mediators of revelation. Their association with new curiosities and ever expanding scriptural teachings make them ideal archetypal figures for authorizing a new stratum or stream of revelation, the Mantramārga, that was not composed “under the sign of the Veda.” The Vedic sages become
authoritative witnesses to the preeminence of tantric Śaivism. The Siddhānta’s conscious adaptation of elements of the Purāṇa extends to Brahmā and Viṣṇu, who have become initiates in the Niśvāsamukha, and Indra, the premier scriptural teacher of this higher Śaiva revelatory knowledge in the Mrgendratantra.

Interestingly, with a notable exception,222 the Vedic sages do not figure in non-Saiddhāntika Śaiva tantra revelation narratives. How are we to account for this? A prominent factor is that the Siddhānta represents the most orthodox and Vedic-congruent tradition found in early Śaiva tantric literature. Thus the Vedic sages’ adoption of this new tradition rhetorically constructs a strategic transition. This transition registers the Siddhānta’s considerable degree of continuity with the broader Vedic-based theistic traditions contained in the Purāṇas when compared with the other streams of Tantric Śaivism. In this sense, the Siddhānta tantras have the greatest “genetic” link to the conception of revelation in the Purāṇas even if they self-consciously distinguish themselves as an independent and ultimately superordinate revelatory tradition.

Some interesting patterns, thematic variations, and transitions are identifiable in this brief survey of revelation in the Siddhānta scriptures. In the sūtras of the Niśvāsatattoasamhitā, with the exception of the section on the “descent of the tantras,” the questions and teachings of Vedic sages do not structure the scripture. Instead, the scripture is mostly structured by the dialogue between Śiva and his divine consort, the Goddess. The Niśvāsamukha flashes back and forth between its frame-narrative of the sages questioning Nandi and the

222 Namely, the Mālinīvijayottaratantra, whose revelatory structure will be examined below.
original exchange between Śiva and the Goddess that Nandi is recollecting.

Excluding the early Niśvāsa corpus, the Kālottara recensions, and the Kiraṇatantra, many Siddhānta scriptures feature Vedic seers in the primary dialogical structure.\textsuperscript{223}

The Kiraṇatantra introduces a significant shift in the dialectical nature of the Siddhānta scriptures from a teaching that is received as unquestioned authority to one that is open to the scrutiny of the interlocutor, Garuḍa. In the Mrgendratantra and Mataṅgapārameśvara the Vedic sages take this polemicism to a new plateau; suddenly schooled in the postulates of Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, Buddhism, and Nyāya, they pose outright objections to the authoritative teachings of Śiva from the standpoint of these philosophical and religious traditions.\textsuperscript{224} The adoption of scholastic modes of discourse in the latest strata of early Siddhānta scriptures allows these revelatory traditions to begin to validate their theological axioms to a broader audience. But it also inadvertently introduces a significant shift in the status and identity of the interlocutors: the Vedic seers. No longer simply passive recipients of scriptural knowledge, they now play a more dynamic role as instruments of theological justification, and the latter function lends greater cogency and explanatory power to the core tenets and principles of the system. From faithful propounders of a timeless Vedic truth

\textsuperscript{223} In addition to the Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha, Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha (according to the ṭīkā of Sadyojyotis), Mrgendratantra, and the Mataṅgapārameśvaratrantra, a Vedic sage is also present in the dialogical structure of the Parākhya- or Saurabhēya-tantra, which was not considered above. In that scripture the interlocutors are Prakāśa (the sun) and Pratoda, whom Sanderson identifies as the famous Vedic sage, Vasiṣṭha. For further analysis of this identification, see GOODALL (2004), pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

\textsuperscript{224} WATSON (2006), pp. 74-75.
to pivotal interlocutors of Purānic scriptural dialogues, in the Siddhānta scriptures the curiosities of the Vedic seers lead them not only to become initiated into new esoteric teachings, but also to interrogate those teachings with tools and theological propositions garnered from the study of Buddhist philosophy, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, and Indian logic.

Another noticeable shift in the structure of revelation in the early Saiddhāntika scriptural canon is the complexification of frame narratives. In the Matangapārameśvara, Matanga’s character as scriptural interlocutor is highlighted in an unprecedented way, no longer as yet another relatively anonymous “Vedic seer,” but more an intriguing individual character. Furthermore, his depiction as a musician-devotee suggests a connection with another reference to Matanga as the legendary author of one of the earliest treatises on music theory, the Brhaddeśī, which is one of a few references that corroborate his affiliation with a musical vocation.225 In this later Siddhānta tantra, then, although we have a sage of Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata notoriety who also makes rare appearances in the Purāṇas, the compilers of the Matangapāremeśvara choose to accentuate his

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225 This connection is noted in Filliozat (1994), p. xv: “This account [in the Matangapārameśvara] has to be compared with another tradition about a sage also called Matanga, who is the promulgator of the science of music and theater and who is especially praised for his talent in playing the flute. An important work on music, the Brhaddeśī, is ascribed to him. It is an ancient work probably composed a short time after Nāṭyaśāstra. This tradition is also preserved in old Tamil literature. The Cilappatikāram describes the city of Pukkār during the festivities in honour of Indra. It evokes the artists displaying their talent and among them “kannulār” (5.184). In the list of artists we expect mention of dancers. The word kannul means ‘dance’, and the word for ‘dancers’ is kannular (5.49). The commentator Atiyārkkunallār (12th-13th century) interprets kannul-ālar as a designation of the musician Matanga: kannulālar—matankar; āvār perumpānar; kulalarum enpa,” i.e. “kannulālar means Matanga who is told to be a great panegyrist and a flute-player... The Tamil commentary and the musicological treatise imply a historical figure. It is quite clear that the same personality is dealt with in both sources and it shows that a myth can correspond to a historical reality.”
This greater interest in the character of Mataṅga is a departure from the Vedic sages’ depiction in other Siddhānta revelation narratives where distinguishing features of their identity (beyond stock virtues briefly enumerated) are never shown to be consequential to the process of revelation. This is clear from the total absence of descriptive analysis of who they are and why they, and not other sages, are present.

§ 2.5 MANTRAPĪTHA

The next major threshold of the Śaiva Tantras to review is the Mantrapītha or Bhairava tantras. The Mantrapītha was elevated by subsequent traditions as a scriptural corpus above and beyond the twenty-eight canonical Siddhānta scriptures. It is sometimes catalogued as a canon of sixty-four revealed texts, although this classification is likely more formulaic than empirical.²²⁷ Of the sixty-four hypothetical Bhairava tantras only one early witness of this class of scriptures is currently extant, the Svachchandabhairavatantra (‘Scripture of the Autonomous Bhairava’). It is listed as the premier exemplar in various scriptural

²²⁶ One possible reason for the choice of Mataṅga in particular is the ambiguity of his social status, and thus making him the focus of an extensive narrative may constitute an implicit statement about the fact that Śaiva initiation is open, with certain stipulations in the Śaiva Siddhānta, to the members of all castes.

²²⁷ Abhinavagupta registers a basic difference between the ten Śivabhedas and eighteen Rudrabhedas of the Siddhānta in contrast to the sixty-four Bhairava tantras. He also sees the Trika as the essence of the latter, and the Mālinīvijayottaratantra as the quintessence of the Trika. See Tantrāloka 1.18: daśāṭādāśavasvaṣṭabhināṇaḥ yacchāsanain vībhoḥ | tatsārami trikaśāstrān hi tātsārami mālinīmatam ‘The teachings of the Lord are divided into the ten, eighteen, and sixty-four [tantras]; the essence of those is the Trika scriptures, and the essence of them is the Mālinīvijaya.’ Cf. Tantrāloka 37.17. See also ARRĀJ (1988), p. 6: “the number sixty-four associated with the non-dualistic scriptures revealed by Bhairavaḥ, which is then divided into eight subgroups, appears to be a fāctitious and retrospective construction. It may have been based in part on traditional numeric associations, such as the eight bhairavāḥ, expanded by correlation with the sixty-four yoginyaḥ associated with Bhairavaḥ.”
inventories of the “Right Stream” (dakṣinārasrotas) of Śaiva tantras or the independent collection (piṭha) of scriptures dedicated to masculine mantras and mantra-deities (Mantrapiṭha). This category of Śaiva tantras came to be further distinguished from another major phase of the tantric corpus, discussed below, in which female tantric deities identified with feminine mantric formulas (Vidyāpiṭha) took center stage.

The Bhairava tantras, as can be determined from the Svacchandabhairava, present a religious world of tantric imagery, ritual praxis, and religious symbolism that represents itself as affiliated with, but authoritatively supplanting, the scriptures of the Śaiva Siddhānta. The central deity of this

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228 In the framework of three streams, an archaic model found in the Brahmayāmala-tantra and elucidated in its thirty-ninth chapter, eight Bhairava tantras are listed beginning with the Svacchandabhairava as belonging to the “right” stream (dakṣinārasrotas), and the scriptures of the Vidyāpiṭha and the Yāmala tantras are described as also emerging from this stream. See Brahmayāmala-tantra 39.32-36. Part of this passage is cited in SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 385-386, footnote 511. In this same footnote, SANDERSON notes that the Svacchandabhairava is also prominently featured as the first scripture in two other lists, one found in a Nepalese manuscript of the Kālottara that enumerates thirty two Dakṣiṇa Tantras and a list of sixty-four Bhairava tantras given in the Śrīkaṇṭhī, which is cited in the Tantrālokaviveka of Jayaratha.

229 For a definition of piṭha as “collection” (samūha), see Tantrāloka 37.18c: samūhah piṭham etac ca. Tantrāloka 37.18-19ab lists the four collections, the Mantra-, Vidyā-, Mudrā-, and Maṇḍalapiṭhas. Tantrāloka 37.19cd-37.24ab describes each piṭha and goes on to the rank them. This traditional categorization, briefly mentioned in the Svacchandabhairava itself (1.5), is elaborated by Kṣemarāja with the following two verses from the Saravoirītantra: mudrā maṇḍalapiṭhaṃ tu mantrapiṭhaṃ tathaiva ca | vidyāpiṭhaṃ tathaiva ca t Tuspiṭha tu samhita || svacchandabhairavaś caṇḍaḥ krodha unmatabhairavaḥ | granthāntaraṇa catoṣe maṇtrapiṭhaṃ varānane ‘A scriptural compilation has four “seats” (piṭha), (the seats of) Mūdras (ritual gestures), Maṇḍalas (deity-enthroning diagrams), Mantras, and Vidyās. Four other texts comprise the seat of Mantras, O beautiful-faced one: the Svacchandabhairava, the Caṇḍalabhairava, the Krodha[bhairava], and the Unmattabhairava.’ There is some ambiguity in this citation and in the general the use of piṭha as both a section of a single scriptural compendium with individual sections focused on each of these four topics, or an independent division of scriptures, i.e. the Mantrapiṭha, which includes a certain collection of texts such as the Svacchandabhairava that are distinguished by their focus on male mantra-deities. The tradition seems to generally go with the latter meaning, which we will also follow in classifying Bhairava tantras (Mantrapiṭha) in distinction to Sakti tantras (Vidyāpiṭha). The latter sees the former as its source, which it claims to transcend.
scripture, “Autonomous Bhairava” (svacchandabhairava), is ritually represented and evoked with diagnostic features developed in the early skull-bearing ascetic tradition of pre-tantric origins known as the Kāpālikas. As a result this scriptural tradition centers on a generally more fierce embodiment of Śiva, Bhairava, who along with his consort is adorned with skulls and associated with liminal social spaces such as the charnel grounds. This Kāpālika background, whose symbols and icons glaringly flaunted antinomian ritual dispositions and environments, was absorbed into religious ambit of Śaiva tantra proper (Mantramārga), particularly in the scriptures of the Mantrapīṭha and Vidyāpīṭha. This deviant and non-conformist character of the Kāpālika repertoire directly confronted and overturned Brahminical social norms by utilizing ritual substances and sites of practice that were considered taboo and a source of defilement, not to mention extremely dangerous. These Kāpālika tendencies become even more prominent and unreserved in the feminine-centered tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha.

In the Svacchandabhairava these Kāpālika components are largely muted in the cult’s representation of its central deities. Although visualized within mortuary environments brandishing a skull-staff, Svachandabhairava is white in color, five-faced, and quiescent. In this way he represents a transitional deity between the Siddhānta’s tranquil Sadāśiva and the more terrifying red and black skull-bearing (kapālin / kapālini) forms of Bhairava and his consort.230 “Autonomous Bhairava” is portrayed as standing upon the corpse of Sadāśiva, emblematic of the Mantrapīṭha’s proclamation of supremacy over the central

deity of Siddhānta tantric liturgies.\textsuperscript{231} This iconic display of preeminence foreshadows the subordinate position that Bhairava himself will assume in the Goddess-centered cults of the Vidyāpīṭha where a female divinity is often visualized enthroned upon Bhairava’s sprawling corpse. Largely absent from Siddhānta ritual where Sadāśiva is mainly worshipped in isolation, the Goddess, Aghoreśvarī, accompanies Svāchhanda-bhairava in the Mantrapīṭha, but “her feminine presence is not reinforced by secondary goddesses in the circuit (āvaraṇa) that surrounds the couple. Furthermore, Svāchhanda-bhairava is worshipped alone after he has been worshipped with his consort. His appearance with Aghoreśvarī is his lower form.”\textsuperscript{232} Nevertheless, the Goddess’s promotion to co-deity at the center of the manḍala (deity-enthroning diagram) is a notable development of the Mantrapīṭha.

One other component of worship in the Svāchhanda-bhairava is worth mention before we consider the scripture’s model of revelation. Unlike the Siddhānta’s ritual substances, which are lacto-vegetarian, the Svāchhanda-bhairava prescribes rites for solitary adepts sojourning in the wilds that require paraphernalia such as skulls and the use of substances deemed highly impure by Brahminical orthopraxy, such as human flesh and wine. Such rites, moreover, culminate in Bhairava forcefully entering the supplicant, engendering a state of possession that endows him or her with supernatural powers—not all

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., p. 669.

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., p. 670.
beneficent—as well as liberation. These features all demonstrate that the Mantrapīṭha, although tamer than the scriptures of the Vidyāpīṭha, is more invested in controverting brahminical social conventions than establishing symbolic continuity with the Vedic tradition.

Given this added distance between the Bhairava tantras and Vedic religion, it is not surprising that the Vedic sages are not featured in the revelation narrative of the Svacchandabhairavatantra. The only exception is a single passing mention to generic seers (ṛṣis) in the narrative of the descent of the tantras (tantrāvatāra) in the eighth chapter. And ARRAJ argues that given its location and sudden departure from a more “properly Bhairava view” of revelation that structures the rest of the text, this prototypical account of the descent of the tantras has been appended in a later phase of the Svacchandabhairava’s redaction. The “properly Bhairava” model of revelation, the devīdevasamāvāda

\[1\] ARRAJ (1988), pp. 48-49.

\[2\] Svacchandabhairava 8.36cd-8.38: mayāpi tava deveśi sādhikāraṇaṁ samarpitam || tvam api skandarudreṇhyo dasaṇeva vidhipūrvaṇakam || brahmaṇiśvindradevaṇam vasumātritrīvākytām || loke saṅgrhyā nāgāṇāṁ yaksāṇāṁ paramēṣvarī || kathayassu ṛṣīnāṁ ca ṛṣibhyo manuṣyeṣu api ‘O Goddess, I am entrusting that [scriptural wisdom] with its attendant authority to you. You should transmit it to Skanda and the Rudras according to the ritual requirements [of initiation and consecration]. Having then redacted [that scriptural wisdom] in this world for Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Indra and the gods [as well as] the Vasus, mother Goddesses and Sūrya, teach it to the Nāgas, Yakṣas, and the seers. And from the seers [it should be transmitted] to human beings.’

\[3\] Svacchandabhairava 8.26cd-8.39.

\[4\] ARRAJ (1988), p. 207: “This section, recognized as a separate and additional topic by Kṣemarājaḥ, may have been constructed by later redactors or interpolated from another source in order to make the Svacchandatantram conform to the structure of other scriptures. It presents the scriptural Śaiva view of revelation, that complements the short and more properly Bhairava view given in the first book. Perhaps compilers placed this section here because they recognized the similarity between the notion of portion, presented in the first part of this book, and this view of revelation. Just as the first considers the different deities to
(God-Goddess-dialogue) drawn forward by Goddess Bhairavi’s questions, is introduced at the outset of the scripture. In the Purāṇas and Siddhānta scriptures the original teaching of God, with important exceptions cited above, is relegated to the narrative background while in the Svacchandabhairava it frames the entire text. Indeed, the Goddess’s questions often delineate changes in scriptural topics. Moreover, at these topical junctures where a dialogueal cue “is lacking, [the commentator] Kṣemarāja supplies it,” an exegetical technique that be fractional manifestations of a supreme Lord, so the second considers scriptures to be lower manifestations of the supreme Lord.”

237 Svacchandabhairava 1.1-12ab: kailāsāśikharāśīnāṁ bhairavaṁ vīgamāyaṁ
caṇḍanamahākālaṅgaṇeśvarasabhrīgbihīṁ| kumārendrayamāḍītyabrhamāvinsūpuraḥsaraṁ|
stūyaṁśaṁ maheśaṁ gaṇanāṁrīṣeṣavitam| sṛṣṭisampākarkārāṁ vīlay ashītkārakam| anugrahakāraṇaṁ devaṁ praṇātānvīnaśanam| muditaṁ bhairavaṁ drśtvā devī vacanam abravi

yat tvraya kathitaṁ mahyaṁ svacchandaṁ parameśvara || śatakoṭipravistārṇaṁ bhedānantaµvavīrṇaṁ| catusṣṭhaṁ mahātuṇtran catusṭāyaphalodayaṁ| na śaknuvantī manuṣya alpavīryaparākramāṁ| alpāśuo 'ipacittāś ca alpasattvāś ca śaṅkara| tadarthāṁ samgrahaṁ tasya svalpaśastraṁvīṣeṣaṁ| bhuktiṃkātpradātāraṁ kathayasva prasādataḥ| kāḍrīṣya vāi guruṁ vidyāt śādhaṁ ca maheśvāra| bhayābhaya-pradātāraṁ śīṣyaṁ bhumīṁ ca kāḍrīṣya| mantrāṁ caiva svamāṣena kālaṁ caiva samāsatāṁ| yaśanaṁ havocṁ caiva adhivāṣaṁ rajāṁ ca| pañcaavyaṁ caruṁ caiva danta-kāṣṭhaṁ ca maṇḍalaṁ| dīkṣā cādāvābhīṣekau ca samayan śādhanāṁ| ca kalim āśādya siddhyantī tathaḥ brūhi maheśvāra| sādhu sādhu mahābhāge yat tvraya paricoditam| anugrāhāya māryaṇāṁ sāmrātaṁ kathayāni te 'Bhairava, seated on the peak of Kailasa in perfect well-being, was being praised by Caṇḍa, Nandīn, Maḥākāla, Gaṇeṣa, [his] Bull, Bhrīṅgin as well as Kumāra, Indra, Yama, Ādītya, Brahmā, and Viṣṇu. That Great Deity was attended upon by his entourage and the mother goddesses. Upon seeing that God, the author of creation and dissolution who brings about obscuration and sustenance, and is the cause of grace, who eradicates the pain of his devotees, that delighted Bhairava, the Goddess said: O Parameśvara, you taught the Svachanda to me spanning one billion verses, expanding into infinite divisions, having four collections (pīṭha), a profound tantra that gives rise to the four-fold goal. Human beings who are bereft of power and strength, with brief life-spans, lacking in requisite fiscal resources and purity, O Śaṅkara, are not fit [for this vast scripture]. For their sake teach by dint of your grace a redaction of that (Svacchandabhairava), which bestows supernatural enjoyments and liberation. Make known the typology of the guru and the adept, the types of disciples and ritual grounds, and whether they bestow fearlessness or fear. Make known the mantras as well as the proper times [for ritual] in a nutshell, as well as sacrifice, oblations, incubation, powders, the five cow products, the gruel offering, the tooth-stick, the deity-enthroning diagram, initiation, the cosmic pathways and consecration, post-initiatory rules, and the means of realization. Teach me, O Maheśvara, how these will be successful now that the Kali [Age] is upon us. Bravo, Bravo, O blessed [Goddess]. Now I will teach you what you have requested in order to bestow grace upon mortal beings.’
“confirms... the perception that the dialogue frame [between Bhairava and Bhairavi] forms the primary and even indispensable structure of the text.”

The Svachchandabhairava opens a door into a world of transgressive post-initiatory rites and expedients for tantric adepts seeking mastery of cosmic powers as well as liberation. Although the Svachchandabhairava includes a standard account of the descent of the tantra, it only makes a gesture to generic Vedic seers. In this way it elides their individual identities or specific roles in mediating the scripture beyond the convention of transmitting the scripture to humanity. In the more aggressively anti-Vedic milieu of the Bhairava tantras it is perhaps not surprising to encounter marginal interest in the Vedic seers. The dialogical structure of God-Goddess dialogue, as we will see, comes to be a norm for non-Saiddhântika Śaiva tantras. In addition to this general shift, in the Yāmala cult, to which we now turn, we find an alternate collection of scriptural


239 Although it may not be the first to do so. Rites and sādhana of this character are also found in the Guhyasūtra of the Niśvāsa corpus. I thank Shaman HATLEY for this important qualification.

240 Umāpati first narrates (Svachchandabhairava 8.27-8.36ab) how he received the scripture through the following succession: A supremely subtle sound arising from Śiva as supreme cause to Sadāśiva to Īśvara to Śrīkanṭha. He then goes on to describe how the Vedic seers transmit it to humanity at the end of the following verse, which he addresses to the Goddess. See Svachchandabhairava 8.36cd-8.38, cited and translated above.

241 However, we should remember that the Niśvāsattattvasamhitā, which is given as one of the canonical twenty-eight Siddhânta scriptures in many lists, did also utilize a devadevasamnvāda structure. In other Siddhânta scriptures where Vedic seers do not act as primary interlocutors we also find a devadevasamnvāda (god-god dialogue) model. Certain commentators elaborate on these various configurations under the rubric of various “relationships” (sambandha).
mediators, more apropos to this scriptural milieu than the Vedic sages of the Siddhānta scriptures.

§ 2.6 Yāmala

The Yāmala (‘Union’) tantras, as represented by a single early surviving archetype, the Brahmayāmalatantra, identify with the “Right Stream” (dakṣiṇasrotas), which is distinguished from the “Middle Stream” (madhyamasrotas)\(^{242}\) comprising the Siddhānta scriptures and the “Left Stream,” which centered on Śiva in the form of Tumburu and four Goddesses.\(^{243}\) The Right Stream of the tantras was divided into two major branches, the Mantrapīṭha or the cult of Bhairava (e.g. the Svacchandabhairava) and the Vidyāpīṭha, in which feminine deities come to the fore and male forms of the godhead are either subordinated or displaced.\(^{244}\) The Brahmayāmalatantra situates itself in the domain of the latter, the Vidyāpīṭha, as a revelatory transmission at once more esoteric and efficacious than the Bhairava scriptures.

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\(^{242}\) Brahmayāmalatantra 39.22-26: sārdhakoṣṭrāyan devi mantrāṇāṁ parisaṃkhyaśā \nmadhyamasrotasaṃbhūto evaṁ vai bhairavo ‘brahita \| navāṣṭakaṁ tathāvāpya \nsarvasiddhāntajātakam | kriyāmantraprabheneda saṃsthītaṁ varavarṇūnī | \| aṣṭāvimśatibhedena bheditaṁ ca tathā punah | sākhopaśākhabhedena prabhinnamāṃ vistarena tu \| kathitāṁ kathisyanti śrīkanṭhāhā yā gurus tathā \| śivahasthitāṁ suḥ kāmikādvaravarnnī | \| rudrabhedena cānyāni saṃsthītāni tālhaiv ca | yatra bhedo śivā yājyāḥ śivabhedas tu saḥ smṛthy.

\(^{243}\) By the period of tantric exegesis in Kashmir, i.e. the tenth century, the scriptures of the Vāma (left) stream appear to have been long obsolete, although Abhinavagupta refers to the tradition as a fundamental step in his hierarchization of initiatory tantric cults. Brahmayāmalatantra 39.75 lists the following scriptures, the Saṁmohā, Nāya, and Nayottara, as emerging from the leftward stream: sanmohāṁ ca tathā proktāṁ nayo caiva nayottaram | \| saukram caiva tathā proktāṁ vānasrotāṁ vinirgatam | \| eteṣāṁ bhadvā bhedāḥ saṃśrītāḥ nirganeṣṭhā. One scripture of this stream does survive, the Viṣṇūkhatantra, edited and translated by Teun Goudriaan. See Goudriaan (1985).

\(^{244}\) On the details and relevant textual citations that delineate these divisions, see Hatley (2007), pp. 7-8.
At the heart of the Brahmayāmalatantra’s ritual program is the divine couple Kapālīśa Bhairava (‘Skull-Lord Bhairava’) and Caṇḍā Kāpālinī (‘Wrathful Goddess of the Skull’), but unlike the predominantly male retinue of deities that encircled Svacchanda Bhairava and Aghoreśvarī in the Mantrapīṭha, here the retinue is female (with or without subservient male consorts). The male deity, Kapālīśa Bhairava, is iconically portrayed as the power-holder (śaktimat) of the great horde of female powers that populate the visionary universe of the Brahmayāmalatantra. That said, the mantra that represents the “nine deities who form the core of the greater maṇḍala and are the pantheon of daily worship” is a feminine formula (vidyā). As a result, the entire pantheon is ultimately conceived as “aspects of a feminine power which transcend the male-female dichotomy which patterns the lower revelations.” Although the divine couple represent the pinnacle of the cosmic hierarchy, like other early texts that identify with the Vidyāpīṭha class of scriptures—the Siddhayogeśvarīmata, Tantrasadbhāva, and Jayadrathayāmala—the Brahmayāmala is largely dedicated to a religious cult of Yoginīs. Much of the text prescribes ceremonies to be performed by itinerant adepts in macabre sites designed to seduce magical female beings (Yoginīs) into transformative encounters. These divine rendezvous result in the receipt of extraordinary power and on occasion secret teachings. Indeed, akin to other

245. The following description of the central deities of the Brahmayāmalatantra is indebted to the description found in Sanderson (1988), p. 672.

246. Ibid., p. 672.

247. On this class of divine female beings, which includes human and super-human members, see Hatley (2013), “What is a Yogini? Towards a Polythetic Definition.” See also Hatley
works that place themselves in the uninhibited Kāpālika terrain of early Vidyāpīṭha, the acquisition of supernatural powers (siddhi) from encounters with Yóginiś and other rites constitutes the core aspiration of the system.²⁴⁸

The account of the descent of the scripture, which initiates the Brahmayāmalatantra, is exceptional for numerous reasons. Embedded in an extensive narrative on how the twelve-thousand verse Brahmayāmalatantra assumed its current form is a basic formulation that shares similarities with accounts in the Siddhānta scriptures: from the supreme nature of Śiva the feminine power of divine will (icchā) first emerged, stimulating the creation of an undifferentiated mass of scriptural wisdom²⁴⁹ which was first versified by Sadāśiva and taught to Śrīkanṭha in a condensed form.²⁵⁰ The narrator, a form of Bhairava and the putative teacher of the Brahmayāmala, in turn received this text from Śrīkanṭha,²⁵¹ and his dialogue with the Goddess frames the scripture,

(2007), p.18, which makes the following important distinction: “Yóginiś, however, do not figure as cultic foci in the manner of most tantric divinities: their cult is integrated within those of ‘high’ deity or deities who form the primary focus of a given ritual system.”

²⁴⁸ This centrality of siddhi as the most eminent goal is stated clearly at the outset of the text. See Brahmayāmalatantra 1.6 and 1.11-13. See also Brahmayāmalatantra 1.118: “But those who are unfit for siddhi, whether a man or women, shall not attain even the mere vidyā-mantra, O great queen. Those fit for siddhi shall learn this secret, O Mahādevi.” Translation of HATLEY (2007), p. 365.

²⁴⁹ Brahmayāmalatantra 1.34-35: acintyasya parā śaktīḥ śivasya paramātmanah | icchā nāmena saṁjitā tayaḥ binduḥ prabodhitaḥ | prabuddhasya tato bindor jñānaughaṃ niskalapaṃ tataḥ | abhivyaktō mahādevi akasmān mantravigraheḥ | jñānasampañṇādaheḥ tu sadāśivopade śhitaḥ.


²⁵¹ As we saw the Siddhānta scriptures, Śrīkanṭha is a key mediator of scriptural truths, often located a few levels below the original pure sonic source of the scriptural wisdom,
recapitulating the basic God-Goddess interlocutional structure of the
Svachchandabhairavatantra.\textsuperscript{252} Aside from this brief parallel with Siddhānta
revelation narratives, the Brahmayāmala’s account of the descent of scripture
departs radically from all the models of revelation explored thus far.

Bhairava informs the Goddess that he had cursed her in the past when,
without prior authorization and in a burst of enthusiasm, she shared with her
attendants the scriptural wisdom with which he had entrusted her.\textsuperscript{253} In response
to her pleadings to be pardoned, Bhairava assures her he would favor her again,
but only after she had incarnated into a human family. Born as Sattikā in the
village of Karṇavīra near Prayāga to a certain Meghadatta of the chāndogya
Brahmin caste, she achieved supernatural powers at the tender age of thirteen,
which bring her back into the Lord’s presence.\textsuperscript{254} Bhairava reminds her of her
original divine status and then teaches the scripture to her yet again, but this
time with explicit instructions on whom She must transmit the teachings to in the

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supreme Śiva. See Brahmayāmalatantra 1.40-41: asmāj jñānān mahādevi śrīkaṇṭhena hitāya vai |
koṭikōṭiprayastāir lokānāṁ hitakaṁyāyā |
prchakāśrayabhedena kriyābhedavihāgaśah |
śuddhāśuddhena mārgena asattvena ca svorate |
viṣṭārītaṁ tantrāṇi jñātāヴァ sadaśivāt pādaṁ ‘From
this scripture, O Mahādevī, seeking the good, Śrīkaṇṭha made manifold the tantrāṇa, learnt
from the state of Sadaśiva, with millions and millions of elaborations for the good of all,
because of differences in the interlocutors and recipients, on account of the divisions of types
of ritual, because of the pure and impure paths, and because of lack of sattva, O pious lady.’
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\textsuperscript{252} Brahmayāmalatantra 1.42-43: ayaṁ tu jñānasandoham svarūpa vāsthitam priye |
sapāḍalakṣaṇasyātyatam mayā jñātāṁ yathārthataḥ |
tavāpi jñānaśrāṣṭāyaḥ sampravakṣyāmi |
sāmratam |
sapāḍalakṣaṇabhāde saṁkāṇāṁ saṁsārthāṁ tu yat.
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\textsuperscript{253} Brahmayāmalatantra 1.20-21: tatas tvāya hitārthāya ādeśena vinā priye |
parijanasya samākhyātāṁ prārabdhāṁ bhaktihṛṣṭayā |
vipaṭeyamānaṁ taṁ drśtvā mahātantraṁ mayā punah |
krodhāvīśtena śaṁtāsi jñānaṁ te nāsītaṁ yatā.
\end{flushright}

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\textsuperscript{254} Brahmayāmalatantra 1.22-30.
\end{flushright}
future. Bhairava’s description of a prospective transmission to be carried out by the Goddess lends this account a prophetic tone, which is enhanced by the pervasive use of the future tense in this passage. None of the tantric gurus the Goddess teaches are Vedic seers mentioned in the Purāṇas. In addition to their Śaiva initiatory names we learn a bit more biographical information on a number of these recipients and subsequent transmitters of the scripture, including their pre-initiation names, region, and other marginal details about their family and lineage.

Among brahmin disciples of the Goddess the Brahmāyāmala mentions Kapālabhairava (previously Śrīdhara) of Kurukṣetra, Padmabhairava (previously Devadatta) of Oḍra, Raktabhairava, Jvālābhairava, and Helābhairava of Madhyadeśa, and Caṇḍabhairava of Sindhu. Two śūdras, Vāmabhairava and Vijayabhairava hailing from Saurāṣṭra, are also entrusted with the scriptural teaching, as well as a couple of Rājput kṣatriyas, Bhībatsabhairava and Gajakarṇabhairava of Sindhu. We also hear of other Brahmin teachers that the Goddess’s scriptural teaching will be transmitted to located in Kāśmīra, Lampā, Kāśī, and Oḍḍiyāna. The narrative ends in the Kali Yuga with the commissioning of scriptural propagation to a certain brahmin, Svacchandabhairava (previously

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255 Brahmāyāmala 1.45: divyādvīyasvabhāvena sthitayā śaktyanujñayā | krodhabhairavadevasya siddhasyaiva śiveccayā | sapādalakṣasāṁkhyātam evaṃ vai bhairavo ‘bravīt.

256 The following condensed account of the intended recipients, including their initiation names, caste, geographical locations, and information on their families, follows Brahmāyāmala 1.45-119.

257 Brahmāyāmala 1.59-70 provides narrative embellishments on the identity of Caṇḍabhairava, including how he came to receive the vidyā-mantra (1.63) and became authorized as a teacher of the scripture, before enumerating some of his prominent disciples.
Amantrin) of Ujjainī. He is enlisted to share the revelation with Viṣṇubhairava in the small village of Kalāpa, and Viṣṇubhairava in turn will teach those who are mentally fit for this sacred transmission.

In the Siddhānta scriptures the narrative of revelatory descent almost invariably featured seers with a Vedic and Purāṇic background. Moreover, the sites of revelation—Naimiśa forest, Devadāruvana, Himavat, and Nārāyaṇāśrama—were, like the presence of the Vedic seers, of greater symbolic than topographical significance. The Brahmâyāmala replaces the Vedic seers with a host of tantric preceptors charged with scriptural transmission. Shaman Hatley makes the following observations on the logic of this account:258

Mentioning numerous individuals, this narrative tacitly acknowledges the role of human agency—through the medium of the tantric guru—in the production of scriptural literature. Idealized though Brahmâyāmala’s account of revelation certainly is, some of the personages and places mentioned appear entirely realistic. More than twenty-five individuals are referred to, the majority of whom have their castes and their regions of origin specified... The narrative ends by predicting that the text shall achieve tremendous popularity, being present in the homes of all worthy of siddhi...

Among the figures mentioned, Svacchandabhairava of Ujjayinī appears pivotal to the text’s transmission; yet there are no strong grounds of assuming he or anyone else mentioned represents an historical figure. It is nonetheless possible that the Brahmâyāmala’s revelation narrative preserves a record of some key individuals connected with the scripture and its background, cast within an idealized temporal and geographical framework.

Apart from the implicit emphasis on human agency on the part of tantric gurus in this revelation narrative of the compilation and trans-regional transmission259

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258 Hatley (2007), pp. 228-232. Note in this citation I have changed all the abbreviations of the text as written in Hatley’s thesis (Brāyā) to the full form.

259 Hatley gives an analysis of the geographical horizons of this account, together with a list of eight cremation grounds (śmaśāna) in chapter three, to speculate on the provenance of “the early textual community” and the scripture’s pan-Indian distribution as a potential sign of “a broadening of the cult’s horizons by the period of the text’s final redaction.” See Hatley (2007), pp. 232-233.
of the scripture, brief stories on how both Caṇḍabhairava and Svacchandabhairava became empowered to teach the scripture are also recorded, revealing a narrative interest in their peculiar identities and background. The *Brahmayāmala* is the earliest tantric source I am aware of that introduces a cast of consecrated tantric gurus as scriptural mediators, which offers a counterpoint to Vedic seers or tropological references to generic sages who bridge the divine revelatory lineage to humanity. In addition to placing great emphasis on apparently non-legendary figures, they are also associated with remote villages and locales, “such as Bṛhadārī of Sindh and Kanaṇvīra, near Prayāga,” the mention of which would serve no symbolic purpose in “the absence of a genuine connection to the text.”

The Vedic seers’ presence in the dialogical framework and the portrayal of the process of revelation in the Siddhānta tantras disclose a number of

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260 Hatley provides an excellent synopsis of Svacchandabhairava’s story. Hatley (2007), pp. 229-231: “In the final quarter of the Kaliyuga, the initiate Svacchandabhairava comes to learn the scripture. Having had numerous miscarriages, a certain Deikā of Ujjayinī prays for a son before the Mother goddesses, and they place in her womb the child called ‘Without a Mantra’ (Amantrī)—an accomplished initiate who in previous birth had broken the initiatory Pledges and failed to achieve siddhi. Reborn, Amantrī attains siddhi through practice of the vidyā-mantra. Consecrated as Svacchandabhairava, he learns the ‘Tantra of Twelve-thousand Verses’ from Krodhabhairava, the primordial disciple of the Goddess. His own disciples preside over ever-diminishing redactions of the scripture at the twilight of the cosmic cycle, at the end of which yoginīṣ hide away the teachings altogether. Concealed throughout the Krta, Tretā, and Dvāpara ages of the subsequent cycle, at the beginning of the next Kaliyuga the Goddess reveals the unabbreviated scripture of 125,000 verses to (the new incarnation of) Svacchandabhairava. He teaches a redaction of 12,000 verses to a certain Viṣṇubhairava in a legendary village of Kalāpa, renowned as an abode of sages.”

261 It should be mentioned that the village of Kalāpa, which is where Svacchandabhairava teaches the scripture to Viṣṇubhairava, is associated with Kali Yuga in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 9.12.6, 9.22.17, 10.87.7, and 12.2.37-38. See Hatley (2007), p. 231, footnote 104.

rhetorical purposes. It demonstrates the superiority of initiatory Śaivism, a path of Mantras, through the literary conceit of the sages leaving behind their past religious affiliations to embrace a new initiatory teaching. The inclusion of the Vedic seers may also signify that the more specialized sphere of tantric Śaivism could be adopted without the complete abandonment of one’s previous “Vedic” identity. This reading lines up with the Siddhānta scriptures greater degree of congruity with and accommodation of brahminical values. The rites of the Brahmayāmalatantra emanate from the radical context of siddhi-seeking ascetics who self-consciously reject and overturn the orthopraxy of Vedic culture. It is not surprising that it also introduces a new model of scriptural revelation—to be adapted and further developed by the Kaula Śaiva scriptures and post-scriptural authors—that underlines the importance of individual tantric masters and non-idealized geographical regions in the successful transmission of the cult.

§ 2.7 Vidyāpīṭha

The “Power tantras” (śaktitantra)263 almost exclusively revolve around female tantric deities and their earliest (pre-ninth century) scriptures can be divided into two major cults. One was focused upon a triad (Trika) of Goddesses, Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā, visualized264 on lotuses balanced on the three tips of a trident. The second was dedicated to various embodiments of the Goddess Kālī (i.e. Kālasaṁkarṣīṇī, Vīrya-Kālī, etc.) whose worship is elaborated in the

263 The following brief introduction is indebted to the description found in Sanderson (1988), pp. 672-678.

264 For a translation of Siddhayogeśvarīmata 6.19cd-28, which describes the visualization of these three Goddesses in detail, see Törzsök (1999), p. xvi.
voluminous and unedited *Jayadrathayāmala*. The former cult, originally set out in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, and elaborated in the *Tantrasadbhāva* and *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, later integrated\(^2\) (e.g. in texts like the *Devyāmalatantra*) the central Goddess of the Kālī-centered tradition, Kālasamkārṣṇī, as the highest reality above and beyond the three Goddesses. This synthetic formulation of the Trika, with esoteric liturgies to Kālī furtively interposed into its very core, formed the basis of Abhinavagupta’s tantric exegetical oeuvre.

With the Śakti tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha we have also arrived at the most radical and transgressive of the tantric traditions considered thus far, in which “the cult of Yognīs permeates all levels.”\(^2\) These powerful female spirits, which form a radiant network (jāla) of power that animates and governs the phenomenal universe, are subordinate to the primary Goddesses that crown the cult of worship, as well as to various sets of presiding Mother Goddesses. These female spirits (Yognīs) are pivotal in the transmission of siddhi or supernatural powers, the preeminent goal of the earliest Vidyāpīṭha scriptures. Moreover, Yognī encounters are facilitated through “impure” ritual technologies and offerings that effectively entice these protean female spirits. TÖRZSÖK describes a ritual convocation with Yognīs as it is prescribed in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*:

“The Śādhaka must be naked, smeared with ashes, and he should lure female spirits by offerings of impure substances such as meat or the ‘perfect nectar’

\(^2\) \textit{Sanderson}, p. 678.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 627. See also TÖRZSÖK (1999), p. xviii: “The *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is chiefly concerned with how to attain supernatural powers, usually with the help of female spirits called *yognīs*, *dākinīs* or *śākinīs*. This topic occupies almost two thirds of the text, the remaining one third mainly describing mantras and initiation.”
(siddhāmṛta—the mingled sexual fluids). He is to offer his own blood from his left arm (vāmāṅga) to tame these spirits.”267 The Yōginīs, moreover, are often organized into clans (kula), and these clans of female spirits and deities constitute the basic symbolic and ritual matrix from which the Kaula Śaiva scriptures emerged, a major development that will be taken up in the next chapter. The modalities of revelation envisioned in the Kaula scriptures depart from those of the Mantramārga and Vidyāpīṭha inasmuch as they introduce a model of revelation that places unprecedented emphasis on the role of tantric adepts and perfected masters (siddha). Of the admittedly limited surviving texts of the Vidyāpīṭha corpus, only the Brahmayāmalatantra seems to have presaged these developments by introducing non-typical tantric agents of revelation into its revelation narrative.

TÖRZSÖK speculatively deconstructs the Trika’s triad of Goddesses in the tradition’s Ur-text, the Siddhayogeśvarīmatā, by noting a paradigmatic difference between the main Goddess Parā who is strategically adapted from the Brahminical Goddess Sarasvatī, and Parāparā and Aparā, both terrifying Kāpālika Goddesses modeled on the cremation ground cult of Yōginīs.268 She proposes that the Siddhayogeśvarīmatā’s triadic Goddess cult...269 evolved from an exorcistic base... in which the pure goddess, Parā, was also a leader of the eight impure Yōginīs. Through the adoption of the iconography and powers of the orthodox goddess, Sarasvatī, into the figure of Parā, an element of the orthodox domain was also colonised... This colonization of a brahminical deity and the

268 Ibid., pp. xxiii-xxiv.
269 Ibid., pp. xxiv-xxv
identification of the Yoginīs is important primarily for the Sādhaka. For it is the Sādhaka’s aim to control all forces of the universe, including the orthodox domain with its śāstric knowledge and purity. At this point, the cult was inclusivistic for the Sādhaka’s sake. On the other hand, when later exegetes colonized the texts of the Trika, the process was reversed: the exegesis was done for the sake of brāhmans seeking liberation (mumukṣu), and it was the inclusion of Parā-Sarasvatī that made the cult particularly susceptible for a brahminical colonization which saw Parā-Sarasvatī as the centre of the cult, and ‘absorbed’ the texts through her in order to control impure forces through the pure. In this sense, the story of the Siddhayogeśvarīmata and the cult of the Trika is a story of competing forces attempting in turn to conquer each other’s domain.

The “later exegetes” of the Trika that reversed the colonization process refers largely to Abhinavagupta’s tantric commentarial works, for he is the preeminent Kashmirian exegete of the many layers and stages of this Śākta-Śaiva tradition—the Trika.

The revelation narrative that ends the Siddhayogeśvarīmata also displays elements of this “story of competing forces.” As just mentioned, the ascetics and adepts of this early Vidyāpīṭha stratum of Śakti tantras attempted to colonize the orthodox domain of Brahminical life by appropriating the pure Brahminical Goddess Sarasvatī as Parā in their bid for mastery of all realms of the immanent world-order. I would argue that the Siddhayogeśvarīmata’s redactors’ choice of Rāma270 (son of Daśaratha and central hero of the epic, the Rāmāyaṇa) as the primary scriptural intermediary in its final phase of descent into the human world is another reflection of the cult’s ambition to encompass and dominate

270 Siddhayogeśvarīmata 32.8-13: tasmāt avāptam rāmena tena loke prakāśitam || śṛṇute vā paṭhati vā kūrute vā ca bhūvanām || yogeśvaro ’sau bhavati rudratejopabṛhmhitam || bhūtendriyaagnādhirah sarvañāh phalabhūgināh || tasmāt tantram na dātavyam anyāyam anuvartine || ājñā hy esā bhagavato bhairavasya mahātmānaḥ || dravyaṃ prāṇam parītyajya na ca guhya-prakāśanam || rudraśaktisamābhaktir gurus tasya pradāpayet || niratam tu ayodhyās vāktraṇa vaktṛaṇa guru-kramāt || guptam pārvaṇā kṛtaṃ deve devyā guptāraṇaṃ kṛtaṃ || svacchandāṃ rṣayaṇa guptam rāma-guṇaṃ sadā kṛtam || yogeśānāṃ gurūnāṃ ca guptā guptāraṇaṃ gatam || yadi guptam bhavet siddhis yasmāt guptāraṇaṃ kṛtaṃ.
Brahminical territory. It does so by subordinating Rāma, arguably the most important and culturally resonant icon of Brahminical dharma and kingship in pan-Indian literature, into the key transmitter of its esoteric and heterodox mantras, rites, and sādhanas.

Like the Svacchandabhairava and Brahmayāmalatantra, the main dialogical frame of the Siddhayogeśvarīmata consists of Bhairava’s responses to his beloved Bhairavī’s queries. In the last chapter (thirty-two) of the text, a brief revelation narrative describes how Bhairava’s original teaching was transmitted from Bhairavī to Garuḍa, Garuḍa to Śukra, Śukra to Kaca, and Kaca to Śrī Rāma.271 Rāma, for his part, is commissioned with disseminating the scripture throughout the world. Briefly mentioned in this narrative are Śukra and Kaca, together with an oblique reference to a myth regarding them, which is recorded in the Mahābhārata.272 An elaborate form of the revelation narrative is recorded by Abhinavagupta in the Tantraloka,273 adopted from a longer recension whose manuscript witnesses have not survived. There we find mention of a few more Vedic sages in the transmission of the text, such as Bhārgava,274 and also further detail on how Rāma came by the scripture and transmitted it. This version of the narrative, as well as the presence of the Vedic seers as interlocutors in the later

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271 Siddhayogeśvarīmata 32.6-8: nānena sadrśaṁ jñānaṁ nānena sadrśaṁ phalam | bhairavāt brajamāhāvīprāptaṁ tantraṁ svacchandabhairavam || tasmāt ca garuḍaprāptaṁ tasmāt śukraṁ avāpnyayāt | tasmāt kacena cārṇena ... nāvāptavān || tasmāt avāptaṁ rāmena tena loke prakāśitam | śṛṅute vā pathati vā kurute vā ca bhāvanāṁ.


273 Tantraloka chapter 36.

274 Tantraloka 36.3-4.
Trika scripture that Abhinavagupta identifies as the prototypical source of his tantric exegesis, the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, will be considered when we turn to Abhinavagupta’s model of revelation in chapter four.

**CONCLUSION**

This examination of models of revelation in important scriptures of the Mantramārga allows us to take a global perspective on a significant trend: the increasing prominence of and narrative attention to individual religious figures in the transmission of scripture. This is a trend, we should note, that does not progress linearly or uniformly. In the next chapter we turn to revelation as it is depicted in the Kulamārga, where enlightened teachers take on a new order of importance in the business of revelation. One tantric guru of legendary proportions, Matysendranātha, is not only isolated as the primary teacher of numerous scriptures and the subject of a series of origin myths, he is also lionized by post-scriptural authors as the primary promulgator of the entire Kaula śāstra. This person-centered notion of scriptural revelation revolves around perfect tantric masters or Siddhas and also results in the inclusion of these ideal gurus in the central *mandala* or deity-enthroning diagram in Kaula rites.

The Kaula system that grew out of the Kālī tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha, the Krama, further accentuates this personalization of scriptural revelation in its post-scriptural literature. It does so by characterizing the fulcrum of its entire revelatory tradition as the enlightening encounter in the cremation ground of Uḍḍiyāna between Jñānanetra, the Krama’s primary scriptural promulgator (*avatāraka*), and Kālī (in the form of Maṅgalā). The individual guru is so prized in
the Krama’s paradigm of revelation that later gurus in Krama lineages also include stories of their own awakening, which is portrayed as a reenactment of Jñānanetra’s original enlightenment event in that iconic tantric site (pīṭha) located in today’s Swat valley of Pakistan (Uḍḍiyāna). This preoccupation with enlightened persons in the process of revelation is particularly illuminating regarding the mystery of Abhinavagupta’s apparently rare habit of writing so profusely about his life as a student and guru, and the context of his texts within the gestalt of his Śākta-Śaiva tradition, the Trika.

This chapter highlights some important precedents for conceptualizing how this Kaula conception of revelation emerged and came to challenge the dominant Vedic paradigm of an impersonal and timeless revelatory truth espoused by the Mīmāṃsakas. The Mīmāṃsakas, we must remember, denied the Vedic seers any independent religious authority in the process of revelation: their only job was to faithfully transmit the word. The story of their lives and their individual identity were without relevance. The Purāṇas upgraded the importance of the Vedic seers. In addition to handing down scriptures, now seen to be ultimately authored by God, the Purāṇas also elicited new revelatory myths, stories, vows, and teachings through the rhetorical device of the seers’ curiosity staged in the dialogical frame-story. However, the settings of these disclosures of the scripture were invariably symbolic abodes of revelation (Naimiṣa, Prayāga, Kurukṣetra) and the individuality of the Vedic seers was often overshadowed by their rhetorical function in scriptural dissemination. This is likely due to the Purāṇas’ symbolic allegiance to an eternal and impersonal Veda (as conceived by the Mīmāṃsakas) with which they pervasively identify, a
“consanguinity” or kinship that acted as a disincentive to invest the Vedic seers with significant independent authority in revelatory matters. The potential interest in their personalities dematerializes, as it were, eclipsed by the literary device of their role as scriptural broadcasters and interrogators with endless curiosity, the latter feature supplying the Purāṇas with its dynamic and open-ended character.

In select Siddhānta scriptures we find a full-scale adoption of the Vedic seers as indispensable actors in the drama of revelation. They pass on to humanity highly condensed versions of the scriptural transmission. This transmission originally poured forth from supreme Śiva as a pure mantric sound and was subsequently versified and progressively reduced in the teachings of scriptural transmitters275 such as Sadāśiva, Śrīkaṇṭha, Umāpati (Parvati’s husband seated on Kailāsa), the Vidyeśas, Rudras, and other gods and semi-divine beings. The Siddhānta tantras also capitalized on the Vedic seers’ paradigmatic curiosity. The “charter myth” for the Mantramārga in the Niśvāsamukha combines their “radical unsatisfied yearning”276 for more revelatory teachings and their utter astonishment at the discovery of a revelatory tradition that has reduced the omniscient divine authors of the Purāṇas, Brahmā and Viṣṇu, into novice initiates.

But the Vedic seers, beyond fulfilling these important symbolic roles, do not leave meaningful trace of a regionally specific or temporally locatable human

275 The order of these figures is mutable across different revelation narratives cited above.

scriptural teacher. Their role is not pivotal enough in the transmission of scripture, it appears, to warrant an independent interest in their identity. In the later strata of Siddhānta scriptures examined above, this begins to change. In the 
*Mrgendratantra* and *Mataṅgapārameśvara*, the Vedic *ṛṣis* are suddenly equipped with an unprecedented philosophical curiosity and the requisite knowledge of Buddhist apologetics, Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, Vedānta, and Mīmāṃsā to articulate their concerns and doubts. Their role as theological scrutinizers of revelatory teachings adds a dialectical tenor that configures the content of those scriptures. The opening frame-story of the *Mrgendratantra* and *Mataṅgapārameśvara* also gestures towards a more robust person-centric emphasis on revelation regarding two Vedic seers, Bharadvāja and Mataṅga, both subjects of an extended narrative. Regarding Mataṅga, his persona in the revelation story is expanded upon with implicit associations to the author of the *Bṛhaddeśī*, a famed expert of Indian music theory and a master flautist of the same name. Nevertheless, all of these figures have a Vedic pedigree, and their presence thus implies a connection between mainstream Brahminism and the Śaiva Siddhānta.

The Vedic congruency of the Siddhānta ritual system rationalizes the inclusion of Vedic sages, not only in narratives of the descent of scripture but also, on occasion, featuring them as main interlocutors of a given Saiddhāntika revealed text. However, unlike the Purāṇas’ appropriation of Vedic sages it is also a part of a strategy to assert superiority over the Vedic domain. This model of supercession has important implications for our overall study. The differentiation of Mantramārga as a posterior, distinct, and uniquely powerful revelatory tradition in its own right is essential to the development of a model of
revelation that departed from the ways in which Vedicized traditions devalued the role of human agency, and by extension, elided historical reference in accounts of the transmission of tradition.

The Mantrapīṭha, the next threshold of early Śaiva Tantric revelation considered, aggressively distanced itself from the Vedic tradition in its adoption of Kāpālika iconography, power-seeking asceticism, and socially transgressive rites. This explains the fact that in the Svacchandabhairava, the premier scripture of this tantric stream, we do not find recourse to Vedic seers other than a single vague reference to generic “sages.” The relationship of the Bhairava tantras, and the more radical tantric praxis of the Vidyāpīṭha, to the orthodoxy of the Vedas is also based on a strategy of supercession, but one which rejects, or more accurately, inverts Vedic norms. This may have facilitated an important conceptual distance from Veda-based visions of religious authority, at least originally within the non-public domain of siddhi-seekers and tantric adepts, that could open the space for imagining novel relationships between revelation and its agents.

In the Brahmāmalatantra Bhairava imparted a prophetic revelation narrative to Bhairavī that commanded her to teach the scripture to a cast of empowered tantric gurus from a wide spectrum of society. The cities or villages of origin of these tantric gurus included remote locations of little to no symbolic valence. In addition to numerous references to family, caste affiliation, and pre-initiatory names, two figures, Svacchandabhairava and Caṇḍabhairava, are the focus of sustained narratives describing how they became empowered to transmit the scripture. Although the Vidyāpīṭha scripture, the
Śiddhayogeśvarīmata, appears to revert back to a Saiddhāntika strategy of Vedic congruence by adopting Śrī Rāma as its primary scriptural mediator to humanity, it does so in attempt to colonize the Brahminical dominion from the far-left. As we will see, the tradition with which both of these scriptures identify, the Vidyāpīṭha, envisaged the religious preceptor or guru as an empowered agent in contrast to the way religious preceptors were generally portrayed in the scriptures of the Śaiva Siddhānta.\textsuperscript{277} It is within this radical tantric milieu of the Vidyāpīṭha that the Kulamārga developed a model of scriptural transmission that is sustained by the agency and power of the Siddhas, Kaula gurus par excellence, to which we now turn.

\textsuperscript{277} The early Niśvāsa corpus is an exception, and this may stem from the fact that it was developed at a period when the distinctions between Siddhānta and non-Saiddhāntika scriptures, and their respective orientations, were not yet clearly delineated. See the introduction of GOODALL, ISAACSON & SANDERSON (2016). We will briefly examine the nature of the guru in scriptural sources of the Mantramārga and Kulamārga in chapter four to help contextualize Abhinavagupta’s notion of the ideal guru.
INTRODUCTION

The Kaula vision of revelation presented in this chapter diverges significantly from the orthodox Vedic notion of scriptural truth independent of discrete human actors connected to place and time. This vision also offers an essential entrée into Abhinavagupta’s understanding of the guru. To be specific, the process of revelation in Kaula scriptures is based upon a model of religious authority, inexorably wedded to the agency of perfect Śaiva masters (Siddhas), that Abhinavagupta’s writing presupposes, advocates, and in revealing ways, expands upon. Indeed, this indebtedness to the Kaula model of religious authority will be unmistakably apparent when we consider Abhinavagupta’s characterization of the ultimate paragon of the guru profession, the innately enlightened (sāṃsiddhi) Siddha.

Chapters four and five will examine Abhinavagupta’s understanding of the Śaiva guru from multiple angles: his analysis of the guru’s defining features; his typology of Śaiva masters in vertically ranked echelons; and his narration of his own religious formation and authoritative status as an enlightened teacher. At that juncture we will further contextualize Abhinavagupta’s writings on the Śaiva guru with a brief synopsis of some of the diverse occupations and responsibilities of consecrated gurus in the scriptures of tantric Śaivism. The
sources consulted will span Saiddhāntika, Mantrapīṭha, and Vidyāpīṭha revealed texts, concluding with a précis of how the guru is portrayed in Kaula scriptures.

Lining up the person-centered model of Kaula revelation with the Kaulas’ esoteric conception of the guru will illustrate the dramatic emphasis that the scriptural redactors of the Kulamārga placed on the enlightened teacher. As a consequential agent of revelation whose mere glance can initiate a disciple, the Kaula guru is commissioned with a catalytic role in realizing the tradition’s most essential aims. Only by first scrutinizing the Kaula vision of revelation and the attributes of the Kaula guru in scriptural sources can we fully appreciate the ways in which Abhinavagupta provides the Kaula master with an urbane makeover. In Abhinavagupta’s representation of his own schooling and life as an empowered guru of the Kaula persuasion, we will argue, the figure of the Kaula guru is effectively re-envisioned as a cosmopolitan Siddha.

Abhinavagupta facilitates this transformation by placing the figure of the Kaula guru into dynamic conversation with a wide spectrum of intellectual, literary, and religious traditions circulating in medieval Kashmir. This cosmopolitan update of the Kaula guru is also catalyzed by Abhinavagupta’s modeling of an interdisciplinary ethos for religious education and intellectual formation. This ethos has compelling precedents in the projects and statements of some of Abhinavagupta’s important Kashmirian predecessors, both Śaiva and non-Śaiva. In chapter five we will reflect on these precedents and reconstruct Abhinavagupta’s ideal curriculum to generate some broader insights into the theory and practice of religious education in the intellectual culture of Kashmir at the turn of the first millennium. However, this refinement of the Kaula guru,
not to mention the very logic of Abhinavagupta’s self-representation as a Siddha master, can only be fully registered once we account for the Kaula innovations to the framework for revelation in tantric Śaivism. This chapter will do so by demonstrating how early Kaula scriptures, to an unprecedented degree, advance an ideal of religious authority revolving around the agency of enlightened and empowered individuals.

§ 3.1 KULAMĀRGĀ: A RÉSUMÉ

Around the eighth century\textsuperscript{278} we have the earliest evidence of the Kaula scriptural tradition, which frequently refers to itself as the “Path of the Kula” (kulamārga) or “Kula Doctrine” (kulaśāsana). The Kulamārga has its origins in the milieu of the Yoginī cults\textsuperscript{279} that featured prominently in the early scriptures of the Śakti Tantras, specifically the scriptural witnesses with a Kāpālika\textsuperscript{280} aura

\textsuperscript{278} See TÖRZSÖK (forthcoming): “Subsequently, a new current, kaulism, developed... perhaps around the 8th or 9th century CE.” The likelihood of an eighth-century dating is supported by SANDERSON’s mention of a reference to Kaulas made by Vākpatī, a contemporary of Bhavabhūti in eighth-century Kānyakubjā, modern-day Kannauj. See SANDERSON (2006a), p. 149. This reference is cited in WALLIS (2014), p. 156.

\textsuperscript{279} The exact relationship between the Yoginī cults of the Vidyāpīṭha and Kaula tradition proper demands further research. See HATLEY (2007), p. 153: The distinctions between these are at once significant and problematic—problematic because the Kaula tradition appears, most probably, to have developed within and had substantial continuity with the Vidyāpīṭha, complicating a neat division between the two.”

\textsuperscript{280} Although SANDERSON has recently argued that the Kaula system has a direct connection with the pre-Mantramārgic “Kāpālika” ascetic tradition of the Somasiddhāntins, which he classifies on Atimārga III. See SANDERSON (2014), p. 57, footnote 220: “The proposition that the essentials of this [Kaula] ritual system were carried forward from the Kāpālika tradition of the Somasiddhānta (Atimārga III) must be argued in detail elsewhere. Here I merely point out that the salient features of the latter show a marked similarity between the two traditions, setting them apart from the rest of Śaivism. These features are in brief (i) erotic ritual with a female companion, (ii) sanguinary practices for the propitiation of the fierce gods Mahābhārava/Bhairava and Cāmuṇḍā, (iii) the noting that supernatural powers may be attained through the extraction by Yogic means of the vital essences of living beings (also prominent in the Kulamārga), (iv) initiation through the consumption of consecrated liquor, and (v) the centrality of states of possession (āveśāḥ).”
centered on female mantra-deities (Vidyāpīṭha). This genealogical relationship to the cult of the Yoganī, which was treated briefly in chapter two, is discernable in the meaning of the appellation “Kaula.” SANDERSON explains:

The rites of the Yoganī and the fruits they bestowed were called kaulika or kaula in the texts which prescribed them, these terms being adjectives derived from the noun kula in its reference to the families or lineages of the Yoganīs and Mothers. Thus a Kaulika rite was one connected with the worship of these kulas, and a kaulika power (kaulikasiddhiḥ) was one that was attained through that worship, above all assimilation into these families. Kaulism developed from within these Yoganī cults.

Kaula Śaivism emerged as a distinct tradition, SANDERSON goes on to show, hand-in-hand with a new esoteric meaning applied to the word kula. In addition to preserving the above sense of “clan” of Yoganīs—often governed by a Mother Goddess—with which a practitioner seeks congress, kula also came to mean “body”; both the body of the practitioner and the body or “totality” of the cosmos made up of networks of feminine powers.

This additional semantic layer of kula as “body” has extraordinary consequences that illuminate how the Kulamārga departed from early Goddess-centered Tantras. For one, envisaging one’s own body as the “Kula” effectively “internalised the whole ritual system as well as the pantheon: the yoganīs became goddesses of the senses in the body (kula) of the practitioner, and the rituals, such as pūjā or fire rituals, all came to be performed as internal worship in the body,

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281 E.g. the Brahmayāmalatantra, Siddhayogeśvarīnata, Tantrasadbāva, and the Jayadrathayāmala. These are mentioned in HATLEY (2007), p. 153.


283 Ibid., pp. 679-680.
based on yogic practices and meditation.”

With the galaxies of tantric powers now internalized, the practitioner became “the temple of his deities.”

SANDERSON elaborates this point:

The cult’s central deity, out of whom these Mother-powers are projected, in whom they are grounded and into whom they are re-absorbed, was to be evoked within this temple as the Lord and/or Lady of the Kula (Kuleśvara, Kuleśvari), as the blissful inner consciousness which is the worshipper’s ultimate and trans-individual identity.

As we will touch upon below, this internalization of the central deities of the manḍala into the sense powers and identity of the practitioner arguably paved the way for the emergence of the doctrine of nonduality. This monistic ontology, most explicitly advanced in the Krama scriptures, radically contrasted with the predominantly dualistic—and correspondingly ritualistic—orientation of almost all preceding Śaiva tantras.

The prototypical structure of the Kaula ritual system, which was adapted in different branches over time, liturgically centered on the Goddess of the Kula

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285 Examples of this process of internalization are legion in the Kaula literature. One classic example, cited in SANDERSON (2005), pp. 116-118, is Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka 4.256:

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\text{śiddhānte lingapūjōkta viśvādhibhuyatāvīde | kulaśisu niśiddhāsaś dehe viśvātmātāvīde 'In the Siddhānta one is required to worship the liṅga, with the intention that one should come to see it as embodying the whole universe; but such [systems] as the Kaula forbid the liṅga cult, so that one may [progress to] realize this universality in [the microcosm of] one’s own body.’ Translation of SANDERSON. Cf. Ibid, p. 118, footnote 72: "Maśānivijayottaratantra 18.2c-3b: mrchailadhāturātmādibhavāmām liṅgām na pūjāyet | yajed ādhyātmikām liṅgām; Timirodghāṭīmāna 12.5ab: "liṅgām (corr. Vasudeva : liṅga Cod.) "svādehe (corr. Vasudeva : svadeheṣu Cod.) sāmpūjāyaṃ."}


287 However, there is evidence of a nondual doctrine in earlier Siddhānta scriptures, notably the Sarvajñānottara, and in certain teachings of the Niśvāsatattvaśamhitā.
Kuleśvarī was optionally accompanied by Bhairava (Kuleśvara), and they were propitiated in concert with eight encircling Mother Goddesses, the attendants Gañeśa and Vaṭuka (or Baṭuka), and four Siddhas, each associated with one of the four ages (yuganāthas). Matsuṣyendranātha (or Macchanda) and his consort Koṅkaṇā preside over the current age (kaliyuga) with their twelve sons, six of which were non-celibate (adhoretas) and thus especially authorized to transmit the tradition.

The proliferation of the Kaula system, “differentiated most obviously by the identity of the central deity,” was organized in the currently extant Kaula scripture, the Ciñcīṇīmatasārasamuccaya, under the rubric of four transmissions (āmnāya), each corresponding to a cardinal direction. The Eastern Transmission (pūrvāmnāya) was the Kaula tradition of the Trika, which Sanderson proposes

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291 Ciñcīṇīmatasārasamuccaya 7.38-39: caturṇāṃ gharam āmnāye avatārah prthak prthak | devyāḥ svayam prabhāvam ca pūrvapacimadakṣiṇam || uttaram ca tathā devi māyāyā rūpam āśritam | pravacaksyāmi samāsenā vallabhatvād varānane. On the relevant sections of the Ciñcīṇīmatasārasamuccaya where each Transmission is treated, see Sanderson (2014), pp. 58-59, footnote 224. The Ciñcīṇīmatasārasamuccaya itself identified with the Western Transmission (paścimāmnāya), and thus it is no surprise that it begins with and predominantly focuses on that system (1.1-7.37) before moving on to the Eastern Transmission (pūrvāmnāya: 7.38-100), Southern Transmission (dakṣināmnāya: 7.101-154), and finally the Northern Transmission (uttarāmnāya: 7.155-250).
292 Sanderson (2014), p. 59: “Of these the Pūrvāmnāya as outlined in this text appears to be the uninflected, original form of the Kaula; and it is closely related to that which was taught for the Trika by the Mālinīvijayottara (11.3-16), Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka (29.18-55), and Jayaratha’s commentary thereon. Indeed there is textual continuity between this part of the Ciñcīṇīmata and the passages of the Kulakrīḍāvatāra, a text that has not otherwise survived to my knowledge, which Jayaratha quotes at length in his commentary on this section of the
was the closest to the Kaula tradition’s original or “uninflected” archetype. The
two earliest extant Trika scriptures that include Kaula materials are the
Tantrasadbhāva and Mālinīvijayottaratantra; Abhinavagupta, it should be recalled,
selects the latter as the paradigmatic scriptural authority for the bulk of his
prolific Śaiva exegesis. Both of these texts identify the Siddhayogeśvarimata as their
source-text, but clearly move beyond its ritual and doctrinal ambit, in part
because the Siddhayogeśvarimata, as we know it, is innocent of ritual, yogic, and
meditative praxis in the Kaula mode. Unfortunately the remaining Kaula Trika
scriptures that predate and deeply inform Abhinavagupta, notably the
Devāyāmala, Trikahṛdaya, Trikasāra, Trikasadbhāva, and Triśirobhairava, are only
fragmentarily available in citations.293

The Northern Transmission (uttarāmnāya), which encompasses three
related Kālī traditions, the Mata, Krama, and the cult of Guhyakālī, is likely the
next stream in which the Kaula version of an early Goddess-centered tradition
(Vidyāpīṭha) was formulated.294 Of these three, the Krama is by far the best
preserved. In addition to two early unedited scriptural authorities, the
Devīpañcaśatikā and Kramasadbhāva, the exegetical literature of the Krama is

293 The main source for these surviving citations is Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka, and
SANDERSON has shown Abhinavagupta’s dependence upon these and other Kaula sources in
articulating his more esoteric conceptions of Trika Śaivism.

comparatively massive.\textsuperscript{295} The Western Transmission (\textit{paścimāmnāya}),\textsuperscript{296} deeply indebted to the Trika,\textsuperscript{297} has extensive scriptural and commentarial literature dedicated to the Kaula Goddess Kubjikā, “The Hunchbacked One.” Finally, the Southern Transmission (\textit{dakṣiṇāmnāya}), originally described by the \textit{Ciṅciṅīmatasārasamuccaya} as the cult of Kāmeśvarī, Goddess of Erotic Pleasure, partially provided the model for the Kaula Goddess tradition that later flourished in southern India, the cult of Tripurasundarī.\textsuperscript{298}

The Kulamārga has myriad inflections of and divergent relationships to the substratum of the Vidyāpīṭha. In the early texts of the Trika that integrated Kaula materials, such as the \textit{Tantrasadbhāva} and \textit{Mālinīvijayottaratantra}, the Kaula system operates somewhat like a “meta-tradition,”\textsuperscript{299} introducing specialized teachings and ritual procedures (\textit{kulapraṇāya / kulavidhi}) that accommodated and

\textsuperscript{295} For the definitive study of the Kaula system known as the Krama, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 260-352.

\textsuperscript{296} SANDERSON (1988), pp. 686-688.

\textsuperscript{297} DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 3, p. 282: “The KMT [\textit{Kubjikāmatatantra}] draws as much as three chapters from the TS [\textit{Tantrasadbhāva}]. Subsequently, our own text [\textit{Manthānabhairavatantra}], which belongs to the second phase of development of the Kubjikā corpus, drew more from it. Moreover, there are very many details of doctrine, practice, iconography and ritual in common with Trika Śaivism not only in the KMT itself but in the subsequent Tantras... It is quite reasonable to assume, therefore, that many of the redactors of the Kubjikā Tantras had close links with the Trika tradition and may well have even been originally initiates.”

\textsuperscript{298} SANDERSON (1988), pp. 688-690.

\textsuperscript{299} WALLIS (2014), p. 159: “It was a meta-tradition in the sense that any Tantric cult could be inflected in a Kaula version and re-interpreted in its terms.” This function of the Kaula system as a “meta-tradition” is also noted in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 256: “The pliable nature of Kula as doctrine and practice allowed the formation of Trikakulas and Kālikulas, for example, within the Bhairava Tantras that thus remained Śākta despite the very large Śākta input that Kula doctrine and practice brought into them.”
coexisted\textsuperscript{300} with more properly tantric methods of yoga, initiation, and ritual observance (\textit{tantraprakriyā}). Here Kaula methods and doctrine appear as advanced and optional phases of the tradition, often appended to the end of a scripture.\textsuperscript{301} Abhinavagupta adapts this integrative approach, treating the Kaula form of ritual in his \textit{Tantrāloka} and \textit{Tantrasāra} only after an analysis of tantric ritual procedures and methods. Conversely, in the Kubjikā cult of the Western Transmission, the Kaula system, rather than functioning as a “meta-tradition,” maintains a more independent identity.\textsuperscript{302} This attitude of independence is reinforced not only by a pervasive disregard for tantric methods, especially in later scriptures of the Kubjikā corpus.\textsuperscript{303} These later Kubjikā scriptures even

\textsuperscript{300} TÖRZSÖK (2007), p. 508: “Now the reinterpretations of these isolated elements in ritual do not necessarily change the basic ritual structure of initiation and daily rites, at least not in the Tantrasadbhāva. On the whole, the text does not reject external ritual altogether, but attempts to enrich the meaning of some observances by writing some sort of primary exegesis on them. These metaphorical interpretations, homologisations and even the internalisations remain separate from and independent of the traditional, external ritual complex of initiation and daily ritual, which are maintained and prescribed in this text.”

\textsuperscript{301} The final section (chapters 19-23) of the \textit{Mālinīvijayottara} treats the Kaula version of its yoga and ritual system. See VASUDEVA (2004), p. xliii, which makes a rough correlation between this portion of the text and the Saiddhāntika textual division on observances (\textit{caryāpāda}). The \textit{Svacchandaabhairava} also concludes with Kaula materials in its fifteenth chapter, dealing with code words, secret gestures (\textit{chumma}), and empowering encounters (\textit{melaka}) with Yoginīs. ARRJ considers this Kaula layer to be evidence of a final phase of redaction, subsequently appended to earlier strata of the tantra. See ARRJ (1988), p. 52. For his full argument and a summary of the chapter, see Ibid., pp. 367-372.

\textsuperscript{302} DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 256: “It was but natural that independent Kaula schools developed around the central figure of the Yoginī. Two such were those centred on the goddesses Kubjikā and Kālī. Both were Yoginikulas, as was the one that followed after centred on the goddess Tripurā. At the last stage of this development, the original affiliation with Bhairava’s current (\textit{bhairavasrotas}) was severed.”

\textsuperscript{303} DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 257: “Thus, the KuKh [\textit{kumārikākhanda} of the \textit{Manthānabhairavatantra}] distinguishes between the practice of Tantra (\textit{tantrācāra}) and Kula practice in general, especially that of the Kubjikā Tantras, invariably deprecating the former in relation to the latter.”
express, in numerous and rather severe diatribes, an emphatic disdain for those who observe the tantric method. Yet another mode of Kaula scriptural identity is found in non-sectarian Kaula texts, such as the Kaulajñānanirṇaya and Kulapañcāśikā, where the central Goddess and God, Kuleśvarī and Kuleśvara, are not identified with central deities particular to any sectarian stream of the Vidyāpīṭha or Bhairava tantras.

These variations in relationship to elements of the Kaulas’ tantric substratum are reminiscent of how the scriptures of the Mantrapīṭha and Vidyāpīṭha positioned themselves relative to the Vedic canon. In chapter two, we contrasted the Siddhānta’s Vedic congruency, couched in a narrative of scriptural supersession, to the more rejectionist attitudes of the Bhairava tantras and Śakti tantras that consciously inverted Vedic norms, particularly those related to ritual

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304 Ibid., p. 257: “[The Manthānabhairavatāntra] warns that its teaching should not be given to Tantrics, or those devoid of the Kula practice (kulācāravilūpta). Tantrics are said to lack devotion. They are cruel, given to hating others, untruthful, quarrelsome, proud and do not belong to the tradition (pāramparya). Kaula initiates should not dine with them, just as a member of a higher caste should avoid eating with one of a lower.” This attitude of rejection goes hand in hand with claims of superior soteriological efficacy. See Ibid., p. 264: “Kulācāra leads to the Śāmbhava state, whereas Tantrācāra does not. Those who are devoted to the practice of Tantra cannot attain the Śāmbhava plane. In the Age of Strife, the Śāmbhava state and the teachings that lead to it is only transmitted through the lineage (santāna) of Siddhas. Tantric practice as understood here extends up to the frontier of the Śāmbhava state which ‘beyond the belly of Mahāmāyā, always stands above the Tantra’. The KuKh is very keen to make this distinction. Tāntrikas cannot manage to purify the Self from Karma. Thus there is no liberation for them here in this world, as there is in the Kula teaching.” On Ibid., p. 258, DYCZKOWSKI notes that “although the KuKhu [kumārikākhaṇḍa of the Manthānabhairavatāntra] invariably condemns Tāntrikas and their practice as inferior, the earlier Kubjikā sources are ambiguous. For the earliest Kubjikā Tantras, like their predecessors, this is not an issue, or at least, they do not mention it.”

305 Ibid., p. 273: “Neither the god nor the goddess in the Kaulajñānanirṇaya has a specific identity. All of the gods of the Kaula type are Bhairavas and the goddesses Bhairavīs. One could say simply, in a nondescript way, that they are Śiva and Śakti. Thus one could describe the cult of the Kaulajñānanirṇaya as non-sectarian Kaulism. Some other works attributed to Matsyendra, such as the printed Akulavīratantra and the unpublished Kulapañcāśikā are of the same type.”
purity. It is telling, then, that when the Manthānabhairava of the Western Transmission denounces tantric practitioners, this rejection includes expunging the jātis from its mantra system. These jātis are syllables such “OM and VAṢAT that prefixed or suffixed mantras,” whose presence is pervasive in the mantra systems of tantric scriptures. Free of this Vedic influence at the level of the tradition’s mantras, the later texts of the Western Kaula Transmission claim an exclusive soteriological power predicated on an even greater degree of distance from Vedic ritual and discourse.

The redactors of Kaula scriptures utilized other strategies to assert the independent and superior status of this new wave of revelation rising from within the scriptural ocean of tantric Śaivism. The Niśvāsamukha, we may recall, introduced a revelatory framework of five streams (pañcasrotas), each associated with one face (mukha) of Sadāśiva, that encompassed and ultimately authorized Vedic orthodoxy, lay Śaivism, Yoga, Sāṅkhya, and Pāśupata ascetic traditions, while justifying the transcendence of the Path of Mantras (Mantramārga) or initiatory Śaivism as the highest stream. The Kaula scriptures extend this

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306 Ibid., p. 260. See also Ibid., pp. 261-262: “Clearly, as the Kubjikā Tantras developed, their exclusive Kaula character asserted itself in various ways. One was that as the tradition grew it distanced itself progressively more from the Veda by divesting itself as much as possible of elements of Vedic ritual. The later texts repeatedly stress that the use of these six syllables is related to the Tantric modality of practice (tantrācāra)... the later Kubjikā Tantras took pride in being free of them and linked this absence to their capacity to lead the adept to the realization of the Śāṁbhava state. Thus, ‘beyond the belly of Māyā’ and so free of the ‘sphere of rajas’ (rajojyanaṇḍala) and the jātis, it is the western Śāṁbhava tradition that ‘always stands above the Tantra.’”

307 On later accounts of the five streams in the Mantramārga, with significant variations in the correlations between each face, mantra, and respective stream / tradition, see HANNEDER (1998), pp. 11-20.
model by positing a “lower face” (pātālavaktra / picuvaktra),\(^{308}\) also envisaged as the “mouth of the Yogini”\(^{309}\) (yoginīvaktra), from which a “sixth stream” of the Kaula teachings issues forth.\(^{310}\) This addition of a “lower face” that releases a “sixth” current associated with the Mouth of the Yogini is highly suggestive of this scriptural corpus’s esoteric character.\(^{311}\) Further proof of this esotericism is found in the intensification of the rhetoric of secrecy and orality in Kaula teachings. The Ciñcinīmatasārasamuccaya also describes this lower face as giving rise to the “Tree of Consciousness,” whose fruit is the “Current of Siddhas,”\(^{312}\) acknowledging the indispensability of perfected Kaula masters in the cult’s propagation.

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\(^{308}\) Another stratagem for extending the five-stream model is mentioned in HANNEDER (1998), p. 21: “In the Vārttika Abhinavagupta does not mention the Picuvaktra; here the source for the higher revelation lies above the upper face (Īśāna) and is simply called ārdhvordhva, the one “higher than the upper”. This face, which is associated with the female power (śakti) of Śiva, is the source of the higher scriptures and corresponds to the higher levels inside the Trika, namely the Kula, Kaula and Mata... What is astonishing is that Abhinava does not mention one important source for this idea: the Jayadrathayāmala. There we find, in the section analysed by Dyczkowski [DYCZKOWSKI 1988, p. 124], a system of six streams which adds a higher stream to the normal five.”

\(^{309}\) DYCZKOWSKI (1988), p. 64: “The ‘Lower Mouth’, which is the Mouth of the Yogini, is generally considered by the Kaula tradition as a whole to be the source of Kaula doctrine. From it flows the sixth current below the five currents of the Śaivāgama.”


\(^{311}\) DYCZKOWSKI (1988), p. 64.

\(^{312}\) Ciñcinīmatasārasamuccaya 1.29cd-1.30: divyaughaparamāṇandam picuvaktran tu kaulikam | tannadhyoditacideryksam mālāsākhāśuvistaram ।। adṛṣṭavigrakahṛūḍham siddhaugraphalam uttamam. Cited and translated in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume three, p. 15.
Abhinavagupta himself identifies this source of the Kaula current with the lower face (adhavaktra), arguing that its doctrines transcend all other traditions from within, because they alone introduce the awareness of nonduality:\textsuperscript{313}

The lower face completely destroys all stains of duality; for when it is worshipped, the multitude of upper and lower [levels] vanishes.

Abhinavagupta’s representation of the Kaula system as pervading all other scriptural streams and religious traditions in virtue of its transmission of an all-inclusive nonduality will be considered in detail in chapter four. The classification of the Kaula stream as a “sixth” current that is most esoteric and religiously efficacious is just one element of the general strategy in Kaula Śaiva scriptures to claim preeminence over the greater scriptural environment of the Mantramārga. In this way, the Kulamārga mirrors the Mantramārga’s strategy of a model of supersession over the Veda, and one result of subordinating the Mantramārga is an even more pronounced sense of superiority over and distance from the Veda and its sphere of influence in Kaula Śaivism.

In preparation for an inquiry into the textual evidence for a distinctive model of revelation in the Kulamārga, some other distinguishing features of the tradition will be summarily sketched. Hatley offers the following pithy synopsis:\textsuperscript{314}

In the domain of ritual, the Kaula tradition attenuated the mortuary or kāpālika dimensions of the Vidyāpītha, shifting the primary locus of ritual from the cremation ground to the body and consciousness itself. This shift involved internalization and simplification of ritual processes, increasingly interiorized conceptions of divine


\textsuperscript{314} Hatley (2007), pp. 156-157.
agencies, disavowal of the outer trappings of the kapālika ascetic, emphasis on ecstatic experience in erotic ritual, and development of comparatively sophisticated systems of yoga... In addition, on the social level the Kaula opened up new possibilities for the engagement of practitioners maintaining conventional social identities and kinship relations.

The Kaula adepts idealized the Kāpālika setting of the crematorium and visionary encounters with bands of protean Yoginīs into internal ritual processes unfolding in the practitioner’s body and awareness.315 This led to a “domestication”316 of much of the Kāpālika components of early Vidyāpīṭha Yoginī cults. This domestication was related to new social horizons for Śaiva

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315 For a vivid account of this process, see SANDERSON (1988), p. 680: “The Kāpālika of the Vidyāpīṭha sought the convergence of the Yoginīs and his fusion with them (joginīmelaka, -melāpa) through a process of visionary invocation in which he would attract them out of the sky, gratify them with an offering of blood drawn from his own body, and ascend with them into the sky as the leader of their band. The Kaulas translated this visionary fantasy into the aesthetic terms of mystical experience. The Yoginīs became the deities of his senses (karaneśvarīs), reveling in his sensations. In intense pleasure this reveling completely clouds his internal awareness: he becomes their plaything or victim (paśu). However, when in the same pleasure the desiring ego is suspended, then the outer sources of sensation lose their gross otherness. They shine within cognition as its aesthetic form. The Yoginīs of the senses relish this offering of ‘nectar’ and gratified thereby they converge and fuse with the kaula’s inner transcendental identity as the Kuleśvara, the Bhairava in the radiant ‘sky’ of enlightened consciousness.”

316 WALLIS (2014), p. 160: “One of the best examples of this is the prohibition of the kapālavṛata in all forms of Kaulism except the Northern Transmission. Indeed, all forms of external markings of sectarian affiliation are forbidden, which indicates the shift of context from the ascetic practicing in the wilds or the charnel ground to the respectable householder practicing at home or at kula gatherings.” On the prohibition of the kapālavṛata see SANDERSON (2005), pp. 118-119 [translating Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka 4.258-259ab]: “[The non-Kaula Tantras prescribe] the practice of [imitative] ascetic observance as the means of achieving identity with the [deity] denoted by [one’s] mantra. But [the Kaula Tantras] forbid this practice of impersonation, so that one may [progress to] realize the [deity] denoted by the mantra is all-embodying.” See also SANDERSON (1988), p. 679: “The Yoginī cult, like the main cults of entry into the Vidyāpīṭha, was the specialty of skull-bearing ascetics removed from conventional society. It might reasonably have been expected to remain so but for Kaulism. This movement within esoteric Śaivism decontaminated the mysticism of the Kāpālikas so that it flowed into the wider community of married householders. In that of Kashmir it found learned exponents who used it to formulate a respectable metaphysics and soteriology with which to stand against Śaiva Siddhānta.”
initiates, in particular a transition from the mortuary domains of itinerant skull-bearing ascetics to the domicile of married householders.317

The internalization of outer practices also resulted in an essentialization, and at times, a total rejection of ritual.318 A novel emphasis upon “spontaneity and intensity of immersion”319 in enlightened awareness replaced the need for outwardly focused ritual propitiation. Previously indispensable rites in tantric liturgies, such as preliminary purification (snāna) and oblations to the sacrificial fire (homa), could be jettisoned in the Kaula mode of worship;320 indeed, “these

317 SANDERSON (1988), p. 682: “One might conclude, then, that this Kaulism, with its emphasis on possession and mystical experience, offered the married Tantric enthusiast an acceptable substitute for the intensity of the Kāpālika Tantric tradition to which he was directly linked through his deities and mantras, but from which he was necessarily excluded by his status as a married home-dweller.” It should also be noted that householder practitioners were not totally absent from pre-Kaula Śaiva scriptures with a Kāpālika flavor. See TÖRZSÖK (2014), pp. 199-200: “There are... some verses in another early scripture, the Svachhandatantra, that clearly give special injunctions concerning householders as opposed to other practitioners or sādhus. It states, for instance, that a householder should not use a rosary made of human bones because it may cause agitation (udvega) in him. Many other passages mentioning the householder, however, include him simply among various other types of practitioners. Most commonly, he figures in a standardized list which is meant to show that anybody can or should practice whatever is prescribed. Thus, in the Siddhayogesvarītāta it is said that whether one is a householder or an ascetic observing celibacy, one should perform the preliminary observance, which is the cause of all siddhi.”

318 An astonishingly comprehensive rejection of ritual is found in the Kramasadbhāva, which characterizes the essential mystery of the Krama teaching as totally free of ritual procedures and paraphernalia. The pertinent passage, cited below, describes the secret teaching of the Krama as free of ritual timings (tithi / kāla), ritual sites (sthāna / niketa), and astrological considerations (nakṣatra / graha), ritual gestures (mudrā) and mantras, fire rituals (agnikarman) and oblations (tila / aksata), vows (vrata) and post-initiatory observances (caryā), as well as yogic breath practices (recaka / puraka / kumbhaka), yogic forms of concentration (saṃyoga), and the restraints that Yogis observe (niyama). See Kramasadbhāva 1.56-60ab:


320 Ibid.
external observances” often underwent a transformation “into yogic practice.”

The elaborate and all-important rite of tantric initiation, moreover, was highly condensed: what was often a multi-day affair could be reduced to an instantaneous or “sudden” event in the Kaula idiom. Kaula initiation also introduced new stipulations: “the initiate is required to manifest signs of possession (āveśa) and is said to have direct experience during his trance of his ascent from level to level of the cosmos” and initiation requires “a putatively enlightened Guru, who... [can] circumvent laborious ritual processes and even bestow initiation merely through a touch or penetrating gaze.” In chapter four we will examine important precedents for these new requirements in early Vidyāpīṭha sources, in particular the earliest scriptures of the Trika.

Some scholars have also noted the centrality of erotic ritual in the Kulamārga. This characterization of the Kaula system often glosses over the diversity of sexual rites scattered across the pre-Kaula scriptures of the

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322 GOODALL (2006), p. 93: “Ce rite complexe, qui implique – entre autres – de nombreuses oblations au feu, et dont la réalisation peut prendre plusieurs jours, ne se réduit pas à une simple séquence d’actes ritualisés.”


325 WHITE (1996), p. 136: “In other words, Siddha Matsyendra, founder of the Yoginī Kaula, shifted the emphasis of early tantrism away from “terrible” practices and clan-based (Kula) system featured in the scriptures of the Vidyā Pīṭha, and towards the erotic-mystical practices that became the bedrock of later Kaulism.”; Cf. WHITE (2003), pp. 8-9.
Mantramārga,\textsuperscript{326} from marginal appearances in the Siddhānta scriptural literature\textsuperscript{327} to a mélange of erotic rituals in the Bhairava and Vidyāpīṭha tantras. Nonetheless, the Kaula scriptures definitely inaugurated “sexual practices more magical, ecstatic, or gnostic in orientation.”\textsuperscript{328} This signals a shift from largely instrumental sexual rites, such as those aimed at the production of sexual fluids as “power-substances to gratify the deities,”\textsuperscript{329} to a focus on the liberating power inherent in the intensity of orgasmic experience itself. Thus, the moment of sexual culmination came to function as “a privileged means of access to a blissful expansion of consciousness in which the deities of the Kula permeate and obliterate the ego of the worshipper.”\textsuperscript{330} This transformation is congruent with a general process in the Kulumārga, particularly in the Krama cult, often designated as “aestheticization”\textsuperscript{331} in the secondary literature. This term refers to a process whereby wheels of female goddesses are reimagined as the sequential

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{326} For a brief survey of the significant diversity of tantric sexual rites, followed by a diachronic study of the coital ritual known as the “razor’s edge observance” (\textit{asidhārāvrata}), see HATLEY (2016).

\textsuperscript{327} HATLEY (2016), pp. 335-337, notes the treatment of the “razor’s edge” coital ritual in the Niśvāsa’s \textit{Guhyasūtra} and the \textit{Mataṅgapārameśvara}, both Saiddhāntika scriptures.

\textsuperscript{328} Ibid., p. 342.


\textsuperscript{330} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{331} Although the term “aestheticization” is potentially misleading, because it potentially evokes an association with theories of aesthetics, which in Sanskritic Indian traditions are largely given over to analysis of poetry and plays. More apt is a connection to the noun “aesthesis,” whose primary meaning is sense-datum, sensation, or the process of perceiving, which although being cognitive functions fundamental to aesthetic experience, are not necessarily connected to the disciplinary domain of the arts.}
flow of cognition and the theater of sense-experience is transformed into a vehicle of liberation.

The final element pioneered by Kaula paradigm to be treated here, a particularly pivotal one with respect to the post-scriptural exegesis of Abhinavagupta, is the introduction of doctrinal nonduality. SANDERSON\textsuperscript{332} has demonstrated that regardless of prescriptions of a ritual awareness of nonduality, the vast majority of scriptures of the Siddhānta, Bhairava cult, and Vidyāpīṭha, including Abhinavagupta’s primary exegetical source text, the Mālinīvijayottara, operate under the premise of a dualistic ontology. SANDERSON goes on to propose\textsuperscript{333} that important sectarian Kaula texts, namely those of the Trika (Trikasāra and Triśīrobhairava) and Krama (Kālīkrama, Devīpañcaśatikā, Kramasadbhāva, and Jayadrathayāmala), actually propound the “nondualism of dynamic consciousness.”\textsuperscript{334} On the basis of these Kaula scriptural precedents, SANDERSON concludes, Abhinavagupta read a nondual ontology into “the entire non-Saiddhāntika corpus.”\textsuperscript{335} TÖRZSÖK has recently extended\textsuperscript{336} SANDERSON’s insights. Through close textual analysis she charts the subtle transitions in Śaiva

\textsuperscript{332} SANDERSON (1992), “The Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra.”

\textsuperscript{333} Ibid., p. 307, footnote 89.

\textsuperscript{334} TÖRZSÖK cites a number of instances of nondualism in these texts, and details how they fulfill “both basic criteria of nondual theology, the identity of god with the individual soul(s) and the identity of god with the phenomenal world.” See TÖRZSÖK (2014), p. 217 and Ibid., footnotes 108-109.

\textsuperscript{335} SANDERSON (1992), p. 307.

\textsuperscript{336} TÖRZSÖK (2014), “Nondualism in Early Śākta Tantras: Transgressive Rites and their Ontological Justification in a Historical Perspective.”
scriptural sources moving from various propositions of ritual nondualism housed in dualist metaphysics to the emergence of a nondual ontology proper.

To summarize each phase of her “roughly chronological” narrative:337 early Vidyāpīṭha scriptures first utilize “impure” ritual substrates while emphasizing that one should not entertain the thought of a dichotomy between pure and impure in the act of ritual propitiation.338 This is what is referred to above as a “ritual nondualism.” The next phase introduces “justifications” of nondualistic ritual awareness based on statements that everything in this universe is created by Bhairava, with the working assumption that impure ritual offerings have greater efficacy in tantric praxis. This led to an interrogation in “anti-ritualist Kaula texts, which postdate the scriptures of the early Yoginī cult”339 of not only the concept of the purity of ritual substances, but also the need for preliminary purification of the ritual agent. Why would anything in Bhairava’s intrinsically pure creation require purification? Nevertheless, certain early Kaula scriptures like the Bhairavamaṅgalā preserve the view that initiation does materially purify the initiate. The next step towards a radical doctrine of

337 Ibid., pp. 220-221.

338 TÖRZSŐK makes an excellent distinction on this point: “Just as Tantras of the Siddhānta allow the use of impure substances in certain contexts for siddhis, some early Yoginī Tantras give options for pure substitutes when impure substances are to be used primarily. Thus, the prescription of impurity is not always as strong and exclusive as it is usually assumed. Several reasons can be evoked to explain these options, but the most common explanation given by the scriptures themselves is that whatever is available can be used. This attitude tallies with the nondualism of these texts, which emphasizes that one should not differentiate between what is pure and impure. The practice goes back to pāśupata observances, in which the practitioner may eat and drink whatever is available to him, behaving like a beast (5.18 mṛgadharmā vā).” See TÖRZSŐK (2014), p. 220.

339 Ibid., p. 221.
nonduality, exemplified by another early Kaula scripture (Kulasāra), is reconceptualizing the very act of initiation as a purely mental process; instead of being an “action” that dissolves impurity (mala) of a material nature, initiation is simply the removal of epistemic ignorance and “the mental abolition of the pure-impure distinction.” This view of Śaiva initiation as the bestowal of knowledge (jñāna) as opposed to purifying ritual (karma) prefigures the theology of nondual exegetes in Kashmir, and is vigorously defended in the systematic thought of Abhinavagupta. Finally, in identifying the individual soul, immanent universe, and supreme godhead with one dynamic consciousness (cit/saṃvit), the Krama scriptures of the Kaula tradition, TÖRZSÖK contends, articulate a full blown and incontrovertible ontology of nonduality.

§ 3.2 Revelation in Kaula Śaivism

A defining hallmark of Kaula Śaivism is the placement of accomplished Kaula adepts or Siddhas at very heart of the process of scriptural transmission, resulting in a distinctive “person-centered” model of revelation. Regarding this

340 Ibid., p. 221.

341 Ibid., p. 217: “For it is in the Krama that the supreme deity has the form of consciousness (cītsvarūpa) while also embodying the universe (sarvarūpa/viśvarūpa)—fulfilling both basic criteria of nondual theology, the identity of the god with the individual soul(s) and the identity of the god with the phenomenal world.” On the supreme deity as the form of consciousness, TÖRZSÖK cites the following sources, Ibid., p. 217, footnote 108: “Kramasadbhāva 2.84 (goddesses), 3.61 (Parā Kāli), 3.77 (Anākhyā).” On the world as the embodiment of that same consciousness, see Ibid., footnote 109: “Devīpaīcaṣatikā 6.24 (sarvarūpa); 2.68, 3.48, 5.42 (viśvarūpa); Kramasadbhāva 1.13, 1.27, 2.73 (viśvarūpa); 5.42, 6.65 (sarvarūpa).”

342 The distinctive elements of this person-centered model of revelation will be further explicated in chapter four, particularly in contrast to other person-centered frameworks for śabdapramāṇa in early Nyāya, Śāṅkha, Bhartṛhari’s Vākyapadiya, and Pātañjala Yoga. Other Indic religious communities likewise deserve attention regarding the role of individual masters in revelation, most obviously Buddhist and Jain text traditions. In future studies I
emphasis on Siddhas in scriptural dissemination, the following statement of the
earliest text of the Kubjikā corpus of the Western Transmission, the
Kubjikāmatatantra, is illustrative:

Bravo! Bravo, O Goddess of great fortune! O bestower of great bliss! The teaching
that you have requested is utterly astonishing and salutary. That is kept secret by all
the Rudras, tantric heroes, and Bhairavas. It is beyond ritual procedure and is [itself]
the transmission of Siddhas; nevertheless, I will teach you that [secret teaching],
which has come down through a series [of transmissions] on the Path of the Siddhas
[and] is established through the line of Siddhas.

This citation is part of Bhairava’s introduction to the revelatory teaching that
comprises the Kubjikāmatatantra, and the identification of the scripture with the
lineage of Siddhas charged with its dispensation recurs across the corpus of
Kaula scriptures.

In an account that closely resembles the earliest or “uninflected” template
of Kaula worship, preserved in the twenty-ninth chapter of the Tantrāloka, the


343 Kubjikāmatatantra 1.44-46: sādhu sādhu mahābhāge mahānandavidhāyini ।.
prchitāṃ yat tvayā vākyām atyadbhutam anāmyam ।
gopitaṃ sarvarudrānām virānām bhairavesu ca ।
siddhakramānā

344 Īrnikaulārvavatrantra 1.5ab: śrutaṃ mayā kulāmnāyaṃ siddha

345 Sanderson (2014), p. 59: The Pūrvāmnāya as outlined in this text
[Ciicīṇiṇatathārasamuccaya] appears to be the uninflected, original form of the Kula; and it is
transmission (krama) or lineage (santati) of Siddhas is associated with four Siddhas in particular, the “Masters of Four Ages” (Yuganāthas). This line of Siddhas descend (avatīrṇa) into different epochs to transmit the Kaula teaching, and they are included in the central deity-enthroning diagram (maṇḍala) of the Kula liturgy (kulayāga) where they are to be propitiated. Abhinavagupta enumerates them with their respective consorts: the four couples, in order, are Khagendra and Vijjāmbā, Kūrma and Maṅgalā, Meṣa and Kāmamaṅgalā, and finally Macchanda (Matsyendranātha) and Kuṅkuṇāmbā (Koṅkaṇā).

closely related to that which was taught for the Trika by the Mālinīvijayottara (11.3-16), Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka (29.18-55), and Jayaratha’s commentary thereon. On the synthesis represented by the Tantrāloka’s teaching of the central Kula maṇḍala, see DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 367: “A major source of this complex ritual constructed by Abhinava is the Mādhavakula, that is, the fourth śatka of the Jayadrathayāmala, especially chapter 23. Another is the Kularatnamālā, which, like the Jayadrathayāmala, was an important Kāl Tantra. Abhinava integrates these Kāl sources with the Trika, which is represented there by the Tantrasadbhāva. Thus he presents a quintessential Kaula rite distilled from these two major traditions, a procedure which finds scriptural antecedents and support in the synthesis of the two elaborated in the Devyāyāmala.

346 DYCZKOWSKI (1988), p. 62: “The Tantrāloka records one of the basic patterns of classification of these Kula traditions, namely, the Siddhakrama (or Siddhasantati) originally established by four Kaula masters, each said to have been incarnated in one of the four Ages (yuga).” Abhinavagupta identifies the lineage of Siddhas (siddhasantati) with this group of four Siddhas earlier in the text. See Tantrāloka 4.267ab: yugakramena kūrmaṣṭya mīnānta siddhasantatiḥ.

347 Jayaratha introduces the list of four Yuganāthas with instructions on their worship. See Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 29.29ab: krīḍiyugakramāvatīrṇam siddhacatuskam abhyarcayet vaksyamāṇakramenapūjayet ‘One should venerate the collection of four Siddhas, who have descended sequentially with each age beginning with Kṛta Yuga, and then] worship them in the order that will now be described.’

348 Tantrāloka 29.29cd-31: khagendraḥ sahavijjāmba illāri ambayā saha || vakaṭṣir vimalo ‘nantamekhalāmbāyutah purā | śaktiṣa marigalayā kūrma illāri ambayā saha || jaitro yāmye hy avijitas tathā sānamandekhalal | kāmamaṅgalayā meṣaṁ kullāi ambayā saha || vindhyo “py ajarayā saha mekhala怜 pare | macchandah kuṅkuṇāmbā ca śadjugman sādhikāram. In this citation the first three Yuganāthas are listed with their consorts and each has two sons, also accompanied by consorts. Macchanda, the Siddha of the Kali Age, breaks this pattern. He is mentioned with a group of six “qualified” (sādhikāram) sons. Tantrāloka 29.32cd-34 enumerates these six sons of Matsyendranātha who were not celibates (ārdhvaretas), which explains why they are qualified to transmit the tradition. Tantrāloka 29.41 lists another set of six sons of Matsyendranātha who were celibate (ārdhvaretas), and thus devoid of this
§ 3.3 Matsyendranātha

Matsyendranātha or Macchandanātha, given his position as the fourth Siddha responsible for the descent of Kaula revelation into the world in this Kali Age, is arguably the most iconic agent of revelation in Kaula Śaivism. Abhinavagupta extols this Siddha before proceeding to offer benedictory verses to the Śaiva gurus in his more immediate preceptorial lineages at the commencement of the Tantrāloka. This esteemed position of Matsyendranātha at the forefront of his magnum opus signals the primacy of the Kūlamārga in Abhinavagupta’s great compendium on tantric ritual and theology. The benediction also alludes to the numerous narrative accounts in Kaula scriptures of Macchanda’s identity as the “Fisherman” Siddha:

May he, the pervasive Lord Macchanda (Fisherman) be pleased with me; he who has cast along the outer path the net (of Māyā) which spreads and extends (in all directions). Red with attachment and strewn with knots and holes, it is made of many parts.

 qualification. DUPUCHE, in his translation of this chapter, notes that Abhinavagupta gives a slightly different order of the four Siddhas earlier in Tantrāloka 4.266-267ab. See DUPUCHE (2003), p. 203, footnote 49. However, SANDERSON offers a conjectural solution to this inconsistency. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 121, footnote 80.

349 Matsyendranātha came to have an “afterlife” in the Sanskrit and vernacular texts of the Nāth Sampradāya. Although there are narrative echoes of his original Kaula pedigree, the texts of this tradition are significantly later than and distinct from the early scriptures of the Kūlamārga. On the Nāth Sampradāya, and Matsyendranātha’s place within it, see MALLINSON (2011), especially pp. 4-5.

350 DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 271.

351 Tantrāloka 1.7: rāgārūṇaṁ granthhibilāvikīrṇaṁ yo jālam ātānavitānavaṛtta \ kalombhitam būhyapathe ca kārā stān me sa macchandavibhuh prasannaḥ. Translation of DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 271, footnote 4. Jayaratha glosses Abhinavagupta’s plea for Macchandanātha to be pleased with him accordingly in Tantrāloka viveka ad Tantrāloka 1.7: mama prasannaḥ stāt svātmadarsaṇasaṁvibhāgapārtratām āvīṣkuryātt ity arthāḥ ‘May he be pleased with me’ has the following sense: may he reveal the state of being a vessel for the bestowal of vision of one’s own Self.’
Jayaratha’s commentarial preamble to this verse is full of valuable information on the role of Matsyendranātha in the Kaula tradition and the place of Kaula Śaivism in Abhinavagupta’s system:352

Authors of systematic texts must, as a matter of course, eulogize their own teachers. Moreover, given that the treatise [i.e., the Tantrāloka] about to be taught has a two-fold character, since it consists of both the Kula procedure and that of the Tantras, [and] because the Kula procedure predominates over all other methods, therefore [Abhinavagupta] first praises the Fourth Master [Matsyendranātha] who is the Avatāraka (Agent of Revelation) of that [Kaula tradition].

Jayaratha, in addition to supplying a rationale for why Abhinavagupta begins his string of preceptorial benedictory verses with Matsyendranātha at the outset of the Tantrāloka, characterizes this Siddha as the primary Agent of Revelation (avatāraka) in the Kulamārga. The pivotal role of this individual figure in the Kaula system is spelled out by Jayaratha a bit further on: “That (Macchandanātha) is celebrated as the Avatāraka of the entire Kaula scriptural tradition.”354 Further elucidating what is meant by Matsyendranātha’s prominent role in revealing the Kaula teachings in this age, Jayaratha cites an anonymous text.355

352 Tantrālokaviveka introducing Tantrāloka 1.7: avaśyam eva śāstrakāraś svagurvādeḥ kīrtanaṃ kāryam atīśa va vyakṣyamanāśastraśya kulatantraprakīramatvena dvaividaḥpi śa... kulaprajītyāḥ prakriyāntarebhyaḥ pradhānyat... tadavatārakam turyanātham eva tāvat prathamaṃ kīrtayati.

353 On the Kaula system’s paramountcy, Jayaratha gives the following citation. Tantrālokaviveka introducing Tantrāloka 1.7: nabhasbhitā yathā tārā na bhrajante ravau sthite | evam siddhāntatantrāṇi na vibhānti kulaṅgane || tasmat kulāt rīnte nänyat saṃśārodhrānaṃ prati ‘Just as the stars, [although still] present in the sky, do not shine when the sun is out, the Siddhānta Tantras do not shine in the presence of the Kula scriptural tradition. Therefore, nothing other than the Kula (teachings) can liberate one from cyclical existence.’ This translation adapts the one found in Dyczkowski (2001), p. 49, footnote 15.

354 Tantrālokaviveka ad Tantrāloka 1.7: saḥ sakalakulaśāstrāvatārakatayā prasiddhāḥ.

355 Tantrālokaviveka introducing Tantrāloka 1.7: bhairavyā bhairavat prāptam yoṣaṃ *prāpya (em. : vyāpya Ed.) tataḥ priye || tatsakāśāt tu siddhena mānakhyaṇa varānane || kāmarūpe mahāpiṭhe
Beloved, the [corpus that teaches Kaula] Yoga was received in its entirety by Bhairavī from Bhairava, and then from her by the Siddha called Macchanda, known as Mīna[nātha], in the great Pīṭha of Kāmarūpa.

This verse appears to be a segment of a Kaula narrative on the descent of scriptures (tantrāvatāra). It describes Matsyendranātha’s reception of the original scriptural dialogue of Bhairava and Bhairavī, without any intermediary process, in a Great Seat (mahāpīṭha) of Kaula revelation with which he is commonly associated, Kāmarūpa (/ Kāmākhyā in modern Guwahati, Assam).356

Jayaratha portrays Matsyendranātha as the sole Agent of Revelation (avatāraka) of the entire Kaula tradition in this Kali Age. If this portrayal has any currency regarding the way in which the Kaula scriptures articulate their own origin, then we are confronted with a model of revelation largely dependent upon the intercession of an individual perfect Kaula master, which has no parallel in the early scriptures of the Siddhānta, Mantrapīṭha, and Vidyāpīṭha. There is evidence that Jayaratha’s portrayal is not unfounded. Numerous Kaula scriptures claim to be revealed (avatārita) by Matsyendranātha. SANDERSON cites five Kaula scriptures, the Kulapaṅcāśikā, Guhyasiddhi, Ūrmikaulārṇava, Kaulajñānanirṇaya, and Kulānanda, whose colophons make this attribution.357 Of


356 For this geographical identification of Kāmarūpa or Kāmākhyā, see DYCZKOWSKI (2001), p. 49.

357 SANDERSON (2007), p. 264, footnote 95: “Colophons of scriptures of the Kula do indeed refer to them as promulgated by him [Matsyendranātha]; e.g. (1) Kulapaṅcāśikā, f.6v5 (end): iti kulapaṅcāsikāyām śrīnats[y]end[r]lapādāvatāre; (2) Guhyasiddhi, f. 20r6-7: śrīmacchagnapādāvatārite śrīkāmākhyāvācintirahal guhyasiddhiṣṭhamah paṭalahaḥ; (3) Ūrmikaulārṇava A, f. 27r7-9: iti śrīnilatantre (nīla em. : nīra A) śrīmadāūrmikaulārṇave mahāsāstre lakṣapādoddhṛte pramārāhase śrībhogahastakramāmnaye śrīkaulagiripīṭhavirnigate śrīminānāthāvatārite śaṭsatādhikāśate kulakaulanirṇaye karmakośāvicāro nāma tṛtīyahaḥ paṭalahaḥ; (4)
these five scriptures, the Úrmikaulārṇavava eulogizes Matsyendranātha at the beginning of the text\textsuperscript{358} and frequently refers to him in the capacity of scriptural revelation.\textsuperscript{359} Noting that Matsyendranātha is also mentioned as the “oldest, most revered teacher”\textsuperscript{360} in three early Kaula scriptures of the Krama,\textsuperscript{361} the Yonigahvaratatantra, Devīpaṇcaśatikā, and Kramasadbhāva, DYCZKOWSKI goes on to say:\textsuperscript{362}

Thus, Matsyendranātha, who may well have been a historical figure, represents a major watershed in the development of Kaulism. The evidence suggests that prior to

\textsuperscript{358} Úrmikaulārṇavatantra 1.1-4.

\textsuperscript{359} Úrmikaulārṇavatantra 1.52: idaṃ pariṣṭhitaḥ saptadhā khecarārcitam | mīnakhecaranāthena yuge ‘smin cāvatāritam; Úrmikaulārṇavatantra 1.75: siddhā kalīyuge yo ‘sau mahābhairavavigrāhaḥ | mīnakhecaranāmneti bhogahastaṁ tu taṇa vidūḥ; Úrmikaulārṇavatantra 2.25: tat krameṇa prakāśyami saptadhā khecarārcitam | pāramparakramāyaṁī śrīnāthaḥ prakāśītam; Úrmikaulārṇavatantra 3.65 yoginikaulasadbhāvaḥ kathito mīnaśāsane | pīṇḍādiṣṭānaukajīnāṇamśīdāhānāyaṇakramāgatam.

\textsuperscript{360} DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 273. It should be noted that these texts do not all explicitly claim to be “revealed” (avatārīta) by Matsyendranātha; the Devīpaṇcaśatikā and the Kramasadbhāva rather claim to be revealed by a certain Śrīnātha, which indeed is one of Matsyendranātha’s aliases, but this attribution leaves open other possibilities, which will be explored below.

\textsuperscript{361} Matsyendranātha is listed in the second Krama text mentioned here in an account that parallels the one found in the Tāntrāloka. Devīpaṇcaśatikā 3.5-8: āduye yuge yathāyātamu tretāyāṃ dvāpare tathā | caturthe tu mahāghore samāsac chṛṇu bhairava || khaḍgendrānaḥ viṁśāmāsamāyatiḥ kṛte yuge | dvitiye kūrmanāthas tu maṅgalāṁbāsamanvitaḥ || trītiye meṣanāthas tu kāmānāgalaḥ saha | caturthe mīnānāthas tu koṅkanaṁbhāsamāyutaḥ || tasya ca krīḍamānasya samjñāḥ dvādaśātmaṇjoḥ | teṣaṁ nāmāni vākṣyāmi yathāmānayaṁ kuleśvara ‘That [scriptural tradition] was received in the first age just as it was in the second, third, and the extremely terrible fourth age [i.e. kalī yuga]. Listen to that in brief, O Bhairava. In the Kṛta Yuga, Khaḍgendrānaḥ was accompanied by [his consort] Viṁśā. In the second age, Kūrmanātha was accompanied by Maṅgaḷāṁba. In the third age was Meṣanātha together with Kāmānāgala. In the fourth, Mīnānātha is accompanied by Koṅkaṇāmbā. Born of that [Mīnānātha] who was amorous sporting [with Koṅkaṇāmbā], were twelve sons. I will teach you their names as has been scripturally documented, O God of the Kula.’

\textsuperscript{362} DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, pp. 273-274.
him Kaulism existed only in the diffuse form outlined above as a feature of the Yoginī cults of the Bhairava Tantras. The transition out of this pervasive presence into independent Kaula schools is invariably signaled by his legendary intervention.

Shrouded in highly idealized narratives (about to be explored) and credited with the legendary role as founder of the entire Kaula tradition, historicizing a figure like Matsyendranātha is a task fraught with uncertainty. However, it is interesting to speculate on the extent to which the obsession of Kaula scriptural redactors and scribes with this enigmatic figure may be understood as a historical trace of the career of a real, historical reformer of Vidyāpītha Yoginī cults. Nevertheless, it is the tradition’s pervasive representation of Matsyendra as a catalyst in the process of revelation, and by extension the Kulaṁārga’s rhetorical emphasis on an individual enlightened figure as decisive to the emergence of its revelatory canon, that primarily concerns us here.  

Chapter sixteen of the early Kaula scripture, the Kaulajñānanirṇaya, narrativizes Matsyendranātha’s role in the scriptural dissemination of the Kaula scriptural tradition (kaulāgama). Earlier in this chapter Bhairava, in his dialogue

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363 For further corroboration of the affiliation of Matsyendranātha with the emergence of the Kaula tradition, see SANDERSON (1985), p. 203, footnote 110: “The distinction between Kula and Kaula traditions mentioned passim but not clarified... is best taken to refer to the clan-structured tradition of the cremation-grounds seen in Brahmāyāmal-Picumata, Jayadratayāmalatanttra, Tantrasadbhāva, Siddhayogeśvarīnata, etc. (with its Kāpālika kaulikā vidhayah) on the one hand and on the other its reformation and domestication through the banning of mortuary and all sect-identifying signs (vyaktaliṅgata), generally associated with Macchanda / Matsyendra.”

364 The translation that follows, cited primarily in footnotes, is based on the forthcoming edition of the Kaulajñānanirṇaya of Shaman HATLEY. The translation of this passage benefits from the one found in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, pp. 319-320. However, based on the improved edition of HATLEY over BAGCHI’s (which DYCZKOWSKI follows), and also thanks to having the opportunity to read this passage with Shaman HATLEY, the following translation departs from, and improves upon, DYCZKOWSKI’s in a number of places. That said, DYCZKOWSKI does a remarkable job given the condition of BAGCHI’s edition.
with Bhairavi, identifies himself with a list of Siddhas\textsuperscript{365} foremosted by his identification with the Siddha Matsyendranātha.\textsuperscript{366} He begins his account of Matsyendranātha by telling the Goddess that he revealed the Kaula scriptural wisdom in Kāmarūpa, the famous “Seat” (pīṭha) of revelation associated with Matsyendranātha.\textsuperscript{367} He then eludes to an earlier episode of the revelation of the Kaula scriptures at the Island of the Moon (candradvīpa). He reminds the Goddess that they had once visited this place where they were joined by their son Kārttikeya as a young boy (baṭuka).\textsuperscript{368} Kārttikeya, suddenly shrouded in ignorance, decided to steal the Kaula scriptural knowledge from his parents in Candradvīpa. Through the retribution of Bhairava’s curse he was transformed into a mouse.\textsuperscript{369} After cursing his son to assume this murine form, Bhairava scanned the ocean surrounding that Moon Island for the stolen scriptural

\textsuperscript{365} This list begins at Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.15, and many of the Siddha names (Viśvapāda, Vicitra, Śvetapāda, Bhrṇgapāda, etc.) line up with the list of Siddhas found in Kaulajñānanirṇaya’s ninth chapter. I thank Shaman Hatley for pointing out this connection with the Siddhas mentioned earlier in the text.

\textsuperscript{366} Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.12: ahaṃ so bhaṭṭasamjñānas tu matsaghnaś caiva kevaṭah | ahaṃ so dhīvaro devi aham vireśvarah priye ‘I am known as Bhaṭṭa and I am Matsaghna; I am Kevaṭa [related to Kaivarta], I am a Fisherman, and the Lord of Heroes, my dear one.’

\textsuperscript{367} Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.21cd-22ab: yadāvatāritan jñānam kāmarūpe tvayā mayā | | tadāvatāritan tubhyan tatvam tu śaḍmukhasya ca ‘When I revealed that scriptural wisdom in Kāmarūpa with you, at that time the essence was revealed to You and Kārttikeya.’

\textsuperscript{368} Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.28: ahaṇ caiva tvayā sāṛddham candradvīpagato yadā | tadā baṭukarāpēṇa kārttikeya samāgataḥ ‘When I went to Candradvīpa with you, Kārttikeya, in the form of a young boy, came along.’

\textsuperscript{369} The word here for mouse, mūṣaka, also means “thief,” and the text is clearly playing with this double meaning.
wisdom with his divine vision (jñānadṛṣṭi), ultimately retrieving it from the belly of a fish that he had pulled to shore.\footnote{Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.29-31: ajñānahāvam ārtya taddā sāstraḥ hi mūsitam | śāpito 'yam mayā devi śadvakākṛthiḥ | gato 'ham sāgaraḥ bhadrē jñānadṛṣṭyāvalokitam | maccham ākārṣyatto tu sphaṇītaḥ codaraṃ priye | grhītāḥ matsyodarastham tu āniṭan tu gṛhe punah | sthāpaitto jñānahātaṃ mama gūḍham tu rakṣitam 'Upon entering an ignorant state, [Kāṛttikeya] stole the [Kaula] scriptural teachings. I cursed Kāṛttikeya, O Goddess, that he would become a mouse. I [then] went to the ocean, O auspicious one, [and] spotted [that scripture] with my eye of wisdom. Having caught a fish, I split open its belly, O dear one. Retrieving the [Kaula sāstra] lying in the belly of that fish, I brought that [scripture] back home. Upon establishing that [wisdom] as a scriptural tablet, my secret teaching was safeguarded.'}

This recovery was short-lived, because the mouse-Kāṛttikeya then spitefully burrowed an underground tunnel to pilfer the Kula sāstra yet again, and promptly hurled it back into the ocean where it is swallowed up by a fish of massive proportions. In a fit of anger, Bhairava wove a net of pure energy to catch this fish, yet another action aligning the god with the contaminating profession of a fisherman.\footnote{Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.31-16.32: punah kruddham anenaiva mūṣakaṃ sureśvāri | gāṛttaṃ kṛtvā suruṅgāya punah kṣiptam hi sāgare | dasakaṭipramāṇena mahāmatsyaṃ bhāṣitaṃ | mama krodhasatpannam śaktijālam mayā kṛtaḥ ‘That mouse-thief, enraged, O divine Goddess, dug a hole to form an underground passage (to steal the śāstra) and then hurled it back into the ocean. Swallowed up by a great fish of massive proportions, I became furious [and] made a net of power.’}

Empowered by the Kaula scripture within it, the great fish, “difficult for even the gods to overcome,” could not be harnessed, and so Bhairava had to relinquish his status as a brahmin in order to fully embrace the profession of fisherman. As a fisherman he wielded the requisite skill to catch this curiously powerful fish.\footnote{Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.34-36: ākāṛṣito mahāmatsa saptānāṃ sāgaraḥ hradaḥ | anāgato 'sau mahāmatsyaṃ mama tulyabalaḥ priye | jñānatejena saṁbhūto durjaśas tridaśār api | brahmatvam hi tadā tyaktāḥ cintāvidhīvarātmakaṃ | aham so dhīvaro devi kaiwarttavam mayā kṛtāḥ | ākṛṣṭas tu tato matsyaḥ śaktijālasamikṛtyaḥ ‘That great fish was [caught in the net] and pulled from the depths of the seven seas. His strength equal to mine, that great fish did not come, O dear one. Through radiant power of the scriptural wisdom [that great fish] had become difficult} Meeting with success, Bhairava, having now
become the Siddha Matsyendranātha to procure the scriptural teachings, cut
open the fish and once more recovered the Kulāgama from its belly.\textsuperscript{373}

The Goddess, upon hearing the full account, immediately registers the
implications of the loss of social status required to make the Kaula scriptures
available in this world:\textsuperscript{374}

\begin{quote}
You are a brahmin of great merit, [but] you took on the status of a fisherman, and
brahmins who kill fish are called “Matsaghna.” O chief of the brahmins, since you
have taken on that status, you have become a Kaivartta (Fisherman).
\end{quote}

The Goddess’s main take away, for this is her only response, is that Bhairava
became a fisherman entailing the loss of social status. The symbolism of the story
is not deeply veiled, but does require interpretative engagement. The narrative
appears to shed light on the identity of this archetypal founding figure of the
Kaula scriptural tradition as ritually impure from having to kill fish, entailing the
loss of his status as a brahmin. Moreover, this shift in status is directly connected
with his recovery of the Kaula scriptures. This suggests that this pivotal Kaula
figure’s aliases—Matsyendranātha, Mīnanātha, Macchandanātha—may reflect
his lower caste identity. By extension, this narrative detail could convey the
message, as DYCZKOWSKI suggests, that any brahmin who becomes initiated into

\textsuperscript{373} Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.37ab: \textit{matsyodaran tu tat sphoṭya grhītaṁ ca kulāgamam} ‘Splitting open
that belly of the fish, the Kulāgama was retrieved.’

\textsuperscript{374} Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.38: \textit{brāhmaṇo ‘si mahāpuruṣo kaivarttatavaṁ tvayā kṛtah}
matsyābhīghātino viprā matsaghnam ceti viśrutā \textit{kaivarttatavaṁ kṛtaṁ yasmāt kaivartto
viprandyakā.}
the Kulamārga must also suffer a corresponding loss of status. “However, this degradation in terms of caste is an upgrade in terms of Kaula practice.” As we saw above, distance from Vedic norms of purity and impurity and also mantric formulae, all seen to be embedded in a highly circumscribed mode of worldly existence, is part of how the Kaula traditions emanating from the Kāpālika Yoginī cults vindicate the greater potency of their teaching tradition.

In terms of a model of revelation, this narrative offers further evidence that the Siddha Matsyendranātha, whatever the pedigree of his human history or divine identity as an incarnation of Bhairava, was seen as ensuring the transmission of the Kula doctrine in this age. In the same vein, the Kaulajñānanirṇaya shares the Kaula convention that aligns different waves of Kaula revelation with each of the Four Ages, and describes the scriptural corpus of the Kali Age as “Matsodara”—“[the revelation recovered by

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375 DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 321: “It sounds at first that the original Matsyendra was indeed a low-caste fisherman and that his authority to recover—or, some might prefer, compose—śāstra is derived from his being originally a Brahmin. Again, the fact that the śāstra is inside a fish compels the person who wishes to recover it to kill it. In other words, the Brahmin Matsyendra had to fall from his high caste to that of a low caste fisherman in order to gain access to the Kulāgama. The message is that this is the ‘fall’ every Brahmin will have to undergo.”

376 Ibid., p. 321

377 For an excellent and robust description of this process, especially with reference to the post-scriptural literature of Kashmir, see SANDERSON (1985), “Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir.”

378 Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.48cd: caturyugavibhāgena avatārāṇa coditam mayā ‘In accordance with the divisions of the Four Ages, I cause that [scripture] to descend.’
Matsyendra from] the Belly of the Fish." Thus, at least for the current world age (kaliyuga), the notion that an individual Siddha, Matsyendranātha, singlehandedly procured and then transmitted the Kula scriptures is unambiguously advocated in this early Kaula scripture. Moreover, this narrative is briefly recapitulated and imitated in later Kaula scriptures.

§ 3.4 Siddhas of the Krama

Notwithstanding Matsyendranātha’s widespread recognition as a hallowed revealer of Kaula scripture, there are other individual Siddhas who feature in revelation narratives and thus further corroborate the emphasis upon individual Siddhas in the scriptural propogation of the Kulamārga. One example is Niśkriyānanda who is credited with revealing Kaula teachings of the cult of the Northern Transmission known as the Krama tradition. One Krama scripture, the

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379 Kaulajñānanirṇaya 16.49: jñānādau nirṇītiḥ kaulaṁ dvītīye mahatsamjñītim \ tṛtīye siddhāṃrtaṁ nāma kalau matsodaram priye ‘O dear one, in the first [age] scriptural wisdom is known as Nirṇīti. In the second [age] the Kaula is known as Mahat. In the third, there is the Nectar of the Siddhas (Siddhāṃrta), and in the Kali Age, the Fish Belly (Matsodara).’

380 The early Kubjikā Kaula scripture, the Kularatnoddyota, tips its hat towards Matsyendra as the key figure in the tradition it inherits. Kularatnoddyota 10.153ab; 10.154: paścimedaṁ svabhāvena kulāmnāyam kuleśvarī | mīnapādāṅkasamasyuktam pūrvāmnīyam bhaviṣyati | pīṭhakramanasanāyuktaṁ tatsantānasamavatam ‘O mistress of the Kula, this is by its very nature the last (paścima) Kula tradition... The previous tradition will possess the mark of the venerable Mīna(nātha) and the transmission of the sacred seats and that lineage. Translation of DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 321. In the next chapter there is an abbreviated version of the story of Matsyendranātha. Kularatnoddyota 11.39-45: tasyodare mahāsiddho ājñāvīryodbhavaḥ priye | bhaviṣyati mahāmāye tācchāstrābhyaśakṛt svayam || jñānayogenā tācchāstraṁ kṣiptam putreṇa sāgare | śaktijālena tannāyam aṅkṣya tarasā priye || udare tasya matsyasya pāthaiṣayati Siddhārāḥ | tannadhīye pustakābhyaśam kurvantam eti dīptimān || viśvaśayiṣai tāṁ drstō apurvāṁ codyaṁ uttamam | apurvādam mayā drṣṭaṁ aṅkṣyaṁ vismaṇavaham || tasmāt taṁ matsya udarāi jannāntaram avāptavān | matsyendranāmahbhaviṣyati tavedam viharyottamam || taviśaṁ viplā kārtir bhaviṣyati mahīśale | tvatsaṁtānaṁ idaṁ vatsa pūrvaṁnāyeta samjñāyā || paścīmasya tu mārgasya pratibimbam iva sthitam | ānandāvalibhedaiś ca sōbhaṁ siddhīdāyakam. See DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 322, for a translation of this passage. Ibid., p. 323 goes on to mention other brief references to this narrative in the Ciṇcintimatasārasanuccaya and Manthānabhāairava.
Devīpañcaśatikā, gives a list of the “guru lineage” (gurusantati) of Kaula Siddhas, commencing with the four Yoganāthas who herald the reception of the Kaula teachings in each of the four ages, followed by Matsyendranātha’s twelve sons.\footnote{Devīpañcaśatikā 3.9-15ab.}

Immediately after this formulaic list another set of four couples are enumerated: Niṣkriyānanda and Jñānādīpti, Vidyānanda and Raktā, Śaktyānanda and Mahānandā, and Śivānanda and Samayā.\footnote{Devīpañcaśatikā 3.15cd-17: niṣkriyānandanaṁthāṣa ca jñānādīptyaṁ sahaikataḥ || vidyānandaś ca raktā ca dvitiyāḥ kathitas tava || śaktyānando mahānandaloḥ triṇyāḥ siddhapūjitaḥ || śivānando mahānandaloḥ samāyītaś caturthakaḥ || khagendraśyādisiddhānāṁ kathitā gurusantatiḥ ‘The first [couple] is Niṣkriyānanda is accompanied by Jñānādīpti. The second is taught as Vidyānanda and Raktā. The third set that is venerated by the Siddhas is Śaktyānanda and Mahānandā. The fourth Śivānandana of great bliss and Samayā. The guru lineage of the Siddhas beginning with Khagendra[nātha] is thus taught.’ This passage is cited in Tāntrālokaviveka introducing Tāntrāloka 29.43-46ab and mentioned in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 315, footnote 1.}

The location in this chapter of these four Kaula Siddhas and consorts, beginning with Niṣkriyānanda, suggests that these are the primary teachers of the Krama transmission which directly follows from the lineage of Kaula Siddhas under the umbrella of the greater Kulamārga.

Niṣkriyānanda’s appearance in other sources as teaching his disciple Vidyānanda (the second guru in the Devīpañcaśatikā’s list of Krama Siddhas) the Kāli-based Krama tradition of the Kulamārga confirms the view that Krama scriptures memorialize him as the Siddha who first transmitted the Krama system. In fact, beyond Niṣkriyānanda’s presence inaugurating lists of Krama teachers,\footnote{The Yonigahvaratantra also records the same lineage of Krama Siddhas, with a slight variation in the identity of Śivānanda’s consort, who is documented there as Ratnā. See Yonigahvaratantra fl. 17b, which is referenced in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 371, footnote 4.} the Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya records a narrative of the events...
surrounding Niśkriyānanda’s transmission of the esoteric teachings of the Krama to Vidyānanda.\(^{384}\)

An excellent sage, Śilāciti, had a son [or disciple] who was a great ascetic. That [son], O Goddess, was a Siddha known as Vidyānanda, who was devoted to the practice of yoga and had the appearance of a tribal. He was a great tantric hero, O dear one, always dwelling in cremation grounds, utterly devoted to night wanderings. A tantric adept among Siddhas and divine Yogins, he was fond of the pleasures of ecstatic circle gatherings.\(^{385}\) O great goddess, there is a Śaiva Seat [known as] Śrīśaila that is dear to the gods. In the northern part of that [sacred site] is a mountain with many peaks. On that [mountain] is a divine cave made of gold that is revered by Siddhas and gods. After performing worship, that best of Yogis, desiring the knowledge beyond [ritual] action, practiced devotion [to the Goddess in the form of the] feminine mantra (vidyā)?]. After performing the most intense divine devotion [to the Goddess], the eminent and foremost sage, Niśkriyānanda, pleased with that [Siddha] with the appearance of a tribal, transmitted the Krama [tradition] of Kāli to him through a powerful [disembodied] voice.

This report of the original transmission of the Krama teachings from Niśkriyānanda to Vidyānanda focuses largely on the preparations of the recipient, the Siddha Vidyānanda, whose disciplines, vigils, and devotions created the conditions for the teachings to be heard, and thus made manifest on earth for the first time. It is interesting to note the association of Vidyānanda with the identity or appearance of a tribal (śābara) and his depiction as always

\(^{384}\) Čiñcinīmatasārasamuccaya 7.182-188ab: śilacitir munivaras tasya putra tapodhanaḥ | yogābhyāsaratoh devi saddhah śābararūpadyährk | vidyānandetip kriyāta mahāvīravaraḥ priye | śmāśānavāsāḥ niṣṭhayo niśātanaraḥ pariḥ | tasya kramam. This translation benefits from the one found in DYCZKOWSKI (2001), p. 44, footnote 4. The question mark in the translation refers to an unclear and likely corrupt compound in Čiñcinīmatasārasamuccaya 7.186ab: vidyāśeviram. In SANDERSON (2007a), p. 269, footnote 114, this passage is cited, and the conjecture vidyāśabararam is given. In the working edition of DYCZKOWSKI (see bibliography), we find the conjecture vidyāśekharam. Unfortunately, neither of these appear to resolve the corruption or add great clarity to the sentence in question. I thank Shaman HATLEY for reading this passage with me and in the process consulting one of the Čiñcinīmatasārasamuccaya manuscripts, NĀK 1-767.

\(^{385}\) For a vivid description and analysis of “circle gatherings” (cakracāra), also termed cakramelaka, cakrakṛṣā, and viśramelāpa, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 281-288.
frequenting cremation grounds, which both signal distance from a brahminically sanctioned context of scriptural transmission.

By way of introduction to this episode, Niskriyānanda is described as first promulgating on earth (*bhūtala*) the “perfect nectar of the Kaula”—the revelation of the highest reality disclosed in the Krama system.\(^\text{386}\) Following the pattern established by Matsyendranātha, the Krama system places an extraordinary emphasis on the intervention of an individual Siddha in first bringing to light its liberative teaching in this world. Abhinavagupta also mentions that this same Krama lineage of Siddhas, from Niskriyānanda to Śivānanda, should be “called to mind” with their consorts during the Kaula ritual related in chapter twenty-nine of the *Tantrāloka*.\(^\text{387}\)

The fourth Siddha in this line of Krama teachers is Śivānanda, which is an alias of another central guru of the Krama tradition, Jñānanetra.\(^\text{388}\) This Siddha

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\(^{386}\) *Ciṇcinīmatasārasamuccaya* 7.178cd-180ab: *hitvā bhāvoṁ na grhyāti yadā bhāvāntaram citiḥ || tādā tat paramaṁ brahma savasvabhāvaṁ pravartate || etat kaulāṁṛtaṁ siddhaṁ yoginiḥbhūr udāḥṛtam || niṣkriyānandapādaṁ ca bhūtale samprakāśitam* ‘Upon abandoning one state, when consciousness does not grasp the next state [that arises], ultimate reality manifests as one’s own essential nature. This [realization] is declared by the Yoginīś to be the perfect nectar of the Kaula [tradition], which was brought to light on earth by the venerable Niskriyānanda.’

\(^{387}\) *Tantrāloka* 29.43-45ab: *anāś ca gurutatpatnayaḥ śrīmatkālikuloditaḥ || anāttadeccaḥ kṛiḍanti tais tair dehair aśaṅkitaḥ || prabodhitatathechakais tajje kaulaṁ prakāśate || tathārūpaṁ patayā tatra gurutoṁ paribhāṣitam || te viśeśān na sampāṣyāṁ smartayaṁ eva kevalam* ‘Other gurus and their wives are cited in the illustrious Kālikula. Having no bodies, they amuse themselves fearlessly with various bodies. Since they have desired [the particular amusement] (*tatha*) of enlightenment, the kaula shines forth in their offspring. Because they have taken on a form of that sort, guruhood is acknowledged in their case. These [gurus and their wives] are not to be worshipped especially, they are only to be called to mind.’ Translation of DUPUCHE (2003), p. 209. It should be noted that Abhinavagupta does not mention the names of these gurus, but Jayaratha’s introduction to this verse identifies them as the Siddhas listed in the Kālikula scripture, the *Deviśaṅgaśatikā*, cited above.

stands at the threshold of legendary agents of revelation in the Kaula scriptures and the post-scriptural Krama literature that flourished in Kashmir, and so we will return to him in the next chapter on “Siddhas in Kashmir.” Jayaratha reserves the same expression he gave to Matsyendranātha, Agent of Revelation (avatāraka), when describing his position in Krama’s scriptural transmission.389 One Krama scripture unambiguously identifies Jñānanetra as its revealer, the Yonigahvara,390 which credits him with bringing its teachings to light on earth (bhūtala) in the cremation-ground of Karavīra (Karavīraka) in the holy Seat of the North (uttarapīṭha), a reference to Uḍḍiyāna located in what is now the Swat Valley of Pakistan.391 SANDERSON speculates that two other early Krama scriptures, the Devpañcaśatikā and Kramasadbhāva, may also ascribe the same role to Jñānanetra, given that both their colophons claim these scriptures were revealed (avatārita) by the illustrious Śrīnātha (another name of Jñānanetra) in the Northern Seat.392 This identification is further supported by fact that the cremation-ground Karavīra of Uḍḍiyāna, where Jñānanetra is said to have revealed the Yonigahvara, is hauntingly depicted as the location of the frame-

389 Ibid., p. 264, footnote 93.


391 On the location of Uḍḍiyāna, and its relocation to Kashmir in the Krama literature of that region, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 265-268.

392 See SANDERSON (2007a), p. 264, footnote 97. There is he cites the colophons accordingly: Kalikulapañcaśataka colophons: śrīmaduttarapīṭhodbhūte śrīśrīnāthāvatārite śrikālikākule pañcaśate; Kalikulakramasadbhāva colophons: śrīmaduttarapīṭhavinīrgate śrīnāthapādāvatārite śrikālikākulasadbhāve.
story of the *Devīpaṇcaśatikā* where Bhairava beseeches Bhairavī to teach him the scripture. The one extant text (not revealed, but) authored by Jñānanetra, the *Kālikāstotra*, informs us that he received his enlightening realization of the Goddess’s all-pervasive nature in the “great cremation ground,” which may also refer to Karavīra. Nevertheless, there still remains a possibility that this so-called Śrīnātha, revealer of both the *Devīpaṇcaśatikā* and the *Kramasadbhāva*, is in fact Matsyendranātha, given that “Śrīnātha” is also one of his titles, and additionally because he is celebrated as a revered teacher in the lineage of Siddhas in the former text.

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393 *Devīpaṇcaśatikā* 1.3-7: śrīmaduttarapīṭhasya śmaśānaṁ karavīrakaṁ ā pūjitam devadevena śivena paramātmanā || mahācityagnisamātarapām mahāyojinaṁ sevitam || mahābhūtasamākṣramaṇaṁ mahāmātyrbhiḥ sevitam || mahāyogaiś ca nicitaṁ mahāśiddhair namaskṛtam || mahāmāṭhakasamajaṁṣṭaṁ mahāpētakāranaṁ || mahāśiddhipradattāraṇ mahābhairavasaṇkulaṁ || mahāghoratīghoragamaṁ mahātejopabhṛnḥhitam || tatrasthā bhairavi bhūṁī śhīlāsīkṣmāṇavartini || piṭheśvaribhiḥ samyuktā siddhāś ca parivārita ‘The cremation ground Karavīraka of the auspicious Northern Seat, is venerated by Śiva, the God of gods, the Supreme Self. [That cremation ground] is blazing with a great funeral pyre, frequented by great Yoginis, scattered with powerful ghosts, [and] attended by the great Mother [Goddesses]. It is full of [practitioners] whose yoga is profound, venerated by the great Siddhas, filled with excellent ascetic huts, and resounding with intense howling. Bestowing the best siddhis, thronged with great Bhairavas, fierce because it is utterly terrifying, it is filled with a powerful radiance. Bhairavī who is present there, terrific, conforming to the gross and subtle realms, accompanied by Piṭheśvarī, is surrounded by Siddhas.’

394 *Kālikāstotra* v. 19: yādṛṣṭa mahāśaśaṁ daṛṣṭaṁ devyāḥ svarūpam akulastham || tāṭṛṣaṣa jāgattrayam idam bhavatu tavāṁba prasādena ‘O mother, by your favour, may these three worlds appropriate the nature of the Goddess that rests within the transcendental void, as I experienced it in the great cremation ground.’ Edition and Translation of ANDERSON (2007a), p. 272.


396 Matsyendranātha is called Śrīnātha in another Kālikula scripture related to the Krama system, the *Ūrnikaulārṇava tantra*, whose colophons we noted above claim Matsyendranātha first revealed this scripture, also known as the *Bhogahasta*, in Kāmarūpa, and that it was later brought to Kaulagīri (Kolhapur) by other Siddhas. This detail is mentioned in ANDERSON (2007a), p. 306, footnote 241. The *Ūrnikaulārṇava tantra* opens with benedictions to Matsysendranātha, one of which refers to him as Śrīnātha. See *Ūrnikaulārṇava tantra* 1.1-1.2: namas te kulaṁhāya kaulaśiddhipradāyaṁ || jiñānavijñānadehāya śrīmacchanda namo ‘stu te ||
Although spotlighting individual Siddhas—Matsyendranātha, Niśkriyānanda, Jñānanetra—as key figures in the process of scriptural dispensation, and constantly identifying the Kaula tradition with the “lineage of Siddhas,” the interlocutional structure of Kaula scriptures predominantly consists of dialogues between Bhairava and Bhairavī. In this sense, the basic dialogical frame of the scriptural teaching retains the devadevīsaṃvāda (God-Goddess-dialogue) convention of non-Saiddhāntika scriptures such as the Svacchandabhairavatantra, Siddhayogeśvarīmata, and Brahmayāmalatantra. Certain Krama scriptures, however, make a compelling role reversal, that can be read as an assertion of the Krama’s ascendant status over and above the scriptures of the Vidyāpīṭha. In the Devīpaṇḍaśatikā, for example, the Goddess Bhairavī acts as the omniscient preceptor, demoting God Bhairava to the supplicant of partial knowledge seeking the highest revelatory secret, initiating a devīdevaṃsaṃvāda

anādighorasaṃsāravyādhidhvaṃsaikhatave | namah śrīnāṭhavaidyaya kulośadhividhāyine ‘I offer salutations to the Lord of the Kula who bestows the Kaula realization, the embodiment of scriptural knowledge and wisdom! O glorious Macchanda, salutations to you! Salutations to Śrīnāṭha, the physician who in prescribing the medicinal herb of the Kula [tradition], is the sole cause for the eradicating the poison of dreadful cyclical existence that is beginningless.‘

397 Sanderson (1988), p. 684: “The claim of superiority [of the Krama over the Vidyāpīṭha] is also expressed by the fact that the two scriptures mentioned reject the universal convention of the Bhairava Tantras which has Bhairava teach the Goddess. Here the roles are reversed. The Goddess teaches Bhairava. For she embodies what he cannot know, the cycle of cognitive power which constitutes his own self-awareness.”

398 E.g. Devīpaṇḍaśatikā 1.26cd-33ab: caturdhā kālikāṃśatam mukhān mukhagatam priye || etat sarvam aśeṣena vada me ‘nugraha yadi || yad adyāpi na vijñātaṃ khecarībhīḥ kahācana || yena vijñānamātraṇa vrajāmi padam avyayam || samsārabhayabhītasya trātā nānī yāḥ sti bhairavi || tvadṛte saṃśayaśasya nānī yo vimokṣaṇākṣamāḥ || šrībhairavy uvāca || kaśaṃ kaśaṃ mahāruda praśnaṃ praśnāṣ ca na khecarīyam praśnam || uttamātma nāsāya uktaṃ tvāyaḥ hari || tvadṛte ‘nugrahaḥ kasya buddhikauśalyabhītvitaḥ || na kacacēd ahaṃ rudra prccitā kālikākramam || dhurbdhām sarvajaddhānāṃ gomeṣṭiṇāṃ mahēśvara || tat kramaṃ pravakṣyāmi mukhapūranāparādham || yan na devaḥ na gandharvaḥ nīśurān muniḥhis tathā || na khecarībhīḥ sūḍhaś ca na jñātam paramārthātah || ‘O beloved [Goddess], teach me all about this four-fold Kālikā tradition, which is handed down through oral transmission, in its entirety. [Teach me that tradition]
(Goddess-God-dialogue) model. This reversal means Bhairava, the revered author of the non-SAïdhhântika scriptures, is suddenly in the dark about the highest teachings. In a parallel construction found in the Niśvâsatattvasamhitâ and Svacchandabhairava, the Devâpaâcaśâtikâ also adapts the Mantramârga idiom explored in chapter two by describing Bhairavi (instead of Sadâsiva or Bhairava) receiving this scriptural wisdom from the supreme cause (paramakâraṇa) without visible form (adrâṣṭavigraha).399

CONCLUSION

Do we find anything like the Kaulas’ conception of revelation uniquely centered on the divine commission of a single Siddha guru in the Śaiva tantric works that predate the Kaula system? Not to my knowledge. In the Siddhânta scriptures surveyed in chapter two we encountered a framework for revelation that

which even today is not completely understood by Sky-faring [Yoginîs], by merely cognizing which I will attain the eternal state. O Bhairavi, besides you, there is no other protector of a person who is terrified of cyclical existence; [besides you] there is no one capable of liberating a person from this doubt. Bhairavi said, Alas, Alas, O great Rudra, this is the supreme question. O Śiva, you have asked a most powerful question. Other than you, who could receive that grace (anugraha) that generates mental prosperity? O Rudra, no one has asked about this Kâlikâkrama [tradition], which is unfathomable to [adepts] endowed with every supernatural power and to Sky-Goddesses. I will teach [you] that [Kâlikâ Transmission] in the right order, which is the reserve of the oral tradition, and whose ultimate meaning is not known by Gods, Gandharvas, Asuras, Sages, Sky-faring [Yoginîs], or Siddhas.’

399 Devâpaâcaśâtikâ 1.33cd-134: adrâṣṭavigrahaḥ chântâc chivât paramakâraṇat || asârâd idam vâkyam śrutaṁ me kâlikâkramam | tad ahaṁ kathayisyâmi akathyâm prameśvâra ‘I learned this Kâlikâkrama teaching [directly] from the Supreme Cause, the quiescent God, which should be kept secret.’ Cf. Niśvâsatattvasamhitâ, uttarasûtra, 1.23: adrâṣṭavigrahe śânte śive paramakârane | nàdarûpaṁ viniskrântam śâstraṁ paramadurlâbham; Svacchandabhairava 8.27cd-28ab: adrâṣṭavigrahyâtmanâ śivât paramakâraṇat | dhavanirûpaṁ susûkshmaṁ tu susûddhâm suprabhûvitaṁ. Note when Ksemârâja cites this verse earlier in his commentary (uddâyota) to Svacchandabhairavatantra 1.1-4b, he cites the same variant of the first two pâdas as is recorded in the Devâpaâcaśâtikâ: adrâṣṭavigrahaḥ chântâc chivât paramakâraṇat; one other parallel verse worth mention is Īrṇikaulârâvatantra 2.50: adrâṣṭavigrahyâtmanâ pâramâyakramodayam || mantracâkramanâm divyaṁ svapinde bhogamoksadam.
significantly paralleled the Purāṇas. This was a story of descent; a narrative of a constantly downscaled stream of scriptural knowledge with which the Vedic seers were charged as scriptural emissaries to humanity. This descent or incarnation of the scripture (tantrāvatāra) passed successively through the hands (or mouths) of divine figures such as Sadāśiva, Īśvara, the Goddess, Ananta, Śrīkaṇṭha, various Rudras, Skanda, Garuḍa, Nandi etc. before arriving in this final phase of sagely mediation.

What kinds of agents of revelation were these Vedic seers in the Saiddhāntika scriptures? Not only were they charged with the transmission of the initiatory teachings of the Mantramārga, they also recurrently featured as primary interlocutors in the scriptural dialogue itself, eliciting the very form and order of the teachings recorded in Saiddhāntika scriptures such as the Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha, Parākhyā, Mrgendratantra, and Mataṅgapārameśvara. Bharadvāja and Mataṅga, who we may recall were the interlocutors of the last two of these scriptures, were particularly prominent agents of revelation. They were uniquely invested with a peculiar theological prowess. In this sense, they diverged significantly from their sagely peers in other Siddhānta scriptures who were predominantly passive recipients of scripture, totally enthralled with the revelatory teachings as presented and prescribed. Bharadvāja and Mataṅga expressed strong theological reservations about the details of the scriptural content they received, and scrutinized it on the basis of their expertise in the finer points of Vedānta, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, Buddhism, and Nyāya. Moreover, Bharadvāja and Mataṅga were the subjects of detailed frame-stories, and for Mataṅga’s part, his distinctive personality is fleshed out as a musician-devotee
whose dedication to Śiva and inspired flute serenade act as a harbinger of revelation. These factors, absent from earlier Siddhānta tantras, heighten the importance of these intermediaries of revelation, and their individual role in eliciting and, through their passion for dialectics, guiding the content of revelation. However, unlike the Kaula Avatārakas who are revered as scriptural revealers, Bharadvāja and Mataṅga are both cast primarily as scriptural recipients—eager questioners in the presence of a divine teacher.

We should also recall from chapter two that the Vedic seers and sages are not present in the Bhairava tantras and early Vidyāpītha scriptures. In the latter category of texts, the revelation narrative of the Brahmāyaṃalatantra opts for a host of initiated tantric teachers entrusted with scriptural dissemination by the Goddess, on Bhairava’s command. These new characters in the great chronicle of the Brahmāyaṃala’s revelation, suddenly re-languaged in a prophetic future tense, hail from diverse locales across the Indian subcontinent and represent a wide spectrum of social backgrounds. This passage also includes a narrative treatment of one tantric guru particularly pivotal to the dissemination of the scripture, Svachchandabhairava. As a whole, the Brahmāyaṃala’s representation of its own revelation “tacitly acknowledges the role of human agency—through the medium of the tantric guru—in the production of scriptural literature.” This introduction of non-Vedic gurus as key transmitters of the scripture presages the Kaula scriptures embrace of Kaula Siddhas as preeminent agents of revelation

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400 With the important exception of the Mālinīvijayottara, which will be dealt with in chapter four.

and the lineage of Siddhas as a core element in the tradition’s self-conception. The Brahmayāmala’s inclusion of numerous sites of revelation with no real precedent in the Purāṇas also introduces a new geographical horizon for scriptural revelation in the Śaiva tantric scriptures, another feature expanded upon in Kaula’s emphatic focus upon power sites (piṭha) of revelation and divine encounter.

Regardless of the important contributions of the Brahmayāmalatantra, the Kaula conception of revelation represents a radical departure from earlier tantric streams for three reasons. First of all, none of the scriptural mediators in the Mantramārga or Vidyāpiṭha appear in the central maṇḍala (deity-enthroning diagram) of their respective cults of worship. Therefore, the presence of the Yoganāthas (ending with Matsyendranātha and Koṅkaṇāmbā) within the original Kaula maṇḍala where they are propitiated alongside Kuleśvarī, Kuleśvara, the eight Mother Goddesses, Gaṇeṣa, and Baṭuka, symbolically highlights the Kaula Siddhas’ entrance into and exaltation within the very heart of the tradition. Secondly, in the entire extant corpus of the early Mantramārga, including the Siddhānta, Bhairava, and Śakti Tantras, there is no evidence of a single agent of revelation being lionized as the sole promulgator (avatāraka) of

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402 However, in a hymn by Aghoraśivīcārya, the Paṅcāvaraṇastava (verse 16), there is a point in the daily pūjā when one worships a line of gurus, which consists of seven figures, many of whom are mediators of revelation in the tantrāvatāras of the Siddhānta scriptures, such as Śrīkaṇṭha. Although this is different than positioning agents of revelation in the central maṇḍala, it is clearly a related phenomenon. I thank Dominic GOODALL for this reference.

403 Promulgator is SANDERSON’s translation of avatāraka, which he notes is “used to denote a divine or semi-divine promulgator of scripture throughout the Śaiva Mantramārga.” See SANDERSON(2007a), p. 264. I have been translating avatāraka as “agent of revelation” above. Even though this term is indeed common in the Mantramārga, the point I am making here is
an entire scriptural tradition (Matsyendranātha for the Kaulāgama) or tantric stream (Jñānanetra for the Krama).\textsuperscript{404} Thirdly, the Kaula Avatārakas are consistently associated with seats of revelation (pīṭha), which take on great symbolic importance in later Kaula scriptures. Thus, Matsyendranātha is often portrayed revealing the Kaula śāstra in Kāmarūpa (Assam), Niśkriyānanda transmits the Krama teachings to Vidyānanda in Śrīśaila (Andhra), and Jñānanetra commonly receives his revelation in Uḍḍiyāna (Swat Valley, Pakistan), specifically the cremation ground Karavīra.

Among the Kaula Siddhas treated above, Matsyendranātha is exceptional, given the way he is evoked across sectarian Kaula streams as initiating the entire Kaula scriptural tradition in Kali Yuga, in addition to being credited with the revelation of a number of individual Kaula scriptures. This prominence is further bolstered by the inclusion of narratives of his exploits as the Fisherman Siddha getting his hands dirty in order to recover the Kaula scripture from the belly of a fish. This logic of a single decisive revelator, in the form of a Siddha guru, is transferred to both Niśkriyānanda and Jñānanetra in the Kaula Transmission of

\footnote{\textit{pace} the Kulamārga, we don’t find one individual \textit{avatāraka} in the form of a tantric guru given responsibility for the revelation of an entire scriptural corpus in early scriptures of tantric Śaivism. One borderline exception to this supposition is the retrospective isolation and exaltation of the divine deity-guru Śrīkaṇṭha as the primary teacher of the Mantramārga, which will be considered in chapter four.}

\textsuperscript{404} One potential source for the Kulamārga’s isolation of an individual revealer of an entire scriptural tradition can be found in the pre-tantric literature of the Atimārga Pāṣupata traditions. In addition to Lakulīśa playing such a role, which we will treat briefly in the beginning of chapter four, there is also evidence of another figure in inscriptive sources who is isolated as a “fountainhead” of Pāṣupata Śaivism, namely Somaśarman. For a collation of references to this figure, accompanied by translations and insightful interpretations, see \textsc{Bakker} (2014), pp. 140-146, 148 & 214. I am thankful to Dominic \textsc{Goodall} for this reference.
the North, the Krama tradition. The evidence for this transference is the way in which they are described, in exactly the same phrase, first bringing the esoteric teachings of the Krama to light on this earth (*bhūtale samprakāśitam*).

In the chapters that follow we will show how the Kaula model of religious authority—centered on individual Siddhas with a great emphasis on “place” of revelation—acts as an important framework for Abhinavagupta’s apparently unique temporal and regional awareness. It must also be emphasized that this Kaula modality of religious authority significantly departs from those that are derived from and genetically linked to the Vedas. Sheldon POLLOCK describes the latter, the highly influential Vedic “episteme” if you will, as a “complex ideological formation of traditional Indian society” that he claims “privileges system over process—the structure of the social order over the creative role of man in history.”\(^\text{405}\) The Kaula tradition, especially in its more advanced iterations, represents something of an exception to this “complex ideological formation,” as conceived by POLLOCK. However, first a clarification. This study does not propose that the Kaula conception of individual agents of revelation represents a latent “modern” impulse in premodern India or an “ur-humanism” that intrinsically values individual over tradition, and on that basis, privileges “the creative role of man in history.” Rather than being interested in individuals qua individuals, the Kaula scriptural redactors highlight Siddhas as enlightened individual repositories of authoritative knowledge acting in primordial lineages. However, this model of revelation does amount to a greater emphasis on

individual agents acting in time in opposition to an ahistoric ideology that naturalizes “system” and “social order” and accordingly deemphasizes the role of individual actors in the “process” of revelation.

Furthermore, this Kaula model of a person-centric or Siddha-centric religious authority helps unravel the mystery of why Abhinavagupta writes multiple verses glorifying Kashmir, dates three of his texts, claims to be enlightened, and narrates his own education and accession to the seat of guru. These are all actions, we must remember, that directly contradict the logic of religious authority emanating from an orthodox Vedic paradigm, and thus require an alternative, non-Vedic model of personhood,\textsuperscript{406} to adequately explain. The contrast between Veda-based conceptions of scripture and the Kaula mode of revelation will become even more explicit when we turn to the Kaula traditions of Kashmir, flourishing in a post-scriptural context, where individual narratives and regional contexts of Kaula gurus are illustrated with even greater concreteness. This is all made possible by appreciating the alternative modality of person, time, and place implicit in Kaula model of authority, that consciously distanced itself not only from Vaidika modalities, but even those of the Tantras.

\textsuperscript{406} We should mention, however, that there is no single model of personhood in Vedic-based traditions. The authors that follow Rāmānuja, the great Śrīvaisṇava Vedāntin, for example, do much to personalize the teaching tradition by placing great emphasis on the ācārya without departing from a Vedic identity and concomitant notions of text and action.
CHAPTER FOUR

Siddhas in Kashmir

INTRODUCTION

When Śākta-Śaivas from Kashmir narrate their local reception of tantric Śaivism, they fully adopt the Kaulas’ Siddha-centric orientation to scriptural transmission. This Śākta-Śaiva phase of reception, which included the composition of non-sectarian\textsuperscript{407} monographs, philosophical tracts based roughly upon Śaiva revelatory axioms, and a vast archive of learned commentaries, is frequently designated as the “post-scriptural”\textsuperscript{408} period of Kashmir (c. ninth to thirteenth centuries). This period of reception will be outlined by tracing distinct guru lineages adorned with prominent authors frequently lauded as Siddhas and portrayed as inhabiting (often through ancestral immigration) or descending upon the vale of Kashmir. Sanderson provides an apt description of the first phase of this period in the ninth century, and his portrait of this transitional moment, we should note, is congruent with the Kaula idiom of revelation elucidated in chapter three.\textsuperscript{409}

\textsuperscript{407} Non-sectarian in the sense that they obviated sectarian divisions within Śaivism.

\textsuperscript{408} Our use of the term “post-scriptural” conforms with the following important qualification made by John Nemec: “The reader should note that I use the term ‘post-scriptural’ only to describe works that define themselves as having been composed subsequent to scripture. The term should not be understood to suggest that post-scriptural works postdate the entire corpus of Śaiva tantric scripture, as many scriptural sources postdate one or another of the ‘post-scriptural’ works (though of course a given post-scriptural work can only refer, directly or implicitly, to historically antecedent scriptural sources).” See Nemec (2011), p. 1, footnote 2.

\textsuperscript{409} Sanderson (2007), pp. 426-427
The second half of that [ninth] century saw the composition of the Śivasūtra and Spandakārīka and, especially in the latter, the first attempt from the Śākta Śaiva domain to present a non-dualistic metaphysics and gnostic soteriology in opposition to the dualistic and ritualistic exegesis of the Saiddhāntika Śaiva scriptures. This movement was presented in its early phase as coming not from Śiva as the teaching of certain scriptures but rather as the contemporary irruption into the world of the gnosis of enlightened Siddhas and Yoganīs; and we have the same perspective in the propagation of the Krama, which unlike the Trika maintained this perspective after the initial revelation, as can be seen from the tradition concerning the Kramastotra of Eraka, the surviving works of Hrasvanātha, and the tradition of the revelation of the Chummās, the Old Kashmiri Kathās, and the Vātālanāthasūtra.

This chapter will delve into what Sanderson describes here as “the contemporary irruption into the world of the gnosis of enlightened Siddhas and Yoganīs,” in particular reflecting upon this process as an elaboration of the Kaula model of religious authority, referred to in what follows as a mature Kaula idiom.

Certain strands of this mature Kaula theory of knowledge encouraged narration of the circumstances of enlightened human authors in textual transmission with even greater granularity than we find in the Kaula scriptures. This includes not only greater temporal and regional specificity, but also a remarkable (albeit occasional) shift to a first-person narrative voice (totally absent in Kaula scriptures), and correspondingly, first-person claims of enlightenment. Although these transitions are highly significant, they are also natural expressions, one might contend, of the Kaula model of religious authority deployed in the context of human preceptorial lineages and processes of textual production no longer considered “scriptural.” Nevertheless, in harmony with the greater agency attributed to perfect Śaiva gurus in the Kaula paradigm, certain works of these post-scriptural human authors retrospectively enjoyed a status akin to scripture in their subsequent reception history.
Abhinavagupta’s narration of Siddha lineages that end with some of his most influential teachers, delineates revelatory channels that move from his local world back in time to the scriptural corpuses explored in the last two chapters. These narratives, together with other post-scriptural encapsulations of the lineal descent of key gurus, offer a powerful point of departure for our transition to a localized focus on the Śaiva literature and intellectual culture of Kashmir.

In the concluding chapter of the Tantraloka, Abhinavagupta begins by arguing for the supremacy of the Śaiva scriptures over other “lower” scriptural traditions, conspicuously the Vedas. This discussion culminates with an assertion—scripturally supported by the Ratnamālā[tantra]—that the Kaula-Trika form of Śaivism, which Abhinavagupta avows is embodied implicitly and explicitly by the Mālinīvijayottaratantra, is the highest essence of all streams of initiatory Śaivism. Before coming to this conclusion, Abhinavagupta makes a

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410 Tantraloka 37.2-12ab. This section will be analyzed below as a part of our discussion on Abhinavagupta’s view of revelation.

411 Tantraloka 37.25ab-26cd: uktaṃ śrīratnamālāyāṃ etac ca parameśinā || aṣeṣatantrasāraṃ tu vāmadaṅgaṃnāṃśritam | ekatra militaṃ kaulaṃ śrīśadardhakaśāsane ‘This is taught by Śiva in the auspicious Ratnamālā: “the essence of the all Tantras regarding the left and right-hand divisions, is the Kaula, which is united in one place in the auspicious Trika doctrinal system”.

412 Tantraloka 37.24ab-25cd: vidyāpīṭhapradhānāṃ ca siddhayogīśvarīmatāṃ || tasyāpya paramāṃ sāraṃ mālinīvijayottaram ‘And the Siddhayogeśvarīmaṭa is the most important (scripture) of the Vidyāpīṭha; its ultimate distillation is Mālinīvijayottara.’ This citation comes after a demonstration, in Tantraloka 37.18-24ab, that the Vidyāpīṭha is the most excellent collection of scriptures in Mantramārga. For another statement to this effect, see Tantraloka 1.17-18: na tad astha yan na śrīmālinīvijayottare | devadevena nirdiṣṭam svasaḥdenāḥ liṅgaḥ || daśaṭādaśaśaṣṭakaṭhinnaṃ yacchāsanaṃ vibhoḥ | tatsaṃ trikaśastraṃ hi tatsaṃ maśīnaṃ ‘There is nothing in this (Tantraloka) that is not taught by Śiva in the auspicious Mālinīvijayottare, either directly or implicitly. The teachings of Lord Śiva are divided into the ten, eighteen, and sixty-four (tantras); the essence of those are the Trika scriptures, and the essence of those is the doctrine of the Mālinī[vyajottara-tantra].’
revealing statement about the greater horizon of the Atimārga (pre-tantric Śaivism) and Mantramārga divisions of Śaivism.\footnote{\textit{Tantrałoka} 37.13cd-37.16: \textit{ajñatvānupadeśṛtvāsamadāste ‘dharaśāsanam || etad viparyayād grāhyam avāśyaṁ śivaśāsanam || dvāra āptau tatra ca śrīmacchrikanṭha lakuleśvarau || dvipravāham idāni śāstraṁ samyaṁ niḥśreyasapradam || prācyasya tu yathābhūṣṭabhogadatvam api sthitam || tace pañcavidhaṁ proktam śaktivaicitryacitritam || pañcasrota iti proktiṁ śrīmacchrikanṭhaśāsanam.}}

Given that the lower scriptural traditions are tainted by false teachers due to their ignorance, one must necessarily adopt this scriptural tradition of Siva because it is contrary [to those scriptures, i.e., its teachers are free of ignorance]. [To demonstrate,] in that [greater Śaiva scriptural tradition] there are two qualified teachers: Śrīkanṭha and Lakulīśa. This scriptural tradition, containing these two streams [namely, the Mantramārga and Atimārga], definitively bestows the highest beatitude [of liberation], but the prior one additionally grants supernatural enjoyments according to one’s desire. And that [prior system], the scriptural system of Śrīkanṭha, described as five-fold [since it is] diversified due to the manifold nature of (Siva’s) powers, is called the “Five Streams” (pañcasrotas).

In this citation, Abhinavagupta identifies two major phases of Śaivism with two trustworthy (āpta) gurus: Lakulīśa for the pre-tantric Pāśupata traditions of the Atimārga\footnote{On the various strata of this early Śaiva tradition, see SANDERSON (2006a), “The Lākulas: New evidence of a system intermediate between Pāñcārthika Pāśupatism and Āgamic Śaivism.”} and Śrīkanṭha for the Mantramārga proper. He even describes the Mantramārga, formulaically affiliated with Five Streams of revelation emerging from Sadāśiva’s five faces, as “the scriptural system of Śrīkanṭha” (śrīkanṭhaśāsana).

Regarding the Pāśupata-based ascetic traditions, there is evidence that Lakulīśa, identified in Kaunḍinya’s sixth-century commentary (pañcarthabhāṣya) on the Pāśupatasūtras as Śiva descending into the Śaiva sanctuary of Kāyāvataraṇa and assuming the form of a brahmin,\footnote{Pañcarthabhāṣya ad Pāśupatasūtra 1.1: \textit{tathā śiṣṭaprāmāṇyaḥ kāmitevād ajñatavoः ca manusya-rūpi bhagavān brahmanākāyaṁ ādhāya kāyāvataraṇa avatīrṇa iti || tathā padbhyaṁ ujjayiniṁ prāptah ||}} came to be venerated as

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the earliest and most revered foundational teacher of the tradition.\textsuperscript{416} In the critical edition of an early redaction of the *Skandapurāṇa*, there is a variant of the episode of Lakulīśa (alias Lāguḍī) initiating the transmission of Pāśupata doctrine and yoga in this world. This version of the story of Lakulīśa\textsuperscript{417} is

\textsuperscript{416} Although, as mentioned in chapter three, there are records of another important founding figure, Somaśarman. See Bakker (2014), pp. 140-146, 148 & 214

\textsuperscript{417} *Skandapurāṇa* 167.126cd-130 = SP₅ 126cd-130: jagāmojayaṁni devaṁ śmaśānam ca viveṣa ha || sa tatra bhasmaṇāśaṇayāṇaṁ nirākāvakavāsahāṇaṁ adhikaranapraśiddhaṁ ca svāśāstrothe āyapate śīṣyansambandhaṁ śucau dese bhasmaṇvedyāṇusītaṁ || ato rudrapracoditaṁ kuśikabhagavān abhyāgatātārgeṣe paripārṇaparipṛṣṭyāyuktārṣaṅkāṇāṁ viparītāṁ cātmāṁ drṣṭvā pāddv upasamgrhyā nyāyena jātiṁ gotraṁ śrutam anirṇātaṁ ca nivedayītvā kṛtyaṁ bhaṁyaṁ kāle vaidyavac avasthitam ātutsravād avasthitah śīṣyaṁ prṣṭvān bhaṇavaṁ kim eteśāṁ ādhyātmikādhibhautikādhibhāvaṁśaṁ savaduhkhānāṁ aikāntikāṁ 'tyantikā vyāpoṁho 'sty uta neti || athoktapariparāṇādhibhāvaṁśaṁ savaduhkhā ramifications of this world as in his scripture is set forth in

\textit{Translation of Minoru Akker (1966), pp. 156-158. It should be noted that this account lacks the name Lakulīśa, but other later parallels of this story refer to this original transmitter of the Pāśupata doctrine who entered the body of a brahmin in Kāyāvataraṇa as Lakulīśa. See Bisschop (2006), p. 45, footnote 125.}
Although the account there differs significantly. See incarnating in Kāla across the four ages is also found in the Kāraṇamāhātmya, although the account there differs significantly. See BISSCHOP (2006), p. 44.

418 Skandapurāṇa 167.115-117 = SPś 115-117.: bhārabhūtis tv asau bhūtvā tasmin deśe pinākadhṛk | bhāraṃ buddhiva dvijatīnāṁ narmādāyāṁ vicikṣipe | kāruṇyena mahādevo martyajanāmadumākṣaya | | tretāyaṁ dīṇḍiṃuṇḍaś ca śīrṣāni vinikṛttavān | dvāpare cāsaḍhir bhūtvā nṛtyanunugṛhitavān | | evam pratiyogam vṛṣaṣa tasmin deśe śivah svayam | avalīrṇaṁ cānuḍhrāya brāhmaṇāṁ chuddhamānaśaṁ ‘Becoming Bhārabhūti in this [auspicious] abode, Śiva bearing the Pīṇāka [bow] took on the burden of twice-born and cast it into the Narmādā. Mahādeva, out of compassion to those who long for freedom from [the rounds] of mortal birth, became Dīṇḍimunda and cut off the heads in the Tretā Age. In Dvāpara he became Āśādhi and favored people through dancing. In this way, O Vyāsa, Śiva descends in this abode [of Kāraṇa] in each Age and favors brahmans whose minds are pure.’
as early as the second century AD, Peter Bisschop casts doubt on this presumption on the basis of Lakulīśa’s conspicuous absence in the earliest epigraphical witnesses of Pāṣupata Śaivism.419

The association of a single divine guru, Śrikanṭha, with the entire scriptural corpus of the Mantramārga, on the other hand, initially appears to be a somewhat synthetic assertion. In chapter two we examined the great diversity of teachers—divine, semi-divine, and sagely—mentioned across the greater corpus of Mantramārga scriptures as transmitters of individual scriptures. At that point we noted not only the great plurality of propagators of revelation, but also the lack of any consistency in the order and logic of lineages of scriptural mediators or the presence of a single universal Avatāraka. Nevertheless, Śrikanṭha is undeniably a recurrent and important agent of revelation across Mantramārgic accounts of the descent of scripture (tantrāvatāra).420 Abhinavagupta’s decision to

419 Bisschop (2006), pp. 45-47: “The Mathurā Pillar Inscription of Candragupta, dated [Gupta] Samvat 61 (380 AD), and generally considered to be one of the earliest epigraphic testimonies for the existence of Pāṣupatas, records a lineage of Śaiva ascetics tracing their origin back to Bhagavat Kuśika. D.R. Bhandarkar (EI 21 [1931-32], pp. 1-9) was the first to suggest that this Kuśika is identical with the pupil of Lakulīśa. On the basis of this inscription, which mentions among other things that one Uditācārya was tenth in line from Bhagavat Kuśika, Lakulīśa has been dated to the second century AD. However, the name Lakulīśa does not appear in this inscription and there is no evidence that the notion of Lakulīśa, as an incarnation of Śiva existed at that time. In fact I am unaware of any attestation of the name Lakulīśa, or a variant of that name, preceding the Skandapurāṇa. The earliest known images of Lakulīśa date from the same period (ca. the sixth century).”

420 In the Rauravasātrasangraha 3.6-3.9, Śrikanṭha, predicated as the Guru of the Suras and Asuras, received the scriptural wisdom from Ananteśa, the supreme Guru and universal cause, and passed it on to the Goddess. Rāmakanṭha, the Saiddhāntika exegete, identifies Śiva on Kailāsa in the framestory of the Kiranatantra with Śrikanṭha. He also argues, at great length, that the main teacher of the Śaradhatriśatikālottara, who is simply described as Bhagavān and Lokanātha, is in fact Śrikanṭha. The effusive explanation of Rāmakanṭha paired with the fact that the name Śrikanṭha is not found in the Śaradhatriśatikālottara itself, gives the impression that Rāmakanṭha is particularly invested in demonstrating Śrikanṭha is the primary teacher of the Siddhānta scriptures, even when this is far from evident. See his vṛtti ad Śaradhatriśatikālottara 1.1ab. I thank Dominic Goodall for this reference. The
distinguish this divine figure has precedent in other post-scriptural literature and may be indebted to the association of Śrīkaṁṭha with the major streams of Śaiva tantra in the Brahmayāmalatantra, a scripture he frequently cites in the Tantrāloka. This choice may also relate to the fact that in revelation narratives Śrīkaṁṭha is most often poised between the upper realms of revelation, above the manifest world, and the scriptures’ original propagation on earth, and thus he acts as a pivotal mediator in the cascading descent (avatāraṇa) of scriptures to earth. It may also reflect the influence of the Kaula idiom which highlights individual tantric gurus as pedagogical catalysts of new scriptural vistas, which

Svacchandabhairavatantra describes Śrīkaṁṭha receiving the revelation from Īśvara and transmitting it to Umāpiṭha. See Svachchandabhairava 8.27-8.36ab. Śrīkaṁṭha also passes on the original transmission of the Brahmayāmalatantra from Sadāśiva to the scriptural narrator, Bhairava. See Brahmayāmalatantra 1.38-41. Later passages in this early Vidyāpīṭha scripture (Brahmayāmalatantra 39.24-25ab, 39.28 & 39.91-92) makes his role extremely prominent in its three-fold stream model of the Śaiva canon, which encompasses the Mantramārga as this scripture conceived it. This may be a source for Abhinavagupta’s isolation of Śrīkaṁṭha as the main teacher of the five-streams. See Brahmayāmalatantra 39.24-25ab: aṣṭāvimśatibhedena bheditaṁ ca tathā punah śākhopāśākhabhedena prabhinnāṁ vistareṇa tu || kathitāni kathyisyanti śrīkaṁṭhādyā gurūs tathā ‘It [the Middle Stream] is further divided by division into twenty-eight [principal Siddhāntatantras]. Divided at length by divisions and branches and sub-branches, [the tantras] have been taught, and the gurus, beginning with Śrīkaṁṭha, shall [continue to] to teach them; Brahmayāmalatantra 39.28: raudrayā cāditenātha śrīkaṁṭhena mahāyaśe dakṣiṇena tu uktena dakṣiṇāśrotasamābham ‘Through Śrīkaṁṭha, O woman of renown, impelled by Raudrā [Śakti], is [the revelation] arising from the rightward stream [which includes the Bhairavatantras and those of the Vidyāpīṭha], via the rightward face.’; Finally, all three streams of Mantramārga are said to be received by Śrīkaṁṭha, who goes on to act as the primary teacher of these streams in Brahmayāmalatantra 39.91-92: ādimo jīnānasandohasa tribhīṣṇu srotair vinirgataḥ sadāśivena devena śrīkaṁṭhāya prabhāṣitam || sapādaśajīnānasandohah śrīkaṁṭhena mahāyaśe | daśasrotavibhāgena bhāṣitaṁ sādhakecchayā ‘The primordial mass of scriptural wisdom emerged via three streams. The Lord Sadāśiva expounded it to Śrīkaṁṭha. Śrīkaṁṭha, O woman of great renown, taught the mass of scriptural wisdom having [one hundred] and a quarter [thousand verses], with division into ten streams, according with the wishes of sādhakas.’ The translations and edition of these Brahmayāmala passages are those of Shaman HATLEY.

421 See the previous footnote for relevant references.

422 I thank Shaman HATLEY for this insight, which will be further corroborated by the analysis below.
itself may hearken back to Lakulīśa and Somaśarman who are conceived as founders of the Pāśupata tradition. This is another possible explanatory factor for how this divine guru, Śrīkaṇṭha, would be retroactively singled-out as the primary teacher of the Five Streams of tantric Śaivism. With the exception of a few intriguing verses in the Brahmāyāmalatantra cited above, I am not aware of any unambiguous scriptural attestations in the Mantramārga identifying Śrīkaṇṭha as the primary teacher of entire streams or the greater canon of revelation.\footnote{423 However, the ninth- to tenth-century post-scriptural Śaiddhāntika work, the Ratnatrayaparīkṣā, has a commentary by Aghoraśivācārya who does identify Śrīkaṇṭha as the primary agent of revelation of “all [Śaiva] scriptures.” See Ratnatrayaparīkṣā 1: namah śivāya śakti ca bindave śāsvatāya ca | gurave ca ganeśaya kārtikeya dhīme | Salutations to Śiva, Śakti, and Bindu, which is eternal, and also to the Guru, Ganeśa, and wise Kārtikeya.’ Aghoraśiva glosses “guru” accordingly: sakalasāṃhitānām avatārakateva gurum ... bhagavanta śrīkaṇṭhanāthān | the guru is the blessed Śrīkaṇṭha since he is the agent of revelation (avatāraka) of all [Śaiva] scriptures.’}

Why is this brief query into the identity of Śrīkaṇṭha pertinent to our inquiry? Abhinavagupta relates an account that positions Śrīkaṇṭha as the divine instigator of prominent lineages of Siddhas that bequeathed the post-scriptural Śaiva traditions that came to circulate within the religious environment of Kashmir. While describing the transition from the broader Mantramārga scriptural era to the emergence of lineages that flourished locally in Kashmir, Abhinavagupta depicts this transitional moment as the descent of three Siddhas. These Siddhas are decreed by Śrīkaṇṭha to restore a Śaiva revelatory tradition that has fallen into obscurity. The relevant verse, about to be cited, follows an account of the Siddhayogeśvarīmata’s transmission, which is likely based upon the
longer redaction of the scripture that is no longer extant.\textsuperscript{424} Jayaratha introduces the passage by signaling that this report of the transmission of these three Siddhas is based on an analysis of the gurus\textsuperscript{425} (i.e., not mentioned in scriptural sources). Abhinavagupta divulges this more recent history of the tradition on the authority of the oral report of gurus accordingly: \textsuperscript{426}

> When, during the intervening period, there was break in the lineage of these transmitters, [three] Siddhas, on the command of Śrīkanṭha, descended (avātaran): Tryambaka, Āmardaka, and Śrīnātha, each proficient in the nondual, dual, and nondual-cum-dual teachings of Śiva, respectively. Of the first lineage, a second is known through the line of his daughter. That is the well-established lineage called the Ardhātryambaka (Half-Tryambaka). And for this reason, on the basis of these lines of transmission, three-and-a-half orders proliferated through the [works of] generations of disciples who established innumerable branches.

Abhinavagupta here registers a rupture in the transmission of the Trika tradition. This standard theme in post-scriptural literature across premodern South Asian, we will see, is particularly prevalent in the narration of Kashmir’s eventual reception of Śaiva revelatory traditions: the corruption and loss of tradition followed by a post-rupture recovery. Following this break, we have three Siddhas who descend to establish traditional orders, Tryambaka, Āmardaka, and Śrīnātha, in addition to a lineage established by Tryambaka’s daughter, all of which continued to branch out through future generations of disciples.

\textsuperscript{424} \textit{Tantrāloka} 36.1-36.10.

\textsuperscript{425} A reference to the second component or phase of the transmission of the śāstra (āyātir ... gurubhiś ca nirūpitaḥ) which forms the topic of this chapter and is mentioned by Abhinavagupta in \textit{Tantrāloka} 36.1.

\textsuperscript{426} \textit{Tantrāloka} 36.12-14: teṣāṁ krameṇa tanmadhye bhṛṣṭaṁ kāḷaṁtarād yadā \| taddā śrīkaṇṭhanāthaḥjñāvaśāt siddhā avātaran \| \| tryambakāmardakābhikhyāśrīnāthā advaya dvaye \| dvayādvaye ca nipunāḥ krameṇa śivaśāsane \| \| ṛḍyaśya cātvaya jajjale dvīṭyō duhiṭkramat \| sa cārdhātryambakābhikhyāḥ saṅtānaḥ supratīṣṭhitaḥ \| \| ataś cārdhacatasro 'tṛa maṁhikāḥ saṅtattikramat \| śisyaprāśisyair vistīrṇāḥ śataśākham vyacasthitaiḥ.
Abhinavagupta sees himself not only as the inheritor of these revelatory lineages. He also envisions the *Tantrāloka*, even though it ultimately identified with the Trika transmitted in the line of Tryambaka, as an exquisite decoction of the essence of each of these three-and-a-half streams.\(^{427}\) In the final chapter of the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta poetically envisions his immediate gurus in each of these Siddha lineages:\(^{428}\)

Vāmanātha, son of the excellent Guru Eraka, [my] helmsman over the ocean of the [Saiddhāntika] Ámardaka lineage, the son of Bhūtirāja, initiated by his father, [my] sun in the vast sky of the Śrīnātha lineage, Lakṣmāṇaguptanātha, disciple of Utpala, the disciple of Somānanda, [my Viśu] lying on the ocean of the lineage of Tryambaka, Śambhunātha who was known to be omniscient, descended from Śumati[nātha], [my] full moon over the ocean of the Kaula lineage.

Adorning the first line of the three paradigmatic Siddhas, originating from Ámardaka, is the guru Vāmanātha, who must have been instrumental for Abhinavagupta’s mastery of the scriptural literature of Śaiva Siddhānta.

Abhinavagupta cites Siddhānta scriptures throughout the *Tantrāloka*,\(^{429}\) but does so under the premise that they represent the base level of revelation of the Mantramārga. Thus he considers “their prescriptions valid except where specific

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\(^{427}\) *Tantrāloka* 36.15: *adhyaṣṭasamāntatīmsrotahsārabhūtarasāṃhṛtīṃ* | *vidhāya tantrāloko yam svandate sakaḍān rasān* ‘Having collected the essential flavors that are the distillation of the streams that are three-and-a-half lineages, this *Tantrāloka* flows with all their rasas.’


\(^{429}\) SANDERSON (2007a), p. 375: “Among scriptures of the Siddhānta he cites the Kacabhārgava, the Kāmika, the Kālottara, the Kirana, the Dikṣottara, the Niḥśvāsa, the Parākhya, the Pauṣkara, the Matanga, the Mayasamgraha, the Mukṣottara, the Rauravasūtrasamgraha, the Sarvajñānottara, and the Svāyambhuvasūtrasamgraha.”
instructions in non-Saiddhāntika scriptures block their application for those initiated into the practice ordained in these more restricted traditions.”

For the lineage emanating from Śrīnātha, Abhinavagupta identifies his guru as the son of Bhūtirāja. He then notes that Laksmanagupta is his master in the Tryambaka lineage, and Śambhunātha in the fourth, i.e. the Kaula Ardhatryambaka line transmitted by Tryambaka’s daughter.

Of great importance among these lineages in appreciating the transitional process between the scriptures and the post-scriptural world of Abhinavagupta are the Tryambaka and Ardhatryambaka lines. The former, associated with the Trika cult of the Vidyāpīṭha and the Śaiva philosophical tradition known as

430 Ibid., p. 376. For an in depth consideration of how the teachings of specialized scriptures can take precedent over more general injunctions, see NEMEC (forthcoming), esp. p. 27ff and Appendix A. This study not only considers the underlying grammatical principles involved in these hermeneutic maneuvers, but also perceptively reflects on the ramifications of this handling of stratified traditions in relationship to the process of religious change in Kashmir, India, and beyond.

431 SANDERSON identifies the son of Bhūtirāja with Maheśvara, one of Abhinavagupta’s gurus who SANDERSON claims is exalted in the opening and closing benedictions of the Parārāṣīkāvivarṣaṇa, Tantrāloka 1.9 and Tantrālokaviveka ad loc., and the closing verses of Abhinavagupta’s Bhagavadgītārthasamgraha. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 123, footnote 85. It should be noted that in SANDERSON (2007a), p. 360, footnote 426, Abhinavagupta’s teacher in the Bhagavadgītārthasamgraha is identified not as Maheśvara (Bhūtirāja’s son), but rather Bhūtirāja himself. Indeed, SANDERSON’s change of opinion is no doubt related to the ambiguity of the Sanskrit in this passage (Bhagavadgītārthasamgraha, p. 186, concluding verses, 1-2). Moreover, I have yet to see in the secondary literature a clear reckoning of this mention of Bhūtirāja (or his son) at the end of the Bhagavadgītārthasamgraha, with his praise of Bhaṭṭendurāja (also his teacher of the Dhvanyāloka mentioned in his locana) as his teacher of this text at its outset (opening verse 6). Abhinavagupta presentation of the four gurus of the three-and-a-half orders—Vāmanātha, Maheśvara, Laksmanagupta, and Śambhunātha—demonstrates that they contributed to the knowledge concretized in the Tantrāloka. SANDERSON argues that among Śambhunātha, Bhūtirāja, Maheśvara, and Laksmanagupta, who are all venerated in the course of Abhinavagupta’s major Śaiva works, these four gurus “did not contribute in equal measure [to the Tantrāloka]. The least important of the four appears to have been Maheśvara. He is cited only once as the source of a particular teaching, and his accommodation in the opening verses is correspondingly unemphatic.” See SANDERSON (2005), p. 125. On the Śrīnātha lineage that Abhinavagupta receives from Maheśvara, see Ibid., pp. 127-128, footnote 95.
Pratyabhijñāsastra (Systematic Discourse on Recognition), was received from Lakṣmaṇagupta who adorned a lineage which has left us with a surfeit of post-scriptural literature. Abhinavagupta, at the beginning of the Tantraloka, offers a charming praise-poem dedicated to Tryambaka’s lineage, depicting its venerable gurus as lustrous pearls in the Tāmraparṇī river:432

The ancient gurus are unsurpassable, possessing that exceptional luster of the multitudes of excellent pearls in the Tāmraparṇī [river] that is [transmissional] stream called “Traiyambaka” (‘Descended from the Siddha Tryambaka’). Those [ancient gurus] are flawless navigators, swaying in the play of waves in the scriptural ocean of the masters.

The ancient gurus adorning Tryambaka’s lineage are compared to pearls in the Tāmraparṇī, a famous South Indian river sourced in the Malaya mountains renowned for its pearls. This alluring image evokes the beauty of the lineage as rushing water and the gurus as glimmering pearls shining in that stream. It then adds another evocative portrayal of these same lineage members expertly piloting a ship that is navigating the ocean of the gurūsāstra, the scriptural teachings of tantric masters. This additional poetic image hints at the transition from pure scriptural works taught by Śiva to other “śāstras” or sacred literature affiliated with Śaiva teachers, describing that body of work as a vast as ocean that requires virtuosic helmsmen-exegetes to cross.

432 Tantraloka 1.8: traiyambakābhihitasantatiūmraparṇīśanmauktikapraṇarakāntiviṣeṣābhājaḥ | pārve jayanti guravo gurūsāstrasindhukallolakelikalanāmalakarṇadhārāḥ.
The image of guru-pearls returns in another description of the recent history of the same lineage in a series of verses that commence Abhinavagupta’s Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī: 433

He [Utpaladeva] taught the flawless knowledge system known as Recognition of the Lord (Īśvarapratyabhijñā), which is a means for the ultimate human purpose—[recognition of] the one knowing subject without a second. That [śāstra] reflects the wisdom of the auspicious master Somānanda, a pearl in the lineage that descended from [the Siddha] Tryambaka. I am the grand disciple of that [guru Utpaladeva]. Upon understanding [this śāstra] from the illustrious Lakṣmanaṭagaṇaputra, I will [now] compose this short commentary on [Utpaladeva’s] aphoristic teachings [on the Recognition of the Lord].

Less lyrical than the previous verse on the Tryambaka lineage, this collection of verses nonetheless enumerates the last three Kashmirian gurus in the Tryambaka lineage, Somānanda, Utpaladeva, and Lakṣmanaṭagaṇaputra, with the first teacher, Somānanda, described as a “pearl” in the line of gurus. These masters are collectively responsible for Abhinavagupta’s reception and subsequent mastery of the Śaiva philosophical system known as Pratyabhijñā, which forms the bedrock of all of Abhinavagupta’s learned exegesis. 434

Of Somānanda (fl. c. 900-950), 435 a single genre-bending 436 monograph survives, the Śivadrṣṭī (‘The Outlook of Śiva’), which embodies, along with the

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433 Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī opening verses 2-4: śrītraiyambakasadvamśamadhyamuktāmasasthitet śrīsomāṇandantaḥhasya vijñānapratibimbakam || anuttarāṇyasaśāsāpyam abhyadhāt śīvarapratyabhijñākhyam yah śāstraḥ yat sunirmalam || tatprāśisyaḥ karomy etāṃ tatsūtravivrūṇaḥ laghum | buddhvābhinaḥvagupto 'hami śrīmalaṃkṣaṇanaguptatālaḥ

434 SANDERSON (2007a), p. 382: “All Abhinavagupta’s exegesis proceeds on the basis of dynamic non-duality newly developed on slight scriptural foundations by Utpaladeva, the pupil of Somānanda, in his Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, its two auto-commentaries (the -vṛttiḥ and the -vivṛttiḥ), the Ajadapramāṇāṣṭhīdhī, the Īśvarasiddhī, the Saṃbandhasiddhī, and his commentary on Somānda’s Śivadrṣṭī.”

Śivasūtra and Spandakārika, one of “the very first tantric post-scriptural expressions of a philosophical non-dualism.”

Appended to the end of the KSTS edition of the Śivadrṣṭi is an autobiographical passage attributed to Somānanda that may be an addendum penned by one of his direct disciples, which would place it in the first half of the tenth century. The narrative, which concludes in the first-person voice of Somānanda (representing either his self-referential statements or a literary device of his disciple), fleshes out, in a highly idealized fashion, the genesis of the Tryambaka lineage culminating in the composition of Somānanda’s Śivadrṣṭi.

John NEMEC notes that this account, although not fully substantiable as a source of historical information on the author’s lineage, “squares perfectly well

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436 Ibid., (2011), pp. 17-18: “Now, the Śivadrṣṭi is unlike a great number of the tantric post-scriptural works that have come down to us. Many of these texts appear in the form of direct exegesis—commentaries that gloss scriptural sources—and many of the Kashmiri post-scriptural works, even when appearing in the form of hymns or other sorts of freestanding compositions, regularly cleave closely to the particular scriptural sources that they aim to elucidate. At the other extreme is the Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārika, which is constructed essentially as a work of pure philosophy, even if it accounts for soteriology (as do so many Indian philosophical works) and is admittedly ‘based on a scriptural back-ground.’ The Śivadrṣṭi, by contrast, appears as a work that carries the flavor of the tantras more or less throughout, but does so for the most part without tying itself too closely to any particular scriptural source. This approach, then, is more or less in line with the apparent strategy of the two root texts of the Spanda School, the Spandakārikās and the Śivasūtras. The concern here, then, is to distinguish Somānanda’s Śivadrṣṭi from the sort of works that closely follow and meticulously gloss scripture, on the one hand, and from the rather more intentionally philosophical Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārika, on the other, while simultaneously recognizing the differences between the Šivadrṣṭi and the root texts of the Spanda School that we have just mentioned... On the other hand, the Śivadrṣṭi is rather more philosophically oriented than the more yogically and/or mystically inclined Spandakārikās and Śivasūtras, while being simultaneously more theologically oriented and colored by scripture than the Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārika.”


438 On this interpretation of the source of this passage and its status, see Ibid., p. 21, footnote 45.
with the idea of the author as a Siddha descended to earth in order to propagate the secrets of the enlightened ones among those ready to hear them.” ⁴³⁹ In this sense, it follows the pattern of the Kaula model of religious authority of placing great emphasis on the intervention of Siddhas in sustaining the transmission of esoteric revelations, with the novel insertion of a first-person narrative voice. What follows is NEMEC’s translation of the entire passage based on his editorial compilation of three sources:⁴⁴⁰

In the past there were secrets, of which the Šaiva ones were chief, (held) in the mouth(s) of great-souled sages; they alone were able to give initiation. When the Kali(-age) began, they went to an inaccessible region and to Kalāpi village in particular. This being so, (and) the teachings (therefore) being lost, God, wandering on Mount Kailāsa, crossed down to earth in the image of Śrīkanṭha in order to grace (humanity). The Lord commanded a sage named Durvāsas, whose semen was turned upwards: “act in a manner such that the sāstra is not lost.” Following that the lord [Durvāsas], having received the command from God, made a great effort and created a mind-born son named Tryambakāditya, to whom he transferred the secrets completely. Following that, he, for his part, went to a cave, appropriately called

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 23-24. The Sanskrit of the passage cited here adopts NEMEC’s editorial choices in his collation of manuscript B = Berlin Manuscript (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, manuscript number Ms / fol 910a), the KSTS edition of Śivārṣṭī 7.107-123ab, and the partial citation of the passage found in Tantrālokaviveka ad Tantrāloka 1.8. See Ibid., p. 22, footnote 48: saivādīni rahasyāṇi pūram āsan mahātmanām | rṣīṇām vaktrahare teṣv evanugrahakriyā || kalau pravṛtte yātesu teṣu durgamagocaram | kalāpiśrāmapramukham ucchinne śivāsāsane || kailāśadau brahmaṇ devo māryā śrīkanṭharāpyā | anuvaśāya-vatātṛanām codayām āśa bhūtale || muniśāṃ dūrvasaśāṃ nāma bhagavān urdhvaretasam | noccidyate yathā śastraṁ rahasyam kuru tādāsam || tataḥ sa bhagavān devaś ādeshāṃ prāpya yatnātaḥ || sasrāja mānasaṃ putraṁ tryambakādityanāmaṁ || tasmin samkranayaṁ āśa rahasyāṇi samantataḥ || so ‘pi gatvā guhāṁ samyak tryambakākhyāṁ tataḥ param || tannāṃnā ciññitaṁ tatra sasrāja manasaṁ sutam || kham utpāpita samśiddhas tatputro ‘pi tathā tathā || siddhas tadavat suhotpattya śiddha evaṁ caturdaśa || ydvya paṇcadasaḥ putraḥ sarvaśrāvīśāradāḥ || sa kadācīl lokaḥyātrāṁ āsīnaḥ prakṣate tataḥ || bhaiḥ mukhyaśa tasyātha brāhmaṇī kācīd eva hi || rāpyaavanasauhāvyabandhūrāṁ śa gatiḥ drṣam || drṣtvā tāṁ laksanār varūkṣmaṇi yogyāṁ kanyāṁ athātmanāḥ || sadharmacārinīṁ samyag gatvā tatpitaram svayam || arthāvati Śrīmaṇṇī tāṁ ānayāṁ āśa yatnātaḥ || brāhmaṇeṇa viṣvēna tato jātṛas tathāvidhāḥ || tena yaḥ sa ca kālēna kaśmīrēṣvā āgato brahmaṇ | nāmā sa samgāmaditya varṣādityo ‘pi tatstūtaḥ || tasyāpy abhītāt sa bhagavān arūḍhyātīsāṃjñāṇaḥ || ānumāsāṃjñākas tasmād udabhātva tathāvidhāḥ || tasmād asmi samudbhūtaḥ somāntandākhya iḍrṣāḥ || karomī sma prakaraṇī śicārṣṭāyabhidhānākam || evam eṣā tryambakākhyāya teramāḥ ādablūyāḥ || śītā śiṣṣyapraśīṣyādair vistīrṇā mahākālo || tad evam eṣu vīhitāṁ mayā prakaraṇī manāk || prārthīyante ‘pi pravṛtte ‘pi guravo grahaṇaṁ prati.
Tryambaka, and there created with his mind a son marked by that name. The Siddha, fully accomplished, flew to the sky, as did his son, and so on and so forth. In this way, through the birth of sons, there were fourteen accomplished ones, until the fifteenth son, who was learned in all the scriptures. Sitting (in that inaccessible region), he at some point in time observed from there the activity of the world. Thereupon, a certain female Brahmin, who was young and beautiful, fell into the gaze of that outward-looking one. Then, having seen that young woman endowed with good characteristics and suitable to be his wife, he went, as is appropriate, to her father himself, and supplicated him and took that Brahmin woman with great effort (as his wife). Following that there was engendered by the brahminical marriage one [i.e., a son] of the same qualities (as the others in his family line), and wandering about he went, after some time, to Kashmir. He was Saṃgamāditya by name, and Varsāditya was his son. He [i.e., Varsāditya] also had (a son,) the lord named Arunāditya. From him was born one named Ānanda of the same qualities (as the others in his family line). I, Somānanda by name, am his son, endowed with such qualities (as those preceding me in my family line). I wrote the treatise called the Śivadrśṭī. In this way is established this [lineage], called the Tryambaka—Teramba in the local language—, which has been widely diffused by generations of students (prior to me) and is spoken of as a school of thought. Now, I have therefore merely provided this treatise; (but) even though I have undertaken it, one should resort to the gurus in order to understand (it).

One noteworthy feature of this account, which is also directly referred to by Abhinavagupta,⁴⁴¹ is the way it connects the legendary project of a lineage of Siddhas to salvage a defunct transmission of secret teachings with the formation of a patrilineal transmission. This transition is marked by Somānanda’s ancestor, Saṃgamāditya, who left Kalāpi village and came to settle in Kashmir. All of these events set the conditions for the Śivadrśṭī to meet the light of day, a

⁴⁴¹ See Abhinavagupta’s Vivrti vimarśini ad Iśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.16: śivadrśṭī iti tadgatam ā śrikaṇṭhanāthāḥ guruparvakramāḥ sūcayaṭī | tatra hi śriśrikaṇṭhanāthāḥ sāsane samutsanne śrīdurvāsomunīṁ tadvatārāṇāya dideṣa, so ‘pi śrītryambakādityaṁ traiyambakākhye lokaprasiddhyā tairimbābhīdhāne gurusanāntāne pravartayitāraṁ mānasaṁ sasārja ityādi vitatya uktam | śrikaṇṭhanāthāḥ ca adhitatatttvāḥ śrimadananantānāthāḥ so ‘pi śrībhagavacchaktīta ityādi āgāmeṣu nirāpitaṁ iti saṃpurṇo guruparvakramāḥ uktah ‘The sequence of the members of the guru lineage found in that [text], the Śivadrśṭī, arising from Śrīkaṇṭha is traced out [therein]. For when the teachings had gone into obscurity, in that [lineage] the illustrious Śrīkaṇṭha taught the sage Śrī Durvāsas in order to make them descend. That [Durvāsas], for his part, generated a mind-born [son], the holy Tryambakāditya, as the initiator of the guru lineage called Traiyambaka, which is called Tairimba according to local usage. This is taught in great detail [in that text]. And Śrīkaṇṭhanāthā himself comprehended the essence [of the teachings] from the auspicious Anantanātha. And that [Ananta received the teachings] from the Sakṭi of the blessed Lord. This and more is laid down in the scriptures. Thus the complete sequence of the members of the guru lineage is taught.’
monograph (prakarana) meant to further propagate the teachings of the Tryambaka order (maṭhikā) at the dawn of the post-scriptural phase of Kashmir’s Śaiva literature.

In addition to themes of recovery and preservation of secret teachings by Siddhas and the subsequent ancestral migration of later generations of Siddhas to Kashmir, other elements from this narrative are worth dwelling on. These are themes that also recur in other narratives in the greater imaginary of Kashmir’s reception of Śaivism. Moreover, these themes are recapitulated in Abhinavagupta’s own first-person autobiographical passages, to be taken up in chapter five. This account of Somānanda’s lineage pivots on one particular Siddha, the fifteenth mind-born son in the line of Durvāsas, who interrupts the process of a secret transmission from father to mind-born son by “observing the activity of the world” as an “outward-looking one.” This leads to his marriage and the carnal procreation of a son. This Siddha’s actions cue a transition in the pattern from celibate (ūrdhvareta) Siddhas mentally generating heirs to whom they transmit secret knowledge, ostensibly in the remote region of Kalāpi, to non-celibate teachers (adhoreta) more focused on the broader world. Indeed, it is this fifteenth mind-born Siddha’s son, Samgamāditya, who is the first to broadcast the esoteric teachings abroad, in Kashmir. The final mind-born son is the subject of a sizable internal narrative about becoming smitten with a lovely woman and their subsequent brahminical marriage. He is also predicated as “learned in all the śāstras” (sarvaśāstraviśārada), certainly a meaningful qualification for initiating a transmission to a more extensive audience within the
Tryambaka lineage, which comes to be associated with significant Śaiva philosophical works in the post-scriptural context.

We noted that the distinction between celibate and non-celibate teachers was also a significant one in the narrative of Matsyendranātha’s sons, who facilitated the dissemination of Kaula Śaivism. Abhinavagupta notes that six of twelve sons were especially qualified to transmit the teachings because, unlike Durvāsas and the subsequent fourteen mind born sons of the early Tryambaka lineage, their semen was not held upwards (adhoretas). Thus these non-celibate sons, whom Abhinavagupta specifies are qualified precisely because they allowed their virile energy (vīrya) to flow, are also worshipped in the Kaula maṇḍala, in addition to the Yugarathas, alongside their six tantric consorts.

Furthermore, like the above narrative recorded in select manuscripts of the Śivadṛṣṭi, these non-celibate Siddhas signal the proliferation of the teachings to new locales, comprising a Kaula network of non-urban sites and thus a great expansion of Kaula-based traditions.

442 Tantrāloka 29.42: adhikāro hi vīryasya prasaraḥ kulavartmani | tadaprasarayogena te proktā ārdhvaretasah ‘For qualification is the flow of the virile energy within the Kula path. Those [other unqualified sons] who practice stopping that flow are called “ārdhvaretas” (with upward-turned semen).’ Jayaratha’s exposition of this verse extrapolates Abhinavagupta’s otherwise terse phrase. Tantrāloka viveka ad Tantrāloka 29.42: adhikāro hi nāma vīryasya mantramudrāsambandhinaḥ sphārasya caramadhuṭoḥ ca kulavartmani śaiṣye madhyanādyādau dehamārge sākte ca ādyādhāre prasaraḥ saṃkramaṇam sa eva eṣāṁ nāstīti ete ārdhvaretasah proktāḥ svātmamātraviśṛṣṭisatattvā eva ity arthaḥ.

443 The six non-celibate sons, who initiate diverse lineages with six lines of transmission (ovalli), are described as the objects of worship in Tantrāloka 29.35: ete hi sādhikārāḥ pūjyā yeśāṁ iyaṁ bahuvibheda | santātir anavacchinnā citrā śisyapraśisyamanāty.

444 The initiation name of each line of transmission is given, along with the corresponding secret hand gestures, hermitages, begging places, and sacred sites in Tantrāloka 29.36-39: ānandāvaliḥbhiprabhupādāntāthā yogiṣabdāntā | etā ovallīyaḥ syur mudrāṣṭaṇāṁ kramāt tv etat | |
Even ignoring the slight chance that Somānanda did compose this transmission account of the Tryambaka lineage, the opening benediction of the Śivadrṣṭi, unquestionably penned by Somānanda himself, makes a first-person claim that the author is fully immersed in Śiva. This convention comes to be prevalent in the writings of non-dual Śaiva exegetes of post-scriptural Kashmir. However, Abhinavagupta, as we will see, injects a certain boldness to his first-person claims of enlightenment. Somānanda praises Śiva in a benedictory formulation that is decidedly nondual:

May Śiva, who has penetrated my form by warding himself off by means of his own self, pay homage to his (all-)extensive self by means of his own power.

The fact that Somānanda describes his own form as penetrated by Śiva signals his authority to transmit the teaching now underway, for this statement is a direct affirmation of his identity with the reality of Śiva at the outset of his work. This first-person claim of being directly immersed in the goal that the

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446 Indeed, this is supported by Utpaladeva’s immediate gloss of Somānanda’s benediction in his commentary to his master’s text, the padsaṅgati ad Śivadrṣṭi 1.1: yo ‘haṃ namaskaromī sa śivo ‘smadrūpenākhyam prāptaḥ ’I, who pay homage, am Śiva, who has attained unity with my form.’ This is the translation of NEMEC (2011), p. 100. For an alternative interpretation of Utpaladeva’s gloss on this benedictory verse that sees it more as a theological statement about the fact that all beings are penetrated by Śiva than Somānanda’s personal claim of his realization of identity with Śiva, see WALLIS (2014), pp. 389-390. Nevertheless, following his analysis of this verse and Utpaladeva’s commentary upon it, WALLIS also acknowledges that this benediction can indeed be read as the author’s announcement of his preliminary immersion in the reality of Śiva as a way of ensuring the composition that follows is carried through to completion without obstacles. This interpretation, more in line with the notion that this benedictory verse encodes a first-person claim of realization on the part of the
text aims to illuminate, surely a rarity in classical and medieval brahminical tracts renowned for hyperbolic displays of self-deprecation and humility, can be fruitfully related to the Kaula model of authority explored above. Authors as gurus and teachers of Kaula-based traditions, who are not only more pivotal in the transmission of knowledge but also prized for their mastery and success as perfected beings (Siddhas), have greater impetus to proclaim their realization of the highest goal. Now that we are reading the works of Siddhas that are not scriptural, i.e. ultimately authored by Śiva and brought down (avatāraṇa) by Siddhas, there is an incentive for these claims to be phrased as first-person proclamations.

Utpaladeva, Somānanda’s direct pupil, makes a similar claim in his benedictory verse to the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, the implications of which are fleshed out in his auto-commentary. What follows is a translation of both:

After miraculously becoming a servant of Maheśvara and desiring to be of service to humanity as well, I will justify logically the recognition of that [Śiva], which is the cause for the attainment of all success. [Auto-comment:] In attaining, by the grace of Somānanda, is based upon Abhinavagupta’s commentary on Utpaladeva’s opening benediction to the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā. See Ibid., pp. 394-395: “While certainly Abhinavagupta agreed with the nondual doctrine Utpala sets out above, it is probable that he read the verse in this latter sense, i.e. expressing an immersion into the Divine [on the part of the author] that is the means by which the obstacles (vignāḥ) to the completion of the work are deflected. For this is precisely what he argues in a passage near the beginning of his longer commentary (vivṛti-vimarsini) on Utpala’s Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, cited and translated by SANDERSON (2005: 80-82). In this passage, Abhinava implies that one’s awakening must be reinforced through repeated acts of samāveśa, or immersion into the śiva-svabhāva, and further that samāveśa is specifically a prerequisite to composing a spiritual treatise both for the inspiration it provides and the power to deflect obstacles that it generates.”

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447 Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 1.1.1: kathāṃ cid āsādaya maheśvarasya dāsyaṃ janasyāpyu upakāram iṣchān | samastasampatmaṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃśāṃș
Parameśvara alone, the great fortune of being his servant, extremely difficult to come by, and being embarrassed by this solitary success, I will cause all of humanity as well to recognize their Lord by the method (upāya) that will be taught [in this text], in order that I might be completely fulfilled by virtue of their realization of the highest reality.

Phrasing his attainment of the goal in a humble manner with the image of God’s servant, Utpaladeva nonetheless describes himself, in an endearing way, as being “embarrassed” by the fact he has realized the goal while others have not. What follows is an expression of his altruistic aim to share this magnificent gift, received by dint of Śiva’s grace, with all of humanity.

Abhinavagupta, in his shorter commentary (vimarśini) on this text, reads into and significantly elaborates the logic underlying Utpaladeva’s first-person claim of “solitary success,” and also explicates the nondual implications of being a “servant” of Śiva in his introduction to this benedictory verse:

With the aspiration of transferring to others the state of identity with the supreme Lord whose powers had been perceived in his own fully revealed Self, and considering that success, free from obstacles, is preceded by communicating his own identity [with the Lord], the author states his purpose [for composing the text]. [Utpaladeva does this] with the intention of generating the capacity to realize [one’s own] identity with that Lord, [an intention] whose secondary aim is an awareness of surrender to the unsurpassable excellence of Śiva.

When Utpaladeva claims to have miraculously attained the status of a servant of Maheśvara, Abhinavagupta reinterprets this as a confessional statement about Utpaladeva’s own perfect identity with supreme Śiva. Furthermore,

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448 Abhinavagupta’s vimarśini introducing Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 1.1.1: granthakāraḥ aparokṣātmānī drṣṭāsaktiṅāṃ parameśvaratanmayatāṃ paratra saṁcikramayiṣuḥ svatātmyasamarpanaṁ parāmpārcavāvighnena tatsampattim manyaṁ ānāṁ parameśvarotkarṣaprahvatāparāmarśaṁeṣatayā parameśvaratātātātmayogayagatāpādanabuddhyā prayōjanam āśātrayati.

449 Abhinavagupta’s departure from Utpaladeva’s humble tone in his own claims of enlightenment, and his interpretation of the inner meaning and function of Utpaladeva’s benediction, both suggest that he is introducing a more bold style and religious self-
Abhinavagupta supplies the reason for sharing this information at the outset of the text. Utpaladeva aspires to transfer or transmit (*saṃcikramayiṣu*) to others, namely humanity, this awareness of identity with Parameśvara, the full power of which has been revealed in his own Self. The way to effectively accomplish this transference, to prepare his disciples for this recognition, is to first communicate (*samarpaṇa*) his own identity with Śiva. A number of premises necessarily follow from Abhinavagupta’s elucidation of Utpaladeva’s intention for making a first-person claim of realization. Rather than skirting impropriety or distancing the author from the reader, first-person claims of enlightenment in this system are meant to instill trust in the audience, empowering them to realize the full potential of the liberating teaching. This kind of transmission from teacher to disciple requires that the teacher has fully recognized his or her own identity with Paramaśiva, a criterion which is directly derived from the Kaula vision of an ideal guru, to be explored below. In addition to these first-person claims in the Tryambaka lineage that Abhinavagupta received, we also find Jñānanetra, a pivotal figure and Avatāraka of the Krama tradition, making a remarkable statement about his own realization of the ineffable reality of the Goddess at the conclusion of his only surviving work.\(^{450}\) These concluding verses include a non-consciousness into the tradition of Pratyabhijñā, one which is perhaps more resonant with Jñānanetra’s first-person proclamation of enlightenment explored below. I am indebted to the comments of Anne MONIUS on this point.

\(^{450}\) *Kālikāstotra* vv. 19-20: याद्रिः महाश्माःशने द्रष्टाम देवयाः स्वरुप्रम अकुलस्थम् | तद्रग जगत्रायम इदाम भवतु तवान्ब प्रसादेनाः || इथाम स्वरुपापतुषिर अब्यादद्यिक तम्याक्सामादेवशदावशास्त्रेणा | माया सवेनास्तु स्वायः समयाः मानावा विश्वस्या तु मान्यलाख्ये ’O mother, by your favour, may these three worlds appropriate the nature of the Goddess that rests within the transcendental void, as I experienced it in the great cremation ground. Thus I, Śiva, have expressed praise of my own nature by force of the state of true immersion. O
dual praise of the author’s own supreme nature through his immersion
(samāveśa) in that highest reality, and also the intention for others to enjoy this
liberating realization of which he is the beneficiary. These precedents are critical
for interpreting Abhinavagupta’s own claims to be an empowered guru.

Before considering other narratives of pivotal figures in the Śākta-Śaiva
religious streams in Kashmir, we will first briefly consolidate a few themes from
the Tryambaka lineage treated above. Śrīkaṇṭha, identified by Abhinavagupta as
the primary authoritative teacher of the fives streams of the Mantramārga,
commands three Siddhas—Tryambaka, Āmardaka, and Śrīnātha—to descend to
earth after the scriptural tradition fell into obscurity. In the account appended to
the Śivadṛṣṭi, we learn about how Durvāsas, the short-tempered sage known for
his plot-twisting curses in Sanskrit epic literature, mediated the recovery of the
teachings and transmitted them to Tryambaka, who established the lineage that
Abhinavagupta received through its recent Kashmirian line—Somānanda,
Utpaladeva, and Lakṣmaṇagupta. Abhinavagupta describes the gurus in this
lineage as peerless navigators in the ocean of sacred literature of the gurus
(guruśāstra), and earlier describes this account of the descent of the three Siddhas
as based on the report of the gurus. The transition from scriptural traditions to
post-scriptural literature is envisioned as being indebted to the intervention of

Maṅgalā, may it benefit the whole world that is itself myself.” Edition and translation of

451 Durvāsas is also mentioned as wrathful and as Krodhamuni or “Angry Sage” in
According to Dominic GOODALL (personal communication), Durvāsas also depicted as an
important mediator of scriptures in the Siddhānta literature.
key Siddha masters after a rupture in the tradition, and the subsequent profusion of teachings of oceanic proportions is associated with Śaiva gurus. Moreover, this ocean must be navigated by further generations of Śaiva preceptors who carry the traditions forward through hundreds of branches. A pivotal moment in the transition from the age of scriptures to a post-scriptural phase of reception is the advent of teachers in the lineage who let their semen flow downwards (adhoretas), i.e. householder gurus who have sons to whom they can impart the tradition. In the Śivadrṣṭi narrative, as well as those surrounding Matsyendranātha’s sons, the transmission comes to be entrusted with non-celibate sons who, in turn, are associated with various important geographical sites. Despite a direct continuity with Kaula models of religious authority that prize individual Siddhas as consequential agents of transmission, these post-scriptural narratives feature an innovation that is absent in the Kaula models: first-person narration. This is evidenced in both the narrative of Somānanda’s preceptorial lineage and also the first-person claims of realization at the outset of Somānanda’s Śivadrṣṭi and Utpaladeva’s Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā.453

Two pithy works of post-scriptural Kashmir that predated Somānanda, garnered numerous commentaries, and heralded the nondual literature of post-scriptural Kashmir are the Śivasūtra (‘Aphorisms of Śiva’) and Spandakārikā (‘Stanzas on Vibration’). Both texts clearly emanate from the scriptural realm of

452 Although in the Siddhānta, the groups of mathas descending from Durvāsas is not entirely post-scriptural. I am grateful to Dominic GODDALL for alerting me to this point.

453 Although, as mentioned above, the first-person claim of Utpaladeva is somewhat concealed by his deference to Śiva’s grace, and retrospectively emboldened by Abhinavagupta’s gloss.
Śākta Śaivism, and in particular echo the doctrines and the “trans-ritual” orientation found in the Kulamārga. However, they are remarkable inasmuch as they intentionally distance themselves from any clear sectarian affinities in an aim to present a truly ecumenical Śaiva teaching. The seventy-seven aphorisms of the Śivasūtra, which articulate meditative techniques and a “yoga that develops as the interior reflection of outer ritual forms,” were revealed to the Kashmirian sage Vasugupta (c. 825-875). The earliest accounts of Vasugupta’s

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454 On the Śivasūtra, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 402-403: “Moreover, they reveal no close attachment to the terminology and concepts of the Krama, the Trika, or any single scripture-based system so that we could clarify their meaning by drawing on its literature. One may say only that they present a creative epitome of doctrine and trans-ritual practice drawing, probably eclectically, from Kaula traditions that venerate Bhairava and the Mothers, teaching that the goal of practice is to realize that one is oneself the Śakti, the deity that controls the diverse powers that constitute the universe of experience, establishing this first through withdrawal into the heart of consciousness and then through its expansion into the states that constitute the mundane awareness of the bound. This model of transcendence followed by an expansion that causes the state of enlightenment to pervade the transcended is central to the Kālīkula, and the Aphorisms may well have drawn it directly or indirectly from that source. But there is much in them that cannot obviously be derived from it and several elements that cannot be traced to any other known scriptural source.”

455 DYCZKOWSKI (1992a), p. 7. See Ibid., pp. 7-8: “The sacred circle (cakra) in which the deities of the Tantric rite are worshipped is now understood to consist of the cognitive and other energies of the adept’s consciousness which is identified with Śiva, Who sits in the center of the circle as its divine master (cakreśvara) and as the main object of worship. The sacred formula (mantra) is the adept’s mind which arises out of Śiva’s universal consciousness to merge back into it in such a way as to be filled with Śiva’s own divine power, and so everything the yogi says is part of his incessant prayer. The deity the adept should meditate upon in the course of the ritual is perceived when he realizes that the universe is nothing but the play of his own consciousness. This is the real initiation that qualifies him to perform the sacred rites. The gift (dāna) the teacher gives by means of the rites of initiation is the knowledge he transmits to his disciples of his true identity, and it is this same offering which he presents as food (anna) to the gods. The vow the disciple takes in the course of his initiation is to abide in the body, conscious that he is one with Śiva for he has offered his conditioned bodily consciousness as an oblation into the fire of knowledge.”

456 This dating follows Sanderson’s “crude method” of calculation, which assumes “preceptorial generations of twenty-five years and active lives of fifty,” and identifies the active career of Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, Vasugupta’s direct pupil, as c. 850-900. See SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 411 & 418.
reception of the Śivasūtra describe the esoteric knowledge encapsulated in the text being orally transmitted to him by an anonymous Siddha.

In his commentary (vivṛti) on the final verse of Spandakārikā,⁴⁵⁷ where Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa is praising the wondrous speech of his own guru, Vasugupta, the commentator Rājānaka Rāma (c. 950-1000)⁴⁵⁸ describes that master who received the Śivasūtra in this way:⁴⁵⁹

I praise the speech or teachings of the guru known as Vasugupta to whom the flow of nectar in the form of the essence of vibration, the secret doctrine of all esoteric [knowledge], was directly transmitted through the oral teaching of a Siddha.

Vasugupta is here described as receiving the secret doctrine from the mouth or oral teaching of a Siddha (siddhamukha). This is an unambiguous Kaula formulation inasmuch as it emphasizes the essential role of a Siddha in directly transmitting (sākṣāt saṁkrānta) an esoteric teaching (rahasya) to Vasugupta, and in particular a transmission that is the reserve of an oral tradition. Bhagavadutpala (sometimes called Bhāgavatotpala), who may well have been a contemporary of

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⁴⁵⁷ Spandakārikā 52: agdhasanīsayāṁbhodhisamuttaranatārinīṁ | vande vicitrārthapadāṁ citrāṁ
tāṁ gurubhāratīṁ ‘I venerate the wondrous speech of the Master, whose words and their meanings are marvelous; it is a boat to cross the unfathomable ocean of doubt.’

⁴⁵⁸ For an explanation of this date for Rājānaka Rāma, see SANDERSON (2007a), p. 411.

⁴⁵⁹ Spandakārikāvivṛti ad Spandakārikā 52 (p. 165): guruh vasuguptabhāhitānasya sākṣāt siddhamukhasaṁkrāntasamastarahasyopanisadbhūtaspadatattvāmṛtaniḥśyandasya bhāratiṁ vācaṁ staumi. This numbering of the Spandakārikā follows the edition of the Spandakārikāvivṛti of Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa. This translation benefits from the one found in SANDERSON (2007a), p. 403, footnote 572.
Rājānaka Rāma living one generation before Abhinavagupta in Kashmir,⁴⁶⁰ offers a parallel explanation for the origin of the Śivasūtra in his Spandapradīpikā:⁴⁶¹

In this [Spanda system], this is the received tradition as it has been reported. Upon receiving that esoteric teaching from the guru Vasugupta, which was revealed to him through the oral teaching of a Siddha, the moon that is Bhāṭṭa Kallaṭa, in order to awaken his disciples, composed this epitome [of that Śivasūtra, i.e. the Spandakārikā] as fifty verses in the anuṣṭūḥ meter. The purport of that [Spandakārikā] was then made visible, to a certain extent, through the moonlight of his commentary [the Spandakārikāvṛtti].

This view is characteristic of commentators on the Śivasūtra and Spandakārikā that predated Kṣemarāja (c. 1000-1050), Abhinavagupta’s direct disciple: the Śivasūtra was revealed to Vasugupta, and his disciple, Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa, elaborated the wisdom condensed in those aphorisms in his Spandakārikā.

The earliest surviving commentary on the Śivasūtra is the Vārttika of the Kashmirian Bhāskara (c. 975-1025), a contemporary of Abhinavagupta, which he professes to have written in order to amend the erroneous ideas of his disciples resulting from corruption in the tradition.⁴⁶² Bhāskara adds a specific location to the account of the reception of the Aphorisms of Śiva, telling us they were

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⁴⁶⁰ On the likelihood of Bhagavadutpala’s mid-tenth-century date, see DYCZKOWSKI (1992a), p. 29.


⁴⁶² Śivasūtravārttika 1.9-1.10ab: daivo karir bhāskaro ‘ham antevaśiṣya’rthataḥ | yasmad āgamaśvahṛṣiṇād bhṛnter bhranitabuddhayah || sukumārā atas tāṇi sūtrāni viṃno mā ca ‘I am Bhāskara, the son of Divākara, who, upon receiving [that esoteric teaching] from that [Śrīkanṭhabhaṭṭa] respectfully composes this Vārtika on the aphorisms [of Śiva], impelled by the assembly of my disciples. Since their very tender intellects are confused by erroneous ideas due to the corruption of the scriptural tradition, I will now explain those aphorisms [for their sake].’
revealed through the command of a Siddha to Vasugupta on Kashmir’s Mahādeva mountain.\footnote{Śivasūtrasāra 1.3-1.5: śrīmanmahādevagirau vasuguptaguroḥ purā | siddhādesāt prādurāsan śivasūtrāni tasya hi \thinspace | sarahasyānāt atah so ‘pi prādād bhaṭṭāya sūraye \thinspace | śrīkallatāya so ‘py evaṃ catuhkhaṇḍāni tāny atha \thinspace | vyākaroḥ trikam etebhyāḥ spandasūtraḥ svakāś tataḥ | tattvārthacintāmanīyākhyātikāyā khaṇḍam antimāin.}

In earlier times, the aphorisms of Śiva appeared to the guru Vasugupta on the auspicious Mahādeva mountain\footnote{On the identity of this site, see SANDERSON (2004), pp. 282-283: “Mahādevagiri is the mountain peak of that name located in the ridge that separates the valleys of the Sindhu and the Arrah”; for further references to Mahādeva mountain in Kashmirian literature, see Ibid., p. 283, footnote 127: “Nilamata 1337; Haracaritacintāmaṇi 10.258; Sarvāvatāra ff. 3-5 (Adhyāya 3); Kathāsaritsāgara 51.48; Śivasūtravimarśinī, p. 1; Stein, 1961, vol. 2, p. 422.”} by the command of a Siddha. After [receiving them], that [Vasugupta] transmitted those esoteric teachings to the brahmin Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa. For his part, [Kallaṭa transmitted] those aphorisms, divided into four chapters, [and] then expounded the [first] three of these [four chapters] through his Spandasūtras [i.e. the Spandakārikā], and then the last [chapter] through his commentary called the Tattvārthacintāmaṇī.

Kṣemarāja echoes Bhāskara’s sentiments of addressing a corrupt tradition when announcing his reason\footnote{Śivasūtravimarśinī second opening verse: āsamaṃjasyam ālocya vrṭtiṇām iha tatvataḥ | śivasūtraṃ vyākaromi gurvaṃnāyavigīnātah ‘Witnessing the absurdity of available commentaries based on incongruences in the teaching tradition of [various] gurus, I will now accurately expound the Śivasūtra.’} for composing yet another commentary on the Śivasūtra, but introduces a new view, that comes to hold sway: Vasugupta, not Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa, authored the Spandakārikā, upon which the latter only wrote a short gloss.

Kṣemarāja gives an alternative, and rather elaborate, account of the initial revelation of the Śivasūtra. He first provides a setting for the story by introducing the reader to master Vasugupta in residence on Mahādeva mountain:\footnote{Śivasūtravimarśinī opening salvo: iha kaścit śaktipūta-vāsonmīnanmāheśvarabhaktiyatiṣayāt anangīkṛtādhararājanāsthānānādhyāyādhisiddhadesānaḥ śivārādhana-pārāṣamaṃ dānānāyogīṃ-śiddhasatsampadāyapavitritāhṛdayaḥ śrīmahādevagirau mahāmāheśvaram śrīmān vasuguptanāmā gurur abhavat.}

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Once, in this [region of Kashmir], there was a certain Śaiva guru known as the illustrious Vasugupta [who dwelt] on the auspicious Mahādeva mountain. Due to his superb Śaiva devotion expanding through the descent of Śiva’s power (śaktipāta), he did not accept the teachings of Siddhas like Nāgabodhi stationed in lower religious systems. Intent upon worship of Śiva, his heart was purified by the genuine tradition of numerous Śaiva Yoganīs and Siddhas.

Vasugupta is described as equipped with discernment about the validity of teachings of certain so-called Siddhas like Nāgabodhi due to his infusion of Śiva’s grace, and further characterized as “purified by the genuine tradition of numerous Śaiva Yoginīs and Siddhas.” SANDERSON observes⁴⁶⁷ that this qualification effectively portrays Vasugupta as “a conduit to men of Kaula oral teachings,” and the adjective “numerous” modifying the Siddhas and Yoganīs whose transmission he received may also “account for the eclectic character of the text.” Indeed, the idea of studying with multiple gurus as a virtuous pursuit, reiterated by Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa and deeply relevant in the post-scriptural world of textual exigencies (to be discussed in the subsequent chapter), is vigorously defended by Abhinavagupta in his arguments for a wide-ranging religious education.

When turning to the events in which the Śivasūtra were revealed, Kṣemarāja edits out the intermediary Siddha, instead ascribing the initial inspiration and subsequent discovery of the text to instructions received from Śiva in a dream:⁴⁶⁸

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Once Paramaśiva, desiring to benefit mankind by preventing the esoteric tradition from dying out in a society that was almost completely permeated by the dualistic doctrine [of the Saiddhāntikas], favoured that [Guru Vasugupta on Mt. Mahādeva by appearing to him] in a dream and causing him to understand that there was an esoteric teaching [inscribed] on a huge rock on that mountain and that he was to learn it and reveal it to those who deserved to be so favoured. When he awoke he looked for that rock and turning it over by a mere touch of his hand saw that it confirmed his dream. He then acquired from it these aphorisms, which are the epitome of the esoteric Śaiva scriptures.

Kṣemarājā, in this revelation narrative, describes how Vasugupta, “a conduit to men of Kaula oral teachings” and blessed by Śiva’s grace to know the difference between definitive non-dual teachings and the lower knowledge peddled by the likes of Nāgabodhi, was chosen by Śiva himself to receive and revive the esoteric (rahasya) revelatory tradition. Kṣemarājā adds a new twist to earlier accounts: Vasugupta is now in direct reception of Śiva’s teaching, “thus lifting the text on to the level of scriptural revelation.”469 Kṣemarājā’s narrative of Vasugupta also places the initial revelation of this text in the broader context of Kashmir’s early post-scriptural world: non-dual Śākta Śaivism is on the verge of extinction in a “society that was almost completely permeated by the dualistic doctrine [of the Saiddhāntikas].” Śiva acts in response to this dire situation by unveiling a non-dual synthesis of Kaula doctrine, which suddenly appeared inscribed on a huge boulder on one of Kashmir’s local sacred sites, the Mahādeva mountain.

Adhering to the Kaula model of religious authority, the medium for such a local revelation in the ninth century was an individual Siddha master, the sage Vasugupta. No matter how endangered Kaula esotericism is, this narrative

469 SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 403-404. That said, there is also evidence in earlier commentarial literature on the Śivasūtra and Spandakārikā that the Śivasūtra was understood as being originally authored by Śiva, albeit mediated by a Siddha, and thus already enjoyed the status of revelation before Kṣemarājā. See DYCZKOWSKI (1992a), p. 11.
suggests, it can reemerge (in a new eclectic, non-sectarian, and catholic form) to an individual spiritual adept without mediation. Moreover, this kind of event, in this mature Kaula framework of authority, is now highly localized and warrants narrative treatment, including the flourishes of a dream message and a magical boulder.

The disciple of this venerable Kashmirian guru, Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa who is credited by the earlier tradition with authoring the Spandakārikā, is mentioned in Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarāṅginī (‘River of Kings’), as a Siddha who descended into the region during the pivotal reign of Avantivarman (c. 855/6-883):⁴⁷⁰

During the period of [King] Avantivarman, [numerous] Siddhas such as Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa descended into the region [of Kashmir] to bestow grace upon humanity. Described in the same fashion as the Siddhas Tryambaka, Āmardaka, and Śrīnātha “descending” (avātaran) into the world, this tantalizing verse is read by Sanderson as registering the significant influence of early Śākta Śaiva authors in the formative period of ninth-century Kashmir:⁴⁷¹

It is not without good reason, then, that the historian Kalhaṇa speaks of the reign of Avantivarman (c. 855/6-883) as one that was marked by the descent of Siddhas among men for the benefit of the world. That this development had a major impact on Kashmirian society is evident in the fact that Kalhaṇa records it. For he is generally silent about the recent history of religion in the valley beyond noting the religious affiliations of certain kings and the temples and other religious foundations that they established. Such figures as Bhaṭṭa Rāmakantha, Abhinavagupta, and Kṣemarāja, who loom so large in the learned literature of the Śaivas of Kashmir and beyond, receive not even a passing mention.

The foregoing encapsulation of narratives surrounding Vasugupta and the emergence of the non-dual and esoteric Śaiva teachings in Kashmir of a Kaula

⁴⁷⁰ Rājatarāṅginī 5.66: anugrahaḥya lokānāṁ bhaṭṭaśrīkallaṭādayaḥ | avantivarmanāḥ kāle siddhā bhuvaṃ avātaraṇ.

pedigree are in harmony with the way Kaula sources envisaged the transmission of tradition. Vasugupta receives esoteric wisdom from the lips of a Siddha, or directly from Śiva, and his disciple, Kallaṭa, is depicted as a Siddha descending into the region at the dawn of the post-scriptural era to bestow grace upon its inhabitants. The parallel with Kaula scriptures is evident in the language of Siddhas acting on a descending arc, either the Avatārakas (agents of revelation) incarnating or bringing down Kaula revelations or posterior Siddhas crossing down (with variants formed from the verbal root √avatṛ) into the world to reignite and perpetuate the transmission of those Kaula revelatory secrets (rahasya / śaivopaniṣad).

More can be gleaned, however, from these narratives when considered together with those of the Tryambaka lineage. A common motif across the above accounts is the role of Siddhas in salvaging a teaching tradition in danger of obsolescence. Post-scriptural authors envision non-dual tantric knowledge and its vehicle of transmission as fragile, delicate, and tenuous across time and space; it is not only liable to dilution and adulteration, but can also become totally defunct. What fends against these risks is not a public institution, carried on by exacting ritual performance of the Śaiva Tantras, but the agency and intervention of individual Siddhas who transmit “secrets” for those initiated into higher and

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472 Here is a collation of citations quoted and translated above that reference a “break” or “corruption,” either of scriptural transmission or its Kashmirian reception. Tantrāloka 36.12: teśāṃ kramaṇa tanmadhye bhraṣṭam kālāntaraṇād yadā | tādā śrīkaṇṭhaḥ kāḷāntā śivaḥ avātaran; Śivadṛṣṭi 7.108: kalau pravṛtte yateṣu teṣu durgāmacocaram | kalāpīgṛmapramukham ucchinne śivaśāsane; Śivasūtraṁvarta 1.9-1.10ab: daivākarīḥ bhāṣakaro 'ham antevāsīgaṇeṇītaḥ | yasmināgamāviḥbraṃśād bhṛantar bhramataborbhayaḥ | sukumāraḥ atan niśtrāṇī vивṛṇom iṣcā; Śivasūtraṁvarmārinī second opening verse: āsamaṇjayasaṁ dlocya vṛtthinām iha tattvataḥ | śivasūtraṁ vyākaroṁ guṇāṇāvaṁghaṇataḥ; Śivasūtraṁvarmārinī opening salvo: kadācī cāsau dvaitādaśānādhiāsaṁtāpāγre jīvaloke rahasyaṣaṁpradāyō mā viccheditya āśayaō.
more restricted levels of Śaivism. In the post-scriptural world of Kashmir these “secrets” are now also translated into more ecumenical texts on meditation and yoga (Śivasūtra and Spandakārikā) that leave behind much of the ritual structure and apparatus of individual sectarian streams of tantric practice (in the spirit of the Kulamārga). There is also another “translation” occurring in post-scriptural Kashmir: the re-presentation of revelatory axioms in dialectical and systematic Sanskrit treatises (Pratyabhijñā literature) in dialogue with pan-Indian philosophical traditions, particularly the Buddhist epistemologists Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and Dharmottara. These processes illustrate a widening of tradition,⁴⁷³ and yet these post-scriptural sources choose to locate their authority

⁴⁷³ TORELLA (2002), p. xiii: “The complex work of exegesis of the scriptures, the reformulation of their teaching and the organizing and hierachizing of their contents indicate first and foremost its decision to emerge into the open, to escape from the dimension of a restricted circle of adepts—which is what must have been the original nature of these schools—and to offer itself implicitly as an alternative to the dominant Śaivasiddhānta... In order to do this it was necessary to extract a homogenous though varied teaching from the diverse texts; to purge it, without changing its essential nature, of all that it was felt could not be proposed to a wider circle—in other words, of all that was bound to create an instinctive and insurmountable resistance—by attenuating the sharper points or removing every actually concrete aspect, and finally translating it into a discourse whose categories were shared by its addressees and engaging in a dialogue that would not be afraid to confront rival doctrines. Vasugupta and Kallaṭa with the doctrine of the Spanda, on the one hand, and Somānanda, on the other, were the first to undertake this task. The former chose a plan that was more closely connected with spiritual experience, the latter one that was more in terms of conceptual elaboration (though his work is clearly based on direct experience, which is sometimes visionary and ecstatic).” For a response to this statement that further nuances the concept of a shared process of a widening of tradition in these and other non-sectarian post-scriptural works of Kashmir, see NEMEC (2011), p. 13: “Torella, for one, has suggested that the emergence of a work of exegesis... requires by the very nature of such a work that the author took ‘the decision to emerge in the open, to escape from the dimension of a restricted circle of adepts.’ Sanderson similarly postulates the existence of a single telos for all the post-scriptural writings. He argues that the Brahmīns who wrote the works in question emphasized liberating knowledge over visionary experience in their writings, and he claims that the choice of this emphasis stemmed directly ‘from the nature of the commentators’ social milieu, which is one of Śaiva brahmīns eager to consolidate their religion on the level of high culture.’... Together this pair of theses identifies the general parameters in which and by which the post-scriptural authors operated... In comparing the Śivadṛṣṭi to the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, however, one identifies more specifically the individual authors’ intended audiences, as well as the particular strategies each author
more in the procedures of rational discourse and the enlightened awareness of individual gurus than an explicit link to particular Śākta Śaiva revelatory streams. These gurus are depicted in the following ways: shining like fresh-water pearls in the lineage-stream, descended from a patrilineal order that came to Kashmir through ancestral migration, acting as a vessel for the oral teachings of a Siddha, directly receiving new revelations from Śiva, or descending into a region to bestow grace upon humanity with their enlightening presence.

The post-scriptural texts treated above, the Śivasūtra, Spandakārikā, Śivadrṣṭi, and subsequent philosophical tracts of the Pratyabhijñā tradition of Utpaladeva, emanate from and are indebted to Śākta Śaiva scriptural traditions and, in various ways, formulate a non-dual Śaiva doctrine. However, they do so without exclusively identifying with and thus promoting a particular Śākta Śaiva sect or line of Kaula transmission. In addition to these non-sectarian works, there are volumes of post-scriptural texts that do faithfully adhere to particular canons of Tantric and Kaula speculation and practice. These include the great

employs in conceptualizing their tradition in terms that were chosen to reach a wider audience in a language that touched the register of high culture. This is to say that, in the case of Somānanda’s Śivadrṣṭi and Utpaladeva’s Iśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, one discerns distinct authorial strategies, ends, and intended audiences for each of the two authors’ works.”

474 On the indebtedness of Somānanda’s Śivadrṣṭi to scriptural sources, see TORELLA (2002), p. xvii: “Somānanda, following the teaching of the Trika, distinguishes a triad of powers – icchā, jñāna and kriyā – (connected with the level of Śakti, Sadaśiva and Iśvara respectively).” NEMEC (2011), p. 39ff gives an excellent summary of the role of Trika concepts and terminology in the Śivadrṣṭi. Regarding Krama influences on the Śivadrṣṭi, see Ibid., pp. 56-58. On potential scriptural sources of the doctrines and concepts found in the Śivasūtra, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 402-403.

475 Although there should be one qualification to this statement: determining a completely unambiguous doctrine of nonduality is difficult in the extremely pithy aphorisms of the Śivasūtra when read independently of its commentaries.
collection of learned exegesis on the dualistic Śaiva Siddhānta scriptures, and, on the Śākta Śaiva side, a great swath of post-scriptual exegetical literature on the Trika and Krama traditions. The Trika post-scriptual literature is most fundamentally embodied in the exegetical writing of Abhinavagupta, and will be considered below in our synopsis of his view of revelation.

The Krama, which plays a critical yet somewhat covert role in Abhinavagupta’s greater exegetical project, has also left us with a considerable textual record exhibiting a vital tradition thriving in post-scriptual Kashmir. A seminal study of the Krama and its post-scriptual literature, based largely on unedited sources, is included in the monumental article of Alexis Sanderson, “The Ĉaiva Exegesis of Kashmir.” In chapter three we noted that Jñānanetra, alias Śivananda, was singled out as the primary agent of revelation (avatāraka) of the Krama tradition by Abhinavagupta’s commentator, Jayaratha. We also observed that at least one Krama scriptural source, the Yonigahvara, credits Jñānanetra with bringing the tradition to light in Uḍḍiyāna, the Northern seat (pīṭha) most often associated with the original earthly inception of the Krama teachings. The post-scriptural Krama literature of Kashmir almost unanimously identifies Jñānanetra as the founding Siddha of their contemporary lineage.

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476 Sanderson (2007a), p. 250: “Kashmirians of the Śäkta Śaiva division have given us exegesis in two traditions, the Kālīkula and the Trika, and, from the standpoint of those, on the cult of Tripurasundarī, and on two non-Saiddhāntika scriptures for the propitiation of Bhairava and his consort that were the primary basis of the Kashmirian Śaiva Paddhati, thus inserting their exegesis into the less esoteric domain of main-stream observance.”

477 Ibid., pp. 260-352.
Abhinavagupta narrates the Kashmirian line of Krama teachers in a lost commentarial work on the Kramastotra⁴⁷⁸ of Eraka (c. 900-950),⁴⁷⁹ the Kramakeli; thankfully, this portion of Abhinavagupta’s lost text is preserved in Jayaratha’s commentary (viveka) on the Tantrāloka. Abhinavagupta portrays the lineage from which he received the Krama transmission in this way:⁴⁸⁰

First the venerable, excellent Vira Govindarāja, of auspicious name, second Bhānuka, and third Eraka received together the teaching from Keyūravatī, Madanikā, and Kalyāṇikā, all three of whom had been initiated by Śivānandanātha, who had received the teaching in the Northern Pītha from the Pītheśvarī. As for the venerable Eraka, he strove for siddhiḥ, until having achieved it he reflected as follows: “What is the value of supernatural rewards that I have undergone this great hardship to attain? Why did I not devote myself exclusively, as my [two] fellow pupils did, to the spiritual upliftment of those who might have come to me as disciples? For: ‘Even on the level of Sādāśiva [to which those who seek reward ascend] Mahograkalī with her ferocious frown of fury will come in time to destroy. Realizing this one should ascend to the ultimate state and forcibly enter the Goddess Kālasaṃkarṣṣiṇī [/who withdraws even Sādāśiva’]. So let me now benefit mankind by spreading through [this] hymn the esoteric teaching that I have held hidden in my mind.” Of these [three disciples] the first[,] Govindarāja[,] realized that now that he had gained all this knowledge nothing remained for him to achieve, and having

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⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 352.

⁴⁷⁹ On this dating of Eraka, see Ibid., p. 411.

⁴⁸⁰ Tantrālokaiviveka ad Tantrāloka 4.173ab, quoting Abhinavagupta’s Kramakeli: yad utkam tatraivānena yathā (‘As [Abhinavagupta] has said in that same work’): ekah śrīmān viravaraḥ suṣugriḥtaṇāṅādheyo govindrājābhidhiṇḥāḥ śrībāṇukābhidhiṇḥāḥ dvitiyaḥ śrīmān erakasamākhyāyaś triyāḥ samam evopadesaṃ pīṭheśvarībhyaḥ uttarapiṭhe (em.: uttarapiṭhe Ed.) labdhopadesāca chriśāvānandānāṭāḥ labdhānugraḥābhīyaḥ śrīkeyūravatīśrīmānandākāśrikālāṅākābhīyaḥ prāṇavantāḥ śrīmān erakas tu siddhiḥyai prāyataḥ yāvat siddhaḥ sann evam manuṣaś samarthayaḥ sma śa kiṃ bhogair yad ayaṃ mahāṃ kleso maṇumabhūtaḥ | katham ahaṃ sahaḥ sahaḥ sarabhāmasvaritaḥ yāvajjīvaḥ prapannalokodharanamātrapaṃ eva nābhavaṃ yataḥ śrīmatasadāśīcavade ‘pi mahograkalī bhīmotkaṭābhṛukṣīr evaṣi bhaṅgaḥbhūmiḥ ity ākalaṃya paramāṇaḥ srihitim etya kālasaṃkaṃkarṣṣiṇīṃ bhagavatim khaṇṭho ‘dhiḥithiḥ | tad idānti api niḥabāvagatarahasyopadesaṃ stotramukhaṇāpi tāvat prasārayaṃ lokān anugṛhiṇyām iti | tatrādyāḥ prāptopadesa evaivaṃ manasya akārśūnd evaḥ pāvayān adhigataṃ kim idānti kṛtyaṃ asīti | ittham ca niṣṭhitamanā yadvajjīvaṃ upanātaḥbāgovāhana-mātravyāpāra etadvijayānopesapātā śīṣyopadesa-pravāṇah (śīṣyopadesa em.: śīṣtopadesa Ed.) sarāntāṃ pratyaikṣaṣa | sa cedāṃ rahasyaṃ śrīsomanandābhidhiṇāḥ gurave saṃcārayāṃ babhūva | dvitiya ‘py evan āṣṭa | tasyaiva caśa śīṣmaduṣṭaḥbhailandāṅgūrumaprīpaśaṃsata (uiṣṭaḥbhaṭṭādi conj.: uṣṭaḥbhaṭṭādi Ed.) yatprasadāsāditamahinābhīr asminbhīr etat pradarśitam. This passage is cited and translated, with the above emendations and conjectures, across three footnotes in SANDERSON (2007a), footnote 131 on p. 275, footnote 133 on p. 276, and footnote 405 on p. 355. The above translation is that of SANDERSON.
decided this he waited for death, engaging in such action as was necessary to carry to completion the experience already in train [as the fruition of his past actions], and devoting himself to instructing such disciples as were fit to be taught this knowledge. He transmitted this esoteric teaching to a Guru called Somânanda. The second [Bhānuka] passed his time in the same way. It is from him that has descended this line of a number of successive Gurus beginning with Ujjaṭa and Udbhaṭa, by the grace of which I have been exalted [by initiation] and have given this explanation.

Abhinavagupta, here in his otherwise lost commentary on Eraka’s Kramastotra, the Kramakeli, describes one line of Krama transmission through which he received the tradition. This lineage was originally revealed to Śivānanda or Jñānanetra by the Yoginīs of the Northern Seat, Uḍḍiyāna, in particular their leader, the Yoginī Maṅgalā. This excerpt dwells specifically on the circumstances whereupon Eraka, an important Krama master originally intent upon supernatural enjoyments, came to realize their ultimate futility. As a result, he decided to redirect his attention to the supreme goal of fusion with the supreme Goddess of the Krama, Kālasāmkarṣini, and to share this realization

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481 There is evidence that Abhinavagupta also received the Krama teachings from Bhuṭirāja, who was the disciple of Cakrabhānu, whose guru (and maternal uncle) Hrasvanātha, was a fellow disciple of Eraka. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 125, footnote 91: “That he [i.e. Bhuṭirāja] was a Krama master and the teacher of Abhinavagupta in this tradition is reported by an unidentified author on the lineages of the Krama quoted by Jayaratha as his contemporary (adyatanaḥ ... yad uktam) (Tantrālokaviveka vol. 3 [4], p. 193, II. 13-14): śrībhūṭirājanāmāpy ācāryaś cakrabhānuśisya ‘nyah | abhinavaguptasya guror yaśya hi kālīnaye guruṭā ‘And there was another pupil of Cakrabhānu, called Bhuṭirāja, who was the teacher of the teacher Abhinavagupta in the Kāli system.’ There is also the evidence of a line in a verse from a lost work by Abhinavagupta quoted by Jayaratha... that acknowledges Bhuṭirāja (Tantrālokaviveka vol. 1 [1] p. 29, 1.3 [on TĀ 1.9]): bhāṭṭārikādibhūṭirājavatāḥ śrīmān siddhodvākramah ‘the glorious lineage of the venerable Siddhas from Bhaṭṭārikā to Bhūti[rāja].’ The Bhaṭṭārikā here is surely the Yoginī Maṅgalā, the source of the Krama lineage that passed from her to Jñānanetranātha, since in the Kashmirian literature no Śaiva tradition other than the Krama is said to have originated from a woman... From Bhuṭirāja’s guru Cakrabhānu the lineage goes back through Hrasvanātha (/Vāmana) and the Rājīhi Keyūravatī to Jñānanetranātha, also called Śivānanda, who is said to have received the revelation from the Yoginī Maṅgalā in Uḍḍiyāna.” On the identity of Hrasvanātha as Cakrabhānu’s maternal uncle, and a fascinating narrative about these two Krama gurus from Kalhaṇa’s Rājatarangini, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 280-282.

with others. This led to his composition of the Kramastotra—an encapsulation of
the secret teachings actualized within Eraka designed to awaken humanity to
this very same ineffable reality—on which Abhinavagupta composed his
commentary, the Kramakeli. Interestingly, Abhinavagupta writes this portion of
the account in a first-person voice, which may be evidence that the report of
Eraka’s spiritual career and subsequent altruistic awakening may have originally
been written in an “autobiographical” register.

Abhinavagupta, at least in the more mature stage of his career as a Śaiva
master, situates his scriptural exegesis squarely in the Trika tradition.

Notwithstanding this fact, following some of his late Trika scriptural sources he
inserts the Goddesses of the Krama, particularly Kālasaṃkarśini,483 into the very
core of his theological system as its apex.484 I mention this because in the

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483 Ibid., p. 259, which refers to the late Trika scripture, the Devyāḥāla. Abhinavagupta’s paradigmatic citations of this scripture that elevates the Krama Goddess Kālasaṃkarśini above the three Goddesses of the Trika, see Tantrāloka 3.70-3.71ab devyāhalasāstre sā kathitā kālaśarinī | mahādāmarake yāge śrīparāmaste sāhitā || śrīpūrvaśāstre sā mātrsadbhāvatvena varṇitā ‘In the Devyāmalā scripture, that [supreme Goddess] is described as Kālakarśini. In the Mahādāmaraka sacrificial rite [of that scripture], [Kālasaṃkarśini] is placed on the head of the auspicious Parā [Devi]. In the Mālinīvijayottara [tantra] she is extolled as Mātrsadbhāva.’ This reading of śrīparāmaste sāhitā in place of the KSTS edition’s śrīparāmaste tathā is indebted to Raniero GNOLI, who noticed this improved variant in Jayaratha’s citation of this verse in Tantrālokaviveka ad Tantrāloka 15.254. See GNOLI (1999), p. 58, footnote 6. Jayaratha, in Tantrālokaviveka ad loc., cites the following verse from the Devyāmalatantra: tanmadhye tu parā devī dakṣiṇe ca parāparā | aparā vāmaśṛṅge tu madhyasṛṅgordhvatāḥ śṛṇu | yā sā sanākarśini devi parāḻī tvavasitā ‘In the middle of those [three trident points] is the goddess Parā and on the right is Parāparā. On the left lotus is Aparā. But listen—the Goddess that is transcending Parā is [Kāla]saṃkarśini, who is installed above the middle lotus [on which Parā is seated].’

484 See SANDERSON (2005), pp. 110-114 for how Abhinavagupta reads features of a number of Kaula texts that transcend the doctrinal and ritual scope of the Mālinīvijayottara—the Trika scripture he claims to base his exegesis upon in the Tantrāloka—as essential to the innermost character of the Trika essentially embodied in the Mālinīvijayottara. These extrinsic features include non-dualistic metaphysics, the inclusion of the “ideal translation of external observance into a purely cognitive process of sudden enlightenment,” and “the convergence of the triads of the Trika into” the central Goddess of the Krama tradition, “Kālasaṃkarśini.”
Kashmirian post-scriptural Krama literature we find the Kaula model of religious authority, with its emphasis on the agency of individual enlightened masters, reach something of a denouement. The Krama’s articulation of a mature Kaula idiom, which is, indeed, a radical formulation as we will see below, is thus highly relevant for considering how Abhinavagupta adopted the Kaula model of religious authority. This is especially the case given Abhinavagupta’s discrete but unequivocal exaltation of the Krama system within his broader inclusive project of Trika exegesis. Nevertheless, with the post-scriptural world of the Krama tradition, there is an ambivalence towards the greater Śaiva tantric scriptural substratum, which Abhinavagupta himself continually endeavored to account for and encompass. Krama post-scriptural authors by and large shunned the Siddhānta, Bhairava, Vidyāpīṭha, and non-Kālikula Kaula scriptures, and SANDERSON relates this disinterest in a more integrative platform of Śākta Śaiva exegesis to the Kashmirian Krama authors’ unreserved adoption of antinomian Kāpālika observances.

On why Abhinavagupta chose the Mālinīvijayottara as his paradigmatic scripture even though it lacked the above features that are essential to Abhinavagupta’s understanding of the Trika, see Ibid., pp. 114-122.

Abhinavagupta’s chapter on the Kaula rite (Tantrāloka chapter 29) includes a section that is based on the paddhati (ritual manual) known as the Mādhavakula, which is a part of the Kālikula scripture, the Jayadrathayāmala. See SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 258-259: “Jayaratha justifies its [i.e. the Mādhavakula’s] inclusion in this text on the Trika by saying that there were Gurus in Kashmir whose tradition combined the teachings of the Mādhavakula with those of the Devyāyāmala.” This can be seen as further evidence of a Kashmirian history of integration between the Kaula Trika and the Kālikula/Krama, which predates Abhinavagupta.

Ibid., pp. 432-433: “The distinctness of the Krama is evident not only in the independence of its discourse but also in the character of its position in relation to the ‘lower’ Śaiva traditions. For there is nothing here of the ambition that drives the works of Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja to embrace and subordinate the many-layered diversity of the systems of the
In the Krama, associated with the Kaula’s Northern Transmission, the premier scriptural sources, the Devīpañcaśatakā and the Kramasadbhāva, “teach no rituals of initiation and consecration... no hand-postures (Mudrās), no visualizations of the constituent deities’ forms, no fire-sacrifice, and none of the elaborate ascetic observances.” In the first post-scriptural work of the Krama, a hymn of the founding post-scriptural Krama guru, Jñānanetra (c. 850-900), the Kālikāstotra, the author concludes his work with a first-person claim of his realization of the nature of the Goddess and his benevolent intention to share it with the world:

O mother, by your favour, may these three worlds appropriate the nature of the Goddess that rests within the transcendental void, as I experienced it in the great cremation ground. Thus I, Śiva, have expressed praise of my own nature by force of the state of true immersion. O Maṅgalā, may it benefit the whole world that is itself myself.

In Jñānanetra’s concise hymn, only twenty verses in Āryā meter, we find not only this (possibly the earliest) first-person claim of enlightenment in Kaula Śaiva Mantramārga within a higher unity. The Krama tradition remained aloof from this inclusivist tendency, and this independent stance is reflected in its observances. For while Abhinavagupta’s Trika rejected the tradition of radical Śaiva asceticism with its cremation-ground practices, making the rejection of such socially distinctive externals a fundamental principle of its universalism, the Krama, and indeed the Kālikula as a whole, continued to maintain its distance from mundane society. For, as we have seen, some of its Gurus were ascetics who had adopted the Kāpālika observance, decking themselves with ornaments of human bone, carrying a human skull as a begging bowl, and living in the cremation ground.”

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488 Ibid., p. 411.

traditions (predating Somānanda’s), but also a synthesis of doctrines in the early Krama scriptures. Sanderson notes how Jñānanetra’s text, which serves as a model for the Krama’s post-scriptural literature, is an unprecedented work inasmuch as it dwells exclusively on the liberating contemplation of one’s one powers of cognition:

The result... is a harmonious and original whole carefully designed to express a coherent model of the cyclical unfolding and reversion of cognition pervaded by its non-sequential core, producing perhaps for the first time in Śaivism a model for a form of contemplative ritual entirely fashioned by and subservient to the terms of a doctrine of liberating gnosis.

This tenor of a contemplative system exclusively dedicated to liberation, free from the litany of ritual procedures for propitiating Goddesses in the Vidyāpīṭha, continues through the subsequent history of the Krama tradition in Kashmir. Certain Krama authors, in fact, take the Kaula’s emphatic focus on the role of individual Siddhas in the transmission of tradition to its logical extreme. They do so by making the transmission of knowledge totally contingent upon the stewardship of enlightened teachers, in particular foregrounding the “event” of their awakening. Jñānanetra’s enlightening encounter with the Goddess Maṅgalā and the Pītheśvarīs in the Karavrīa cremation ground serves as the basic prototype of this “enlightenment event” to be replicated by future Krama gurus.

This understanding of transmission, in which subsequent gurus see the genesis and spreading of their awakened awareness recapitulating the original

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irruption of the Krama revelation on earth in the person of Jñānanetra, is described by SANDERSON as “re-enactment”:\textsuperscript{491}

Initiatory empowerment in the Krama was seen as the re-enactment of the original revelation in Uḍḍiyāna and... the lineage of Krama Gurus was perceived as an internally undifferentiated stream of consciousness multiple from generation to generation only in outward appearance.

This orientation has implications germane to our broader inquiry about Abhinavagupta’s strategy of representing his own life as a student and Kaula guru. Each individual guru in the lineage is not just a faithful transmitter of the letter of scripture that extrinsically governs their religious lives. More precisely, they are tasked with “reenacting” the revelatory truths in the form of a “sudden unfolding” in the “visionary consciousness” of their “own inner reality.”\textsuperscript{492}

Therefore, the exercise of religious authority is now dynamically rooted in the divine identity of the individual Siddha master. This model of revelation helps explain an extraordinary feature in writings of post-scriptural authors in the Krama, namely their “readiness to innovate.”\textsuperscript{493} The words inspired by the inner realization of these Siddhas are tantamount to scripture, and no longer need to conform strictly to the fixed doctrine of an external scriptural canon. This very conception of revelation, I would argue, also encouraged post-scriptural Krama authors to record narratives about the circumstances of the event of their awakening. This effectively illustrated their reenactment of Jñānanetra’s original awakening, which is transmitted through a lineage conceived of as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{491} Ibid., p. 326.
\item \textsuperscript{492} Ibid., p. 307.
\item \textsuperscript{493} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
“undifferentiated stream” of enlightened rays of awakened awareness.\textsuperscript{494} These narratives, composed in a first-person voice, authorized Krama gurus as living portals for this dynamic initiatory lineage, and furthermore, offered a template for future reenactments, charismatically transferred from guru to disciple.

We can now consider Abhinavagupta’s conception of revelation and the ideal guru in light of these post-scriptural Kashmirian Śākta Śaiva lineages. First we will briefly cite two examples of how later Krama teachers epitomized this dynamic and Siddha-centered model of religious authority by writing vivid first-person accounts of their awakening. These are both accounts of Krama authors that postdate Abhinavagupta. However, they can be considered natural instantiations of a conception of revelatory transmission present in the works of earlier Krama authors, implicit in Jñānanetra’s first-person claim of enlightenment and the narrative of Eraka passed on in a first-person account. This conception of revelation invests the events of a guru’s awakening, and the compassionate transferal of that realization, with considerable significance, making them indispensible to the perpetuation of tradition. Abhinavagupta’s own decision to write autobiographical passages on the circumstances of his journey from student to initiatory Kaula guru can, therefore, be better understood in light of the mature Kaula framework embodied in the Krama. This

\textsuperscript{494} For a description and examples of this conception of lineage, and the way in which individual gurus enact it, see the following citation (Ibid., pp. 326-327), which begins with a quote to this end by the Krama author, Ramyadeva: “‘I bow to the line of Gurus, the sole cause of salvation, the expansive circle of the rays [of enlightenment] that has come from that whose form is beyond perception.’ And the first three aphorisms of the Krama-based Kulasātra can declare to the same effect: ‘(1) There is but one Guru, the uninterrupted transmission of the rays [of enlightened consciousness] passed on to us through the initiatory lineage (ovalliḥ). (2) There is but one deity, the reality that they have perceived. (3) The power of its consciousness is nothing but the state of [their] innate self-awareness.’

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is a tradition, we must remember, whose central deity Abhinavagupta exalts as the nonpareil divine core within the Kaula Trika. Further evidence of Abhinavagupta’s indebtedness to the Krama’s model of religious authority will be furnished below when we consider his understanding of the initiatory lineage—in consonance with the Krama vision—as an undifferentiated stream in which “the guru and the lineage and the deity are one and the same.”

The first example of later Krama descriptions of awakening, admittedly condensed but including a temporal reference to “today” (adya), which instills it with a sense of immediacy, is found in the Cittasaṃtosatriṃśikā of the Krama master Nāga (c. 1025-1075). Nāga proclaims:

By great good fortune I stand today flooded with the blissful relish of the nectar of the unlocated consciousness that surges up from [its] unfettered, spotless ground,

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495 Ibid, p. 376: “Though the Tantrāloka is a work of the Trika based on a text untouched by the Kālikula, Abhinavagupta reads the Kālikula-influenced strata of the tradition into the very core of his exegesis and develops this further in the light of post-scriptural Krama theory, though always doing so obliquely as though to conceal the purely Śākta ground of his Śaivism from profane eyes.”

496 SANDERSON (2005), p. 94. For a salient expression of this perspective on the nature of the guru and lineage, see the following extract of the Mahārthamaṇjariparimala, cited in Ibid., p. 94, footnote 16: “And so the gist is that the venerable line of [the Krama’s] gurus is of the nature of all-containing awareness. Therefore their [apparent] plurality is not in accord with the way they are in reality. It is accepted only figuratively, by virtue of association with diverse adventitious conditions, just as a single thing casts a variety of reflections because of the difference between the surfaces [on which it appears,] such as a mirror, water or oil. The fact that [the guru lineage] is affected by bodies and the like that are plural does not cause any [true] plurality to appear [here], as I myself have taught in [my] Pādukodaya: ‘The whole vast circle of powers that we are to worship there is in the final analysis the Śiva that constitutes the essence of the self. And he is one with the venerable guru and [the worshipper] himself.’”

497 For this dating of Nāga, see SANDERSON (2007a), p. 411.

astonished by the fruit of the instruction in the inexpressible practice that I obtained from the heart of my true teacher’s oral teaching.

The second example of a Krama first-person account of awakening, considerably more elaborate, belongs to the guru, Niśkriyānanda,499 and provides a content-rich description of his reception of the non-conceptual transmission of a certain Siddhanātha.500

Through the glory of his glance I collapsed on the ground like a felled tree and in a flash attained the incomparable state that is free of the external and internal faculties, inaccessible to the means of knowledge, free of defects, beyond the influence of time or its absence, beyond the lights [of the object, medium, and agent of cognition] yet pervading them, unlocated, neither sequential nor non-sequential, overflowing with the flooding rapture of the ultimate joy of the contactless, beyond bliss, beyond the means of immersion, free of the errors of ‘is’ and ‘is not’, free of both conceptual and non-conceptual awareness, with a nature that transcends [all levels of] cognition, free of the stain [even] of the latent impressions [of what it transcends]. In that state I remained unwavering for a long time. Then, unexpectedly, by his favour, I came round somewhat. I was reeling from the rapturous experience of the bliss of that extraordinary consciousness, filled with wonder, ecstatic with the eternal joy [of my awakening], now averse to the elaborations of the Śāstras and freed from all sense of self. Then I addressed a question to the Siddha Lord (Siddhanātha) [who was standing there] with a manuscript [in his hand], saying “Tell me, my master, my lord, how I may perceive at all times, completely, on all sides, the unprecedented, defectless level so hard to reach that I have experienced by your favour.”

499 The date of Niśkriyānanda is uncertain, but his Chummasamketaprakāśa must at least predate the career of Śivasvāmin Upādhyāya I who cites his commentary in the eighteenth century. See SANDERSON (2007a), p. 417.


In response to this question, Siddhanātha cast his powerful gaze into the sky, eliciting supreme reality of divine speech to incarnate in the form of a Siddha named Aṭavila.

Siddha Aṭavila scorns Niṣkriyānanda for his pride related to the "snare of learning." What follows is Aṭavila’s teaching on awakening to the dynamic structure of reality, its immanence, transcendence, and what lies beyond both. Aṭavila elaborates this teaching with the help of an example or teaching prop: the manuscript in Siddhanātha’s hands. The five-fold [knot] of the manuscript’s binding represents the five senses, the two encircling rings are the waking and dream states, and the two boards are both the outgoing and incoming breaths and “the awakening of the sequences of immanance (kulam) and transcendence (kaulam)” as well as “the two immersions that are the active and quiescent expansions.” Aṭavila goes on to say, “Break open these two boards and through your awareness [alone] behold between them the great void beyond the void, that is free of both the transient and the eternal, that is without sensation... the [Nameless] devouring of time, supreme, free of all obscuration, the nature of the self.”

Forever freed from “the snare of the Śāstras,” Niṣkriyānanda is plunged into a direct experience of the referent of Aṭavila’s speech. Niṣkriyānanda then reports how this series of events prepared him to hear the teachings of the text (Chummāsaṅketa) from his guru Siddhanātha, which he comments upon in his Chummāsaṅketa-prakāśa. Thus he fully discloses the conditions for the genesis of

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501 The subsequent summary and quotations, extending to the next citation of the Chummāsaṅketa-prakāśa, follow SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 339-341.
his qualification to transmit its revelatory truths to others, rooted in his internal realization of the Great Krama; in other words, the conditions for the reenactment of a Krama guru’s enlightened awareness in future generations.\(^{502}\)

Thus in an instant I experienced directly the most transcendent reality [and] abandoned altogether the snare of learning in its entirety. The wise Siddhanātha, who [likewise] had let go of all the elaborations of Śāstric knowledge, looked at me and said..., “My son with excellent understanding, you are [now] worthy to enter this inaccessible Great Krama.” With this, being filled with compassion, the Lord made me understand completely the wondrous teaching of the Chummās with the full expance of the samketa-pādāṇī that is hard to grasp [even] for the greatest meditators. As a result I suddenly ascended to the great unfettered, eternal domain of sudden enlightenment, in the state of one who is fully awakened. In the same way I shall explain to you fully the unique, most extraordinary, indefinable [knowledge] that I have attained by Siddhanātha’s favour in that wondrous reality. You have wandered to every Pīṭha constantly established in Brahman. [Yet] still you have not achieved perfect rest. Why continue to roam with confused mind, my disciple? You are fit for the highest wisdom. So cease. I shall teach you in due order the oral transmission that is beyond the schools of philosophy, the [Śākta]āṃśikas, and [even] the Melāpa [doctrine], ever active, in ultimate truth void of the relation of worshipped and worshipper, just as I myself received it [from Siddhanātha].

The complexity and detail of this first-person liberation story of Nīkriyānanda can be fruitfully related to the Krama’s version of the mature Kaula idiom of religious authority explored above: the source of the liberating teaching, Jñānanaṭṭa’s enlightenment in Uḍḍiyāna, made present again through the non-conceptual and oral transmission of a Siddha guru. Moreover, the

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autobiographical account is clearly articulated with the didactic purpose of modeling to his disciple, addressed in the second-person at the story’s conclusion, how to “reenact” Nīṣkriyānanda’s own realization of the esoteric transmission encoded in the text. The aim is for complete assimilation of this knowledge, Nīṣkriyānanda tells his pupil, “just as I received it [from Siddhanātha].”

Another striking detail of this account is the emphatic dismissal of “Śāstric knowledge”; the ultimate realization is beyond the “six schools of philosophy,” and only available when one is released from the “snare of learning.” Considering intellectual training to be a pedantic vice, a notion reiterated in Kaula post-scriptural texts, particularly in the Krama, is certainly not a value embraced by Abhinavagupta. The latter’s method as exemplified throughout his oeuvre, a pedagogical approach of “maximum inclusion”503 explored in the next chapter, is to fully exhaust the immanent educational resources of one’s intellectual culture. Through an examination of Abhinavagupta’s ideal curriculum for religious education, we will be in a position to appreciate the ways in which Abhinavagupta reformulates the ideal figure of the Kaula Siddha along these very lines.

503 On the social dynamic of this process of “maximum inclusion” of which Abhinavagupta is a powerful exemplar in the period in which he flourished, see SANDERSON (1985), p. 191: “This period... is one in which the materials at all levels have achieved great sophistication and mutual consciousness... It was the scene of maximum inclusion; for it saw the entry into sophisticated discourse of religious systems which the orthodox consensus considered impure, visionary and magical cults seeking superhuman power... [at this time] we witness the strategies by which certain groups within these radical sects were brought in from the visionary fringe to accommodate areas of orthodox self-representation. This accommodation is of particular interest because the visionary power of the heterodox self is recoded in order to be inscribed within the orthodox social identity.”
Congruous with the logic of these two accounts is another first person narration from a post-scriptural text that merits brief mention. This is the \textit{Mahārthamaṅjarīparimala} of Maheśvarānanda (c. 1275-1325).\footnote{On this dating, see SANDERSON (2007), p. 416.} This work was written within the Krama tradition\footnote{See \textit{Mahārthamaṅjarīparimala} opening verse 2 (referring to the \textit{auttaraṃ tattvam advayam} ‘the non-dual reality of the Northern [transmission]’) and opening verse 10 (\textit{kramasaraṇī} ‘path of the Krama’). The title also points to an unambiguous affiliation with the Krama, given that Mahārtha (Great Doctrine) is another designation for the teachings of the Krama.} in its South Indian reception (viz. Cidambaram, Tamil Nadu).\footnote{On this provenance of the \textit{Mahārthamaṅjarīparimala}, see COX (2006), p. 260.} In his autocommentary, the \textit{Parimala}, Maheśvarānanda reports a dream in which he encountered a divine female figure, Siddhayoginī. The visitation of Siddhayoginī, and his guru’s interpretation of his dream, inspired the genesis of his text.\footnote{For a translation and analysis of the narrative, see COX (2006), pp. 4-6.} Also noteworthy is the way in which Maheśvarānanda describes his own composition as a revelatory source (\textit{tantra}) in its own right.

A few comments by way of summary of the above excursus on the post-scriptural Krama literature of Kashmir: in the final two verses of the \textit{Kālikāstotra} of Jñānanetra the author describes the essential nature of the Goddess as he directly perceived (\textit{mayā drṣṭam}) it in the “great cremation ground” (\textit{mahāśmaśāna}) in Uḍḍiyāna, while praying that the same reality may be realized by the entire world. In virtue of his complete immersion (\textit{samyaksamāveśa}) in that reality of the Goddess, he characterizes the hymn he composes as a praise of his own highest nature. This divine encounter, which is in retrospect identified as
the inception of the Kashmirian Krama lineage, becomes a model to reenact, not ritually, but within the very awareness of subsequent Krama masters. Therefore, the context for the composition of the Kramastotra of Eraka, removed from Jñānanetra by only two generations of Krama teachers, is reported by Abhinavagupta as his recognition that only fusion with Kālasaṃkarśinī is the goal towards which one should strive. And not only for one’s own sake, but to share that experience with eligible disciples through the medium of his hymn.

Later Krama authors, on the occasion of describing the purpose of their text, aim to “reenact” this original realization of Jñānanetra, which he encoded into words to awaken others. This model of “reenactment” implies that religious authority is intrinsic to the awakened awareness of the individual Krama guru who is now a living portal to the initiatory lineage, which a guru gives voice to through his or her own teachings. Enlightened Krama masters are thus seen as individual vessels of the full potency of the revelatory teaching. One result is that the original moment of Krama revelation can be made present again and again, reignited in the very awareness of one’s immediate guru. This naturally leads to a heightened attention to the circumstances of the “event” of awakening, which in turn can serve as a roadmap for future reenactments. Nāga and Niṣkriyānanda’s awakening narratives cited above demonstrate how this model of reenactment can lend itself to first person accounts of remarkable detail.

Although the Krama’s teachings and principles are deeply imprinted in Abhinavagupta’s writings, he chose to identify with the scriptural domain of the Trika system of the Vidyāpīṭha, while depicting the Trika as the universal essence of the Kulamārga. We now turn to Abhinavagupta’s understanding of
revelation and the ideal (i.e., Kaula) guru. Abhinavagupta’s theory of revelation
and depiction of the ideal guru, we will demonstrate, represent a systematic
articulation of the mature Kaula idiom of religious authority, which places great
emphasis on individual Siddha masters. However, in Abhinavagupta’s hands, this
Kaula idiom of religious authority is couched in a comprehensive account of the
greater religious and intellectual world of Kashmir. At the heart of
Abhinavagupta’s approach, there is a natural connection between the process of
revelation and the perfect guru.

§ 4.2 ABHINAVAGUPTA ON REVELATION

Any serious consideration of Abhinavagupta’s theory of revelation is obliged to
take as its point of departure the exemplary studies of Jürgen HANNEDER, Isabelle RATIE, and Raffaele TORELLA. Instead of simply synthesizing their
research on this topic, their scholarship will provide an essential background for

508 HANNEDER (1998), “Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation.” This monograph
includes an edition and translation of Abhinavagupta’s Mālinīśloka-vārttika 1.1-1.399, which
deals primarily with the subject of Śaiva revelation. The edition and annotated translation is
contextualized with an erudite introduction.

509 RATIE (2013), “On Reason and Scripture in the Pratyabhijñā.” In this study Ratie deals
with a paradox in the Pratyabhijñā literature of Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta: the
Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā and its commentaries represent a rational demonstration of non-dual
Śaiva philosophy without recourse to scriptural authority while simultaneously exposing the
limits of rational proofs. This subordination of rational discourse follows from their theory of
“revelation” or āgama as the foundational source of knowledge, which animates both
perception and inference. The paradox is sorted out through RATIE’s comprehensive textual
analysis of Abhinavagupta’s theory of revelation in his Pratyabhijñā commentaries and also
the thirty-fifth chapter of the Tantrāloka.

510 TORELLA (2013), “Inherited cognitions: prasiddhi, āgama, pratibhā, śabdana – Bhartṛhari,
Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, Kumārila and Dharmakīrti in dialogue.” This essay considers
an important source for Utpaladeva’s and Abhinavagupta’s conception of revelation in the
theory of Bhartṛhari, and convincingly argues that their development of this theory and their
definition of āgama as “prasiddhi” can be productively understood as a response to
Kumārila’s indirect critiques of Bhartṛhari.
our inquiry, which introduces a distinct frame of analysis. To be precise, we will elucidate Abhinavagupta’s understanding of revelation, which TORELLA demonstrates is indebted to the thought of Utpaladeva and Bhartṛhari, from the perspective of the Kauła model of religious authority. This includes both the Kaulas’ emphasis on individual Siddhas in the transmission of scriptures (chapter three) and also the modes of religious authority explicated in this chapter, broadly construed as a “mature Kaula idiom.” The latter further accentuates the agency of individual religious teachers in the perpetuation of tradition. This is attested by more detailed and locally situated accounts of the religious dispensation of Siddha gurus, and a sudden shift to first-person narration and claims of enlightenment. This transformation took place through the proliferation of esoteric scriptural teachings orally transmitted through guru lineages. Moreover, the recorded words of those gurus—subsequently revered as Siddhas—came to be endowed with tremendous authority in their own right.

This model of transmission was particularly evident in early narratives of Vasugupta and also the writings of post-scriptural Krama authors. In these texts, the content of an ongoing revelation was seen to be internal to Siddhas empowered to orally transmit or directly transfer (saṅkrānti) that awakened awareness to disciples. This model of textual transmission also entrusted Siddhas with greater leeway for the reformulation of this “internal” revelation. As elucidated above, in the post-scriptural Krama tradition, revelation itself came to be conceived as a reenactment of the original moment of Jñānanetra’s awakening in Uḍḍiyāna. The original enlightening transmission received by the Krama Avatāraka could be made present again as the very unfolding of the awakened
awareness of subsequent Krama gurus. This was an event that naturally attracted a narrative portrayal, which could offer suggestive clues on the ideal conditions for future reenactments.

This Siddha-centric formulation of the process of transmission forms a rich context for reflecting on Abhinavagupta’s theory of revelation. In this way, we will build off of the scholarship of HANNEDE, RATIE, and TORELLA by drawing out the full implication of Abhinavagupta’s unique articulation of a mature Kaula model of religious authority. Particularly germane to our presentation will be the first half of chapter thirty seven of the Tantrāloka, which has not been closely examined in the above-mentioned studies. Our analysis will also include a brief consideration of other teacher-centered models of revealed tradition (āgama) from Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, and Patañjali’s system of yoga, which provided a critical conceptual repertoire that Abhinavagupta draws from.

Abhinavagupta situates his theory of revelation within the post-scriptural horizon of Trika Śaivism, and in that context he develops a model of the mature Kaula idiom that is much more inclusive than the texts discussed in our foregoing survey of the Śākta Śaiva literature of Kashmir. In Abhinavagupta’s hands, the Kaula model of religious authority centered on individual masters as agents of revelation is defended on epistemological grounds and framed in a radically accommodating, but unabashedly hierarchical, vision of scriptural revelation.

Why did Abhinavagupta choose the Trika tradition to position his own post-scriptural writings on Śaiva tantra, and in particular the prototype of the Trika scripture, the Malinīvijayottaratantra? This is a serious question, given
evidence that the Trika tradition was not very well-established\textsuperscript{511} in the region of Kashmir during Abhinavagupta’s career. It has also been well-documented that Abhinavagupta’s tantric exegesis departs significantly from the scope, metaphysics,\textsuperscript{512} and aim\textsuperscript{513} of the \textit{Mālinīvijayottaratantra}. For example, in addition to reading the doctrine of nonduality into the dualistically oriented \textit{Mālinīvijayottara}, Abhinavagupta superimposes into this scripture other foreign doctrinal elements, many of which are prototypical of the Krama tradition, that come to constitute the esoteric core of his systematic Śaiva teachings. These

\textsuperscript{511} Abhinavagupta himself notes the lack of practical guides for the ritual system of the Trika, a lacuna that the \textit{Tantrāloka} is designed to fill. See \textit{Tantrāloka} 1.14: \textit{santi paddhatayaś citraḥ srotobhedesu bhūyasaḥ \ anuttaraśaṅdārdhārthakrame tv ekāpi nekṣyate} “Ritual manuals are exceedingly manifold within various different [scriptural] streams, but even one [\textit{paddhati}] is not seen in the ritual system of the supreme Trika.” Cf. SANDERSON (2009a), p. 36: “As for the Śākta Śaiva systems, the Trika gives the impression of having been less deeply established in Kashmir than the Krama. Abhinavagupta tells us that his monumental \textit{Tantrāloka} was the first attempt to write a \textit{Paddhati} on this system. There are no works of substance on the Trika by any other author and no later manuals for practical use in ritual survive to show that it had succeeded in integrating itself into the ordinary religious life of the community.” SANDERSON has also noted the shocking absence of interest in or engagement with the Trika in the works of Kṣemarāja, Abhinavagupta’s direct disciple who consistently credits Abhinavagupta as his main source of religious inspiration. This is further evidence of the ritual and social dimensions of the Trika cult were likely not even well-established in Abhinavagupta’s inner circle of disciples. Kṣemarāja’s exegesis predominantly gravitates towards the Krama.

\textsuperscript{512} On Abhinavagupta’s imposition of the doctrine of nonduality upon the dualist ontology of the \textit{Mālinīvijayottara}, see SANDERSON (1992).

\textsuperscript{513} See VASUDEVA (2004), p. 146: “The primarily yogic orientation of the \textit{Mālinīvijayottara} is also evidenced by the fact that its liturgy is essentialised and abbreviated, while its yogic teachings are expanded and elaborated. Despite the centrality of yoga (especially the practicalities of yoga) in the \textit{Mālinīvijayottara}, Abhinavagupta has sidelined it in his \textit{Tantrāloka}, preferring to analyse instead the epistemological background of the \textit{Mālinīvijayottara}’s yogic homologies. Of course, the question of why Abhinavagupta is so disinterested in the actualities of yoga, or even why he should have chosen to place an openly yogic text at the centre of his teachings, needs to be posed in a much wider framework than is possible here.” Our ensuing discussion will gesture toward a set of plausible answers to the latter question, while also acknowledging the inherent difficulties of coming to a definitive conclusion given “several large lacunae in our present knowledge of the Trika in general and the \textit{Mālinīvijayottara} in particular.” See Ibid., p. 146, footnote 3.
include “the centrality of Kaula non-dualistic practice free of the inhibitions of
convention, the ideal of the translation of all external observance into a purely
cognitive process of sudden enlightenment, the convergence of the triads of the
Trika into the Goddess Kālasamkarṣīṇī, and the accompanying superimposition
of the categories of the tetradic Krama.”

These more fully-developed or “higher” Kaula diagnostic features of
Abhinavagupta’s Śaivism were projected onto the Mālinīvijayottara from later
(Kaula) Trika and Krama scriptural sources. Despite this fact, SANDERSON argues
that the Mālinīvijayottara, by virtue of its status as an elementary synthesis of the
Siddhānta and Kaula traditions, served as the best “foundational” source text for
Abhinavagupta’s far-reaching exegesis. This is because these more esoteric
features could “be read in as implicit if the Mālinīvijayottara is the all-
encompassing revelation.”

Thus SANDERSON concludes, “the Mālinīvijayottara
was the ideal matrix for an exposition of the Trika that aspired to encapsulate
Tantric Śaivism as a whole, because it could be felt to subsume not only the
highest texts such as the Virāvalikula, with their transcendence of rites and
grades, but also the religion of the lower levels.”

The Trika, as embodied in the
Mālinīvijayottara, was thus much better suited as a platform for Abhinavagupta’s

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514 The following list of Kaula elements, is quoted from SANDERSON (2005), pp. 110-114.
Listed op. cit. are the relevant texts from which Abhinavagupta derives these teachings that
are not native to the religious system of the Mālinīvijayottara.

515 Ibid., p. 114.

516 Ibid., p. 115.
broad exegetical aims than the Krama, whose scriptures and exegetical literature made no real effort to account for more exoteric branches of the Śaiva religion.

In addition to this insight of SANDERSON, we have already touched upon a key feature of the earliest Trika scripture, the Siddhayogeśvarīmata, that acts as an important antecedent to Abhinavagupta’s own spirit of inclusivism. The Siddhayogeśvarīmata, as TÖRZSÖK has shown (and as discussed in chapter two), integrated the Goddess Sarasvatī into its triad of central female deities. Sarasvatī is adapted into the figure of the serene Goddess Parā, flanked by two fierce Kāpālika Goddesses, Parāparā and Aparā. The goal of this synthesis, TÖRZSÖK argues,517 is for the siddhi-seeking adept to not only win powers that were the preserve of charnel-ground Yoginī cults, but also to extend their mastery over the "orthodox domain with its śāstric knowledge and purity."518 This impulse to include and encompass mainstream religion within the heterdox cult of Yoginīs, which we noted above also helps to explain the choice of the Siddhayogeśvarīmata’s redactors to feature Rāma519 as a main protagonist of

517 TÖRZSÖK (1999), pp. xxiv-xxv.

518 Ibid.

519 See the following verse from the thirty-sixth chapter of the Tantrāloka, which likely records the earlier and no longer extant version of the narrative of scriptural descent (tantraṇatāra) of the Siddhayogeśvarīmata, Tantrāloka 36.10: rāma ca lakṣmanas tasmāt siddhās tebhya ’pi dānavah | guhyakāś ca tatas tebhya yogino nṛvarās tataḥ ‘Lakṣmaṇa [received the scripture] from Rāma. From him, the Siddhas, and from them the Dānavas. Then the Guhyakas [received it from the Dānavas], and from them the Yogins, and then [from the Yogins] the best of men [received it].’ Cf. Siddhayogeśvarīmata 32.8-9: tasmāt avāptaṁ rāmeṇa tena loke prakāśitam | śrūte vā paṭhate vā kurute vā ca bhāvanām | | yogeśvaro ’sau bhavati rudratejopabhyāmrhitas | bhūtendriyaugyādātvārah sarvajñānāḥ phalabhāgīnāḥ ‘From him, Rāma got it and he has revealed it to the people of this world. If one listens to it, reads it, or performs the visualisation, he becomes a Master of Yoga, empowered by the energy of Rudra. [Thus] he will become the receptacle of the primary elements, of the organs of senses and of the qualities, he will be omniscient, and will succeed.’ Translation of TÖRZSÖK (1999), p. 185.
transmission of the scripture to humanity, is thus present in the earliest textual instantiation of the Trika tradition. Abhinavagupta identifies this foundational scripture of the Trika, the *Siddhayogesvarimata*, as expressing the highest teachings of the entire Vidyāpīṭha corpus of the Tantras, which he places above the Bhairava Tantras of the Mantrapīṭha, which are in turn regarded as superior to the twenty-eight canonical scriptures of the Siddhānta.\(^{520}\)

Abhinavagupta sees the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* as the highest essence of the *Siddhayogesvarimata* (and likewise of all it transcends).\(^{521}\) The *Mālinīvijayottara*

\(^{520}\) *Tantrāloka* 37.17-19ab, 37.22cd-24: *daśāśṭādaśadhā srotahpaṇcakaṃ yat tato 'py alam | utkṛṣṭanām bhairavābhikhyam catuḥsātāvibhidhatām | śrīmadānandaśāstraśau praktaṃ bhagavatā kīlā | saṁbhāha pīṭhān etac ca dvidhā daksinaśāstra | mantra vidyeti tasmāc ca mudrāmaṇḍalagam dvaśyam | . . . pradhānāvatāṃ tasya tasya vastunā bhinnatā punaḥ | . . . kathitā saḍhakendrānām tattadavastuprasiddhaye | pratyekam taccaturdhaivaṃ maṇḍalaṃ mudrikā tathā | . . . mantra vidyeti ca pīṭhān utkṛṣṭaṃ cotarottam | vidyāpīṭhapradhānāṃ ca siddhayogesvarimataṃ 'That five-fold stream has ten and eighteen fold scriptures [of the Siddhānta corpus]. Superior to those is the Bhairava [corpus], which has sixty-four scriptures. In scriptures like the auspicious *Ānandatantra*, Śiva taught that this [word] *pīṭha* refers to a collection. That is twofold, based on the right [as the form of Śiva] and the left [as the form of Śakti]: the Mantrapīṭha and the Vidyāpīṭha. And from that [two-fold *pīṭha*] arises two others, the Mudrā and Maṇḍala[pīṭha]. . . However these various [*pīṭhas*] are taught as differentiated based on their (respective) predominance for the sake of attaining different realities on the part of the best of adepts. Each one of the fourfold [*pīṭhas*], Maṇḍala, Mudrā, Mantra and Vidyā, is more excellent than the preceding one. And the *Siddhayogesvarimata* is the most important (scripture) of the Vidyāpīṭha.

\(^{521}\) *Tantrāloka* 37.24cd-25ab: *vidyāpīṭhapradhānāṃ ca siddhayogesvarimataṃ | tasyāpi paramam sāram mālinīvijayottarām 'And the *Siddhayogesvarimata* is the most important [scripture] of the Vidyāpīṭha; its ultimate distillation is the *Mālinīvijayottara*. The *Mālinīvijayottara* itself represents the *Siddhayogesvarimata* as its source tradition, despite radical differences, as shown by VASUDEV, in the *Mālinīvijayottara*’s style of composition, sophistication, amalgamation of yogic systems, audience, and overall character as a Vidyāpīṭha scripture. On this identification, see *Mālinīvijayottara* 1.12cd-14ab: *evaṃ uktaś tadā devyā prahasyovāca viśvāt | śṛṇu devi pravakṣyāmi siddhayogesvarimataṃ | yān na kasya caś idākhyātām mālinīvijayottaram | maṇīpy etat purā prāptaṃ aghorāt paramātmanāḥ 'Addressed in this way by the Goddess, the sovereign of the universe, laughing, said: ‘O Goddess, listen, for I will teach the *Siddhayogesvarimata* [in its reduced form as] the *Mālinīvijayottara*. This has never been revealed to anyone before. In a former age I myself received this from Aghora, the supreme Self.’ Cf. VASUDEV (2004), p. xxxix: “This reflects the fact that the *Mālinīvijayottara* is a Tantra of the Trika, and derives its mantra-system more or less completely from that of the *Siddhayogesvarimata*."

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amplifies the inclusivism of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* by harmoniously accommodating doctrinal materials and systems of yoga from the Siddhānta scriptures, conspicuously the *Śvāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgṛaha*, side by side with those of the Kulamārga.\(^{522}\) Neither of the source materials of these traditions are found in the extant *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* itself, thus in the scriptural history of the Trika these additional elements represent “a remarkable transformation of the system.”\(^{523}\) Indeed, from what we know of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, we find a stark absence of systematic investigation into yogic praxis, which comprises the main focus of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*. Thus, this “remarkable transformation” also coincides with a new audience: Sādhakas intent on the “full-time... practice of yoga.”\(^{524}\)

A brief look at the frame narrative of the *Mālinīvijayottara* reveals another marker of the inclusivist outlook of this early Trika scripture. Unlike the revelation narratives of the non-Saiddhāntika scriptures and those of the Kulamārga surveyed above, the *Mālinīvijayottara* gives a bonafide list of eight Vedic seers who have petitioned Śiva’s son, Kārttikeya, for the liberating knowledge and the yogic teachings of the Trika.\(^{525}\) Thus, the *Mālinīvijayottara*, in

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522 VASUDEVA (2004), p. xli: “A critical examination of the materials absorbed into the *Mālinīvijayottara* shows that the central enterprise of its redactor(s) was to create a synthesis of Saiddhāntika and Kaula teachings which could be assimilated to Trika doctrine.” The connection with the *Śvāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgṛaha* is noted in VASUDEVA (2004).

523 Ibid., p. xlii.

524 Ibid., p. 147.

525 *Mālinīvijayottara* 1.2-1.8ab: *jagadarṇavamagnānāṁ tārakaṁ tārakāntakam | | sanatkumārasanakasanātanasananandāḥ | nāradāgastyaśanvartavasisphādyā mahārṣayaḥ | | jijñāsavah paraṁ tattvaṁ śivaśaktyunmukhitkṛtāṁ | samabhyaścya vidhāneṇa te tam ācā
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addition to including doctrinal features of the Śaiva Siddhānta, also parallels a strategy of select Saiddhāntika scriptures: casting Vedic seers as scriptural interlocutors. The presence of the Vedic seers may signal that, much like the Saiddhāntika scriptures, the Mālinīvijayottara aimed to encompass, or at least maintain a rapport with, the more orthodox sphere of Veda-based religious observances. Indeed, such communities may well have be conceived as an extended audience of the Mālinīvijayottara’s initiatory teachings on Yoga.

Regardless of the original intention of the redactors of the Mālinīvijayottara, this interpretation is consistent with Abhinavagupta’s own understanding of the scripture’s narrative frame. In a passage that justifies the eventual graduation of seekers from lower to higher śāstras under the influence of the Vedic sages and Skanda, the destroyer of demon Tārkaka who liberates those who are sunk in the ocean of worldly existence, those [sages], overjoyed, said “longing for the naturally perfect form of Śaiva yoga, we have arrived, since without Yoga that [perfection (siddhi)] will not arise. Therefore, teach us that [Śaiva yoga].” Addressed in this way by those seers aspiring to Yoga, first offering obeisance to Maheśvara, that ecstatic [Skanda] replied—“Listen! I will discourse on that which bestows all perfections, the Mālinīvijayatantra that flowed forth from the [highest] face of Parameśa. The Goddess Umā, having bowed down before her Lord seated in his abode, the bestower of supernatural enjoyments and liberation who is exalted by the Gods, said…” Immediately following this the Mālinīvijayottara presents the Goddess’s questions to Bhairava, and their dialogue provides the main dialogical structure of the text. That said, this background frame story of the Vedic sages and Skanda reemerges at the outset of chapter four when they ask for a clarification about the topic of the preceding chapter, and then again at the conclusion of the text. See Mālinīvijayottara 4.1-4.3ab; Mālinīvijayottara 23.41cd-23.45ab.
of Śiva’s grace, Abhinavagupta gives the following rationale for the presence of
the Vedic sages in the outerframe of the Mālinīvijayottara:

Those sages who are interrogators in the [frame story of the] Śrīpūrastra [i.e., the
Mālinīvijayottara], Nārada and the [seven] others, who were previously Vaiṣṇavas
and Buddhists, and subsequently Saiddhāntikas and so on, following the sequence
[of higher and higher teachings, ultimately] longed to behold that moon that is the
esoteric knowledge of the Trika doctrine.

The reference to the scriptural wisdom of the Trika as a moon picks up the image
of the scripture’s opening benediction, which describes the rays of this moon-
knowledge pouring forth from the face of Parameśa. Nārada and company
eventually became fixated upon the moon of knowledge that is the Trika. This is
proof, for Abhinavagupta at least, that even these revered teachers of a Vedic
pedigree featured as scriptural mediators in Purāṇic lore eventually ascended to
the highest pinnacle of revelation. Abhinavagupta also adds intermediary steps
in that ascent by characterizing the Vedic sages as previously being Vaiṣṇavas,
Buddhists, and then Śaiva Siddhāntins. Indeed, adopting and subsequently
abandoning traditions in this manner is nothing but the natural outcome of
Śiva’s grace in action, given Abhinavagupta’s view that all scriptural traditions,
as we will see below, ultimately emanate from Śiva. Being partial manifestations
of a single universal revelatory process (eka āgama), lower religious systems are

526 Tantrāloka 13.347cd-348: śrīpūrvastra praṣṭāro munayo nāradādayah || prāg vaiṣṇavāh
saugatāḥ ca siddhāntādividas tataḥ || kramāt trikārthavijñānacandrotsukitadṛśtāyaḥ.

527 Mālinīvijayottaratatantra 1.1: jayanti jagadānandadvipaśaṃsāparationkṣamāḥ ||
parameśaṃukhodātajñānacandrāmarīcayah ‘The rays of the moon that is the scriptural
wisdom pouring forth from the face of Parameśa surpass all! [Those moon-rays] are capable
of destroying that which opposes all-embracing bliss.’

528 For a fascinating and extensive interpretation of the imagery and inner meaning of this
opening benediction of the Mālinīvijayottaratatantra, see Abhinavagupta’s Mālinīślokavārttika
1.13-20ab.
necessarily abandoned as Śiva’s grace unfurls more all-encompassing horizons of revelation.

Abhinavagupta dodges the potential liability of delimiting the applicability of his monumental Śaiva exegesis to a single cult of the Vidyāpīṭha or a single transmission (Pūrvāmnāya) of the Kulamārga (Kaula Trika). He does so by abstracting the Trika into a universalistic conception of Kaula Śaivism. The Trika is, in fact, an excellent candidate for this move, in part because Abhinavagupta is able to make this claim on the strength of scriptural testimony:

This is taught by Śiva in the auspicious Ratnamālā(tantra): “the essence of all Tantras regarding the left and right [streams], is the Kaula, which is consolidated in one place in the auspicious Trika (ṣaḍārdha) scriptural system.”

Abhinavagupta thus understands the Trika to be the animating core or underlying unity of all Śaivism, and thus his Tantrāloka can serve as an exegetical platform for beaming light on the totality of Śaiva Tantras, and by extension, the entire Śaiva religion.

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529 Tantrāloka 37.35cd-37.25: uktam śriratnamālāyām etac ca parameśinā || aṣeṣatantrasāraṃ tu vāmadaksināṃ āśritam || ekatra militāṃ kaulāṃ śrīṣaḍārdhakaśāsane.

530 The fact that Abhinavagupta’s tantric exegesis is meant to extend well beyond Trika doctrine is spelled out by Jayaratha in a justification for the inclusion of benedictory verses to non-Trika gurus at the outset of the Tantrāloka. See Tantrālokaviveka ad Tantrāloka 1.9: yady api yo yatras āṣāstre ‘dhiṅkṛtaḥ sa tatra guruḥ iti vākyamāṇanītyā mahākāntaraṣūṇāṃ trīkārthe gurutvābhāvāt īha namaskārprastāva eva || tathāpi taśa me sarvaśīṣyasya nopaḍeśaḍaridrata ityādiddrā sarvatraiva gurūpadeśasya bhāvāt ātmanī bhūyovidyatvanā dārśayata grāṇthakṛtā asya grāṇthasyāpi mikhilā śāstraśāstraśastrayaḥ pramrahābhāhprāyatyavā prakāśita || According to the following dictum, “That scriptural system in which a person is qualified, in that very domain one is a guru,” there should be no occasion for offering salutations [to gurus like Bhūtarāja], because the gurus of other branches of knowledge do not have the status of guru when it comes to the doctrine of the Trika. Even if this is true, in harmony with the view [of Kallata] “I who am a disciple of all am not poor in the teachings,” the author, in showing the vastness of his own erudition in virtue of the presence of instruction of gurus in every system, illuminates the fact that this text [i.e., the Tantrāloka] aims to be an epitome of the essence of all other scriptural systems.”
However, Abhinavagupta’s ambition to encompass scriptural literature in his theory of revelation is not limited to Śaivism alone. Looking to one of the foremost scriptures of the Krama, he finds a powerful analogy for describing how the Trika-Kaula exists as the very essence of all revelation:\textsuperscript{531}

There is only one revelation. All [traditions] from worldly scriptures\textsuperscript{532} up to Vaishnav, Buddhist, and Śaiva traditions are indeed established in that. The ultimate plane to be obtained for that [one revelation] is called the Trika. On account of being undivided by the entire diversity [of manifold revealed traditions], [that highest plane of revelation] is referred to as the Kula. Just as there is one life-breath in all the different limbs of the body, whether they are higher or lower parts, the Trika [as the Kula] exists in all [scriptures as their one animating power]. [This thesis] has a basis in scripture. And so the revered \textit{Kālikula(pañcaśatata)} teaches:\textsuperscript{533} “that [Kula], beyond the five streams [of the Mantramārga], is the essence of the division of the twenty-eight [Siddhānta] scriptures. Just as fragrance exists in a blossom, sesame oil in a sesame seed, life in the body, and nectar in water, this Kula is established as the core of all scriptures.” Therefore, there is only one revelation. This [revelation] becomes manifold with respect to various levels of qualification [of diverse audiences].

Abhinavagupta here corrals further scriptural testimony to posit that the Kaula teachings are not simply the highest esoteric revelation, but rather more like an “essence” that pervades a form. That form is the composite body of scriptural traditions, which, in all of its multiplicity is animated by one sustaining life-force,

\textsuperscript{531} \textit{Tantraśloka} 35.30-35ab: \textit{eka evāgamas tasmāt tatra laukikaśāstrataḥ \ḥ prabhṛty āvaishnavād bauddhāc chaiva v sarvaṃ hi niśṭhitam \| tasya yat tat paraṃ prápyaṃ dhāma tat trikaśabditam \| sarvāvibhavedānucchedat eva kulam ucyate \| yathordhvaḥdaratābhāksu dehāṅgeśu vibhēduḥ \| ekaṃ prāṇitam evaṃ syāt trikaṃ sarvesu śāstrataḥ \| śrīmatkālikule coktaṃ pañcasrotovivarjitam \| daśāstādāśabhedasya sāram etat prakārtitam \| puṣpe gandhas tile tailaṃ dehe Īvo jale’ nṛtām \| yathā tathaiva śāśrāṇāṃ kulam antah pratiṣṭhitam \| tad eva evagamo ‘yaṃ citraś citre’ dhikārini. This translation is indebted to the one found in \textsc{Sanderson} (2005).

\textsuperscript{532} \textsc{Sanderson} (2005), p. 107 identifies \textit{laukikaśāstra} here as the “mundane [Vedic religion].” The meaning of \textit{laukika} shifts in various descriptions of the Five Streams. For the earliest usage, see \textsc{Sanderson} (2006a), p. 157: “The \textit{Nīvāsamukha}’s description of Mundane Religion (\textit{laukiko dharmah}) is of the ordinary observances of the uninitiated but regenerate (\textit{upunīta}-) householder devoted to Śiva, comprising the \textit{pūjā} of Śiva and other deities on the lunar days sacred to them, donations to worthy recipients (\textit{dānam}), pilgrimages to Śivakṣettras and so forth.”

\textsuperscript{533} See Ibid., p. 107, footnote 51 for the original citation from the \textit{Devīpañcaśatata} (alias \textit{Kālikulapañcaśatata}) f. 33r-v (2.35-38b), that Abhinavagupta here adapts.
the Trika now reconceived as essential wisdom of the entire Kulamārga.

Abhinavagupta also supplies a reason for the necessity of the manifold diversity of scriptural traditions: there are many levels of qualification—not everyone is prepared for the higher transmission of revelatory truth—, and so the scriptural teachings of Śiva need to be customized in a great scriptural dispersion.

The analogy of essences suggests more. Mark DYCZKOWSKI elaborates.\(^{534}\)

The higher contains the lower. The highest contains everything. Each tradition contributes to the whole. However, only the highest tradition is complete and therefore fully liberating. The lower one’s are just fragments of the whole; alone they cannot lead to liberation. Indeed, individually, they are misleading. Like a series of principles of existence, religious traditions are arranged into a hierarchy where the higher members pervade the lower ones. This is because they are arranged in a chain of cause and effect. Thus, the highest principle pervades them as does the cause its effect. As we rise along the chain, the ultimate, totally pervasive principle becomes progressively more evident. Thus, as we rise through lower traditions the presence of the Kaula elements in them become more evident.

DYCZKOWSKI’s comparison with the the relationship between higher and lower *tattvas* or reality levels is apt, because it grants the lower traditions validity while simultaneously delimiting their jurisdiction. The source of that validity is the more encompassing vision of the higher, more subtle *tattva* pervading the lower one, like fragrance pervading the petals of a blossom. The accuracy of this analogy is also corroborated in a common tactic in Śaiva literature to vertically rank traditions, including Buddhism, Vaiśṇavism, and Vedānta, on the rungs of the *tattvas*.\(^{535}\)

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\(^{534}\) DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, pp. 265-267.

\(^{535}\) On one Śaiva Siddhānta source that adopts this strategy, the *Paramokṣanirāsakārikāvytti*, see WATSON, GOODALL, & SHARMA (2013), pp. 70-71: “In the final section of Rāmakantha’s commentary, having refuted all of the opponent’s views, he maintains (ad verse 58a) that they are not completely invalid. The opponents’ teachings and scriptures are limited in what they can reveal, but that does not disqualify them from being means of knowledge in their own respective spheres—just as perception is limited in only being able to reveal sounds,
In harmony with Bhartṛhari, whose ideas were originally adapted by Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta sees revelation (āgama) or divine “word” (śabda) as an intense self-reflective awareness (dr̥tha-vimarśa) or an a priori conviction (prasiddhi) inherent in all beings. Reflective awareness or a powerful

smells, colours, etc., and yet is certainly a means of knowledge regarding those. What, then, are the spheres regarding which the teachings of the other traditions are valid? Lower levels of the Śaiva universe. As is well known, the Śaivas regarded the twenty-five principles (tattvas) accepted by the Sāṅkhya as the lowest levels of the universe, on top of which were a further group of, usually eleven, levels whose non-recognition by non-Śaivas was explained as resulting from the limited vision of the formulators of their doctrines... Rāmakāṇṭha has an interlocutor ask (ad 58cd) what level can be attained by each of the other opponents, in answer to which he refers the reader to a different text of his, the Āgamaprāmāṇyopanyāsā. This text seems not to have survived other than in quotations, but Goodall has edited and translated the main part of it—that is to say the part in which the liberations of rival traditions are assigned to tattvas—based on citations by later authors.” For an even earlier tantric source that uses this strategy, see Ibid., p. 75: “We know that the placing of different religious groups in levels of the cosmos goes back at least to the Sarvajñānottara; perhaps it occurred in lost parts of the Raurava.” For a non-Śaiddhāntika deployment of a similar strategy, see Kṣemarāja’s Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya, specifically his auto-commentary to verse 8.

536 TORELLA (2013), p. 465: “The doctrine of prasiddhi, developed by Abhinavagupta in the TĀ, MVV, IPV, and ĪPV, was first formulated by Utpaladeva... But what, in turn, could Utpaladeva’s source have been? Once again we trace back to the great mentor of Utpaladeva, Bhartṛhari. As is well known, the constellation āgama-vāc-śabdābha-vanā-pratibhā is at the center of the Bhartṛharian sky. What Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta say of prasiddhi easily refers us to Bhartṛhari’s pratibhā.”

538 RATIE (2013), pp. 382-383: “Prasiddhi has to do with an intuitive knowledge that is related to pratibhā, ‘intuition.’ Nonetheless this intuition, while being pre-discursive in the sense that it appears before any kind of reasoning, is also essential related to language as it is a kind of realization (vimarśa) through which consciousness expresses its own awareness. It also has to do with some sort of belief insofar as it rests neither on perception nor on inference... In the Pratyabhijñā texts, the word prasiddhi therefore denotes some kind of a priori certainty, provided that here we understand a priori to mean that this knowledge is anterior both to perception and reasoning, since it extends to the intuitive understanding experts have of objects that belong to their field of expertise as well as to what we would probably term the ‘instinct’ of animals or children to behave in a particular way.” See also TORELLA (2013), p. 460: “We are progressively arriving at a definition of prasiddhi: so far, we can say that we are dealing with a reflective awareness depending on previous mental impregnations. These previous impregnations coming to us from the past constitute this ancient prasiddhi, which animates our present. It has come down to us (TĀ 35.10a: āgata), it is to be identified with āgama. Unlike the Buddhists (and the Māmāṣakas), our Śaiva thinkers, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, are not willing to relegate āgama to the sphere of atyantāparokṣa or dharma; on the contrary, the entire vyavahāra is impregnated and made possible by it.”
realization\textsuperscript{539} (vim\textit{a}ṛ\textit{s}a) at the most subtle level of speech comprises the primary meaning of “revelation” (\textit{ā}gama) for Abhinavagupta, more fundamental than the “scriptures” consisting of collections of words\textsuperscript{540} distinctly arranged in various sequences. This premise conforms closely with Bhartṛhari’s description of revelation. In the \textit{Vākyapadīya\textit{ā}vṛtti}, he explains revelation as the process\textsuperscript{541}

\textsuperscript{539} Ratie (2013), pp. 379-380: “According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, \textit{ā}gama is first and foremost a kind of realization (vim\textit{a}ṛ\textit{s}a). This key word in the Pratyabhijñā system designates the act through which consciousness, instead of passively reflecting its objects as in a mirror, actively grasps itself \textit{as being the consciousness of this or that}. This dynamic feature of consciousness is conceived as essentially verbal, since Pratyabhijñā philosophers consider that any cognitive apprehension is of linguistic nature (although in the case of immediate perception for instance it expresses itself in a sort of silent proto-language). Far from being contingent, the ability of consciousness to grasp itself as being this or that constitutes its very essence and is fundamental to the system... since the Śaiva nondualists hold that there is nothing outside of Śiva understood as an all-encompassing consciousness, and that this unique consciousness creates the universe merely by grasping (vim\textit{a}ṛś-) itself in the form of the universe.”

\textsuperscript{540} Ibid., p. 380: “Abhinavagupta explains that \textit{ā}gama is a particularly intense kind of vim\textit{a}ṛ\textit{s}a of which scriptures are only a secondary expression... In a literal or primary (\textit{mukhya}) sense, \textit{ā}gama denotes a particularly intense intuition, whereas in a figurative or secondary sense, it designates what we could translate as scripture, i.e. a speech or a text considered as authoritative by a certain religious tradition—and it is \textit{ā}gama in the first sense that gives its meaning and validity to \textit{ā}gama in the second sense.” Cf. Ibid., p. 422: “One should therefore understand the Pratyabhijñā’s assertions that \textit{ā}gama is the strongest means of knowledge and that all \textit{ā}gama-s are means of knowledge while keeping in mind that Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta constantly play with several meanings of the word \textit{ā}gama: not only do they distinguish between \textit{ā}gama as a realization (vim\textit{a}ṛ\textit{s}a) and \textit{ā}gama as a mass of words (\textit{sabdarāśi}) claiming to express this realization; they also distinguish between the unique \textit{ā}gama that is Śiva’s self-realization and the multiple \textit{ā}gama-s or realizations that are more or less partial aspects of it.”

\textsuperscript{541} Vākyapadīya\textit{ā}vṛtti ad Vākyapadiya 1.5: \textit{yām sākṣmāṃ nityāṃ atīndriyāṃ vācāṃ rśayāṃ sākṣātktadhrmāṃ no mantradṛṣṭāḥ paśyanti tām asākṣātktadhrmabhyaḥ ‘parebhyāḥ pravedāyisyamāṇā bilmāṃ samāmanantī} “The Vedic seers, who directly experience the nature of things and see the mantras, perceive that subtle, eternal, speech that is beyond the range of the senses. Inasmuch as they plan to make that [divine word] known to others who lack direct access to the nature of things, they set down for transmission an image [of that subtle, sense-transcending speech].” This translation is highly indebted to the one found in AKLUJKAR (2009), pp. 24-25. Regarding this “image” (\textit{anukāra} / \textit{bilmā}) of the most subtle revelatory speech that the Vedic seers hand down, AKLUJKAR proposes that it is one step removed from the Veda as an oral or textual artifact. See Ibid., p. 37: “The \textit{bilmā} is practically the same as the \textit{veda}, although it would primarily refer to an undivided and unorganized collection or pile (\textit{rāśi}) of mantras, while \textit{veda} would primarily refer to the separated and arranged bodies of mantras.”
whereby Vedic seers, uniquely endowed with the intuitive capacity (*pratibhā*)\(^{542}\)
to directly apprehend this eternal divine speech, inaccessible to empirical or inferential knowledge, subsequently transcribed it into discursive “scriptures” for the sake of others who lack such abilities. That transcription is a secondary representation or “image” (*anukāra / bilma*) of unarticulated revelatory awareness (*āgama* in its primary sense).

Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta were likely attracted to Bhartṛhari’s conception of revelation since Bhartṛhari did not prioritize an extrinsic canon of scriptural statements as the guarantor of religious authority. The highest revelation for Bhartṛhari is rather conceived of as a divine speech inherent in human awareness, directly accessible only to those with the subtle intuitive power to realize it.\(^{543}\) As TORELLA persuasively demonstrates, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta’s adoption of the word *prasiddhi* (*a priori* conviction) to signify revelation was a part of their strategic response to the Mīmāṃsakas, such as Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, who were extremely uncomfortable with the implications of the Bhartṛharian theory of revelation the concept of *prasiddhi* evokes.\(^{544}\) An important

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\(^{542}\) Utpaladeva also describes revelation as pure intuition (*pratibhā*). See TORELLA (2013), p. 464: “‘Its name is *pratibhā*’ says a fragment of Utpaladeva’s *Vivṛti*, which Abhinavagupta glosses: ‘This [divine voice] is characterized by ‘intuitive shining’ (*pratibhāṇa*), it is indeed the *āgama*, that is, the subliminal impulse towards language (*śabdabhāvanā*).’” For the Sanskrit, see Ibid, p. 464, footnote 23: “ĪPVV III p. 93.14-15 *’pratibhāsanijñā’ iti pratibhāṇalakṣaṇā iyaṁ śabdabhāvanākhyā āgama eveti yāvat."

\(^{543}\) TORELLA (2013), pp. 468-469: “It is true that Bhartṛhari focuses on the Veda, but, apart from the corpus of texts in which the Veda is embodied, he envisages a higher level, a kind of subtle Veda made of *pratibhā* or *śabdatattva* which lies in the depths of all men, or even all living creatures. Apparently, *āgama* / Veda is not just a content of the consciousness of living beings, but something more: on two occasions and in slightly different contexts, Bhartṛhari likens it to *caitanya* itself.”

\(^{544}\) Ibid., p. 468ff.
sticking point in the divergence of views is the Māṁsākās’ vision of the Veda as an independent authority on the supersensible realm of dharma inaccessible to and ultimately remote from the awareness of human beings, including the Vedic seers. For Māṁsākās, revelation is not an internal awareness of dharma at the heart of all conscious beings, directly accessible through intuition, but an already fixed or natural relationship between (Vedic) words and meanings that always precedes human authors and communicates ritual injunctions. This authorless scripture is passed down through beginningless succession of Vedic teachers who merely serve as intermediaries, not illumined seers with higher faculties and thus worthy of special veneration.

It should be noted that these fundamental differences in orientation toward

545 Here “independent” (anapekṣa) means not confirmable by other means of knowledge, i.e. perception and inference, which are instruments for valid awareness from the realm of human experience. See Māṁsāṣṭṭra 1.1.5: [...] tatpramāṇam bādārayasyānapekṣatvāt. Cf. FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 290 “Epistemological independence is needed because an instrument of knowledge, according to Māṁsākās, must provide fresh information, i.e. it must cause to know a referent not previously known through other means of knowledge.”

546 On the restriction that śabda as the Vedaśāstra only makes known that which is inaccessible to other means of knowledge, see Māṁsāṣṭṭra 6.2.18: [...] aprāpte śāstram arthavat ‘The sacred text is useful only with respect to what cannot be arrived at (through other means of knowledge).’ This passage is cited in FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 290.

547 Māṁsāṣṭṭra 1.1.5: autpattikas tu śābadasyārthena sambandhas ‘But the relation of (Vedic) word and meaning is original.’ In the Śābarabhāṣya ad Māṁsāṣṭṭra 1.1.5, Śabara glosses “original” (autpattika) as already fixed (nītya) and later in the same passage as not originating from human beings (apauruseya). On the meaning of nītya as fixed, along with other possibilities, see FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 294.


549 Māṁsāślokaśākritika codanāṣṭṭra 69: ato vaktranadhīnātavāt prāmāṇye tadupāsanam na yuktam apramāṇaḥ te kalpye tatprārthitāḥ bhavet ‘Therefore, since validity [of the Veda] does not depend on an author, the worship of its [author] is wrong. Because one could address him only with prayers if he assumes that the Veda is [in itself] devoid of epistemological validity.’ Translation of FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 310.
scripture persist alongside an interesting commonality between Mīmāṃsakas and Bhartṛhari that the Vedas are ultimately unauthored and beginningless.

The idea that certain individuals are endowed with the capacity to directly perceive or experience realities or scriptural truths beyond the range of perception and inference, an issue directly related to arguments for or against omniscience, is also supported by early Naiyāyikas. It is therefore not surprising, as we will see below, that Abhinavagupta also draws considerably from the conceptual vocabulary of Nyāya when discussing revelation. One possible reason is that the Kaula conception of revelation mediated by and internal to the awareness of Siddhas dovetails nicely with both Bhartṛhari and early Naiyāyika conceptions of revelation as experientially available to illumined teachers. Granting human beings—albeit a rare class of adepts—the power to perceive revelation without mediation has the potential, if not in practice then at least in theory, of investing individual authors with immense agency in the ongoing transmission of tradition. Charging visionaries with gleaning and transmitting the scriptural canon could, again, in theory, constitute a person-centered model of religious authority that encourages future authors to perpetually enliven a text tradition through their own intuitive and unmediated grasp of revelation. Bhartṛhari and early Nyāya theorists, contra the Mīmāṃsakas, thus represent a compelling precedent to the Siddha-centered model of revelation articulated in the Kulamārga and post-scriptural Kaula sources.

“Word” (śabda) in Nyāya is defined as verbal testimony, specifically that of a trustworthy speaker (āpta), and Abhinavagupta uses this term (āpta) when
justifying the unique status of Śaiva revelation. The Naiyāyikas understanding of śabda as verbal testimony shifts the locus of revelatory teaching from a timeless and impersonal scriptural statement that is received (viz. the Mīmāṃsā view) to a more speaker-based model of “word,” rooted in the authority of the individual offering scriptural testimony. Nyāyaśūtra 1.1.7 and 1.1.8 together with the corresponding commentary of Vātsyāyana provides the logical starting point for gleaning the early Naiyāyikas position:

Word is the statement of a trustworthy person (1.1.7). [Vātsyāyana’s comment:]
Truly a trustworthy person is one who directly experiences (sāksātkarana) the nature of things. Impelled by the desire to communicate that reality [to others], as it has been perceived, such a person becomes a speaker [/teacher] (upadeśṭṛ). Direct experience is the full acquisition (āpti) of a reality. One who acts on the basis of that [full acquisition of a reality] is a trustworthy person (āpta).

That [testimony] is twofold due to having either an object that is perceptible or beyond perception (1.1.8).

[Vātsyāyana’s comment:] In this way, [the distinction between realities beyond perception and those that are perceptible comprises] a distinction between the speech of Vedic seers and common people.

The Naiyāyikas root authority in the speaker, based on their direct experience of a given reality. For Vedic seers, this includes realities beyond the senses, but even common people can give faithful testimony regarding perceptible objects or the mundane state of affairs of the world.

Although the Naiyāyikas disagree with Bhartṛhari that the Veda is authorless, Vātsyāyana’s description of a trustworthy speaker as one who has direct experiential access to the nature of things and is motivated to transmit it to

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550 Although later Naiyāyika authors, like Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, who propose that the trustworthy author of scripture is none other than God, depart from this earlier notion of trustworthy human authors. See FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 291, footnote 15.

551 Nyāyasūtra 1.1.7-8: āptopadeśah śabda | sa dvividho drṣṭādrṣṭārthatvāt; Nyāyasūtraḥbhāṣya ad Nyāyasūtra 1.1.7-8: āptah khalu sāksātkṛtadharmaḥ yathādṛṣṭasṛṣṭhasya cikhyāpāyiṣayā prayukta upadeṣṭā | sāksātkaranam arthasyāptih tayaḥ pravartata ity āptah | rṣyāryamlecchānāṁ samānaṁ laksanāṁ [...] | [...] evam rṣilaukikavākyānāṁ vibhāga iti.
others directly corresponds to Bhartṛhari’s description of the Vedic seers cited above. For Bhartṛhari also distinguishes the Vedic sages as those who directly experience the nature of things (sākṣātktadharman) and who go on to transcribe the subtle, eternal, revelatory speech that they directly perceive into collections of mantras for the sake of those lacking such extraordinary capacities. Vātsyāyana also has the Vedic seers in mind when describing a reliable speaker (āpta) responsible for reporting non-mundane matters, such as scriptural truths. This is further supported by his distinction that the valid testimony of realities beyond the range of sense-perception (adrṣṭārtha) belongs not to worldly people, but to the ṛṣis.

The Naiyāyika definition of the instrument of valid knowledge that is “word” (śabda) as verbal testimony is also attested in the Sāṅkhya-kārikā and

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552 This is reiterated and slightly elaborated in Nyāyasūtra-bhāṣya ad Nyāyasūtra 2.1.68: kiṃ punar āptānāṃ prāmāṇyam ! sākṣātktadharmanāt bhūtadayā yathābhūtārthacikhyāpayiṣetī ‘But why is there validity for trustworthy persons? They have direct experience of the nature of things, they possess compassion for beings, [and] desire to communicate [to others] a reality as it really exists.’

553 Sāṅkhya-kārikā 5cd: āptaśrutih āptavacanam ‘Trustworthy testimony is [what is taught by] trustworthy people and revelation.’ This translation follows Gaudapāda’s bhāṣya ad Sāṅkhya-kārikā 5 (āpta ācāryā brahma-dāvayaḥ śrutir vedalḥ āptaḥ ca śrutis ca āptaśrutih tadvām āptavacanam iti [although this reading seems artificial, given that it reads āptaśrutih as a samāhāradvandvam, which should result in a neuter singular form, āptaśrutih, in the base text]). Another reading for āptaśrutih could be “what is heard from trustworthy teachers.” Many of the other commentators, like Gaudapāda, gloss āptaśrutih as referring to both trustworthy teachers, such as Kapila, Manu, or Brahmā, and revelation (śrutih), frequently glossed as the Veda. This would seem to be a compromise between two notions of revelation explored above, one a teaching of a rare adept with access to revelatory truth and the other a revelatory source independent of or preceding an illumined author. However, the absence of other reference to the Vedas or any clear deference to Vedic authority in Sāṅkhya-kārikā puts into question the degree to which āptavacana refers to independent and timeless revelation analogous to how Mīmāṃsakas envisioned the Veda. See Larson (1979), pp. 158-159: “Reliable authority, according to Kārikā V, is reliable revelation or unimpeachable verbal testimony (āptaśrutih). According to all commentators, this includes the teachings of the Vedas together with the doctrines of revered teachers in the tradition—e.g., Kapila, etc... Moreover, the reliance of classical Sāṃkhya on the Veda is unclear, although the lack of reference to the
Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*. The former text, which together with its commentaries serves as the most important extant source for classical Sāṅkhya, represents itself as the liberating teachings of a particular lineage of sagely authors.\(^{554}\)

This secret knowledge, which is for the individual soul, in which the existence, origin, and dissolution of living beings is examined, has been fully explained by the supreme sage [Kapila].\(^{555}\) Out of compassion that sage transmitted this foremost pure [knowledge] to Āsuri. Āsuri, for his part, [transmitted] it to Pañcaśikhā who further expanded this knowledge system. Passed down through a traditional lineage of disciples, this [secret knowledge] was abridged by the noble-minded Īśvarakṛṣṇa, with recourse to the Ārya meter, after fully realizing its definitive truth.

Given the importance of Sāṅkhya as a conceptual vocabulary for Śaiva tantric speculation, and its placement above the Veda by the early Śaiva tantric scriptural source, the *Niśvāsamukha*, it is interesting to note its emphasis on the authoritative knowledge of individual sages against an impersonal conception of revealed tradition.

The *Yogasūtra*, in tandem with its foundational commentary, the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, also adopts the connotation of āgama as verbal testimony,\(^{556}\) but...
goes on to flesh out the implications of this theory with a description of the relationship between the instruments of valid knowledge. The resultant view stresses the preeminence of the higher perceptual faculties of advanced Yogis as the very source of āgama and inference:\footnote{\textit{Yogasūtrabhāṣya} ad 1.42 (introducing \textit{nirvitarkā samāpatti} of 1.43): tat \textit{paraṃ pratyakṣam} \textit{tac ca śrutīnāmaṇaḥ prabhavataḥ} \textit{na ca śrutīnāmānaśabhaḥ} \textit{tad darśanam} \textit{tasmaद asaṃkīrṇaḥ pramāṇāntareṇa yogino nirvitarkasamādhījām darśanam iti.}

This is higher perception. And this is the seed of āgama and inference. Āgama and inference arise from that [higher perception]. And this perception is independent of scriptural or inferential knowledge. Therefore, the perception of a Yogi arising from meditative absorption free of discursive thought is not mixed with any other source of knowledge.

What comes to be the authoritative knowledge handed down in tradition, āgama, has its source in the perception of Yogis who are able to see without the static of discursive thought that necessarily accompanies ordinary perception. This discussion of yogic perception arises not in a discussion on the instruments of knowledge or the sources of tradition, but rather a level of meditative awareness (\textit{nirvitarkā samāpatti} or \textit{sabījasamādhi}) that is a stage of the cultivation the text prescribes. The implication is that future authors with pragmatic commitments to the system are encouraged to cultivate the rare capacity to directly perceive the source of all scriptural wisdom.

In the subsequent history of these systems in the classical and early medieval periods, the person-centered model of religious authority of Nyāya,
Sāṅkhya, and Pātañjalayoga did not inspire future authors in these traditions to write about the context of their compositions with the kind of detail and regional awareness of the Śākta Śaiva authors of post-scriptural Kashmir. The most definitive authors and learned commentators in these knowledge systems never claimed to be liberated, and likewise did not describe themselves as endowed with direct access to the nature of reality (sākṣātkṛtadhāman) beyond the range of the senses. The humble confession of the sixth-century Naiyāyika commentator, Uddyotakara, is a case in point. In a riposte to a hypothetical challenge from a Mīmāṃsaka casting doubt on the human capacity of perceiving extra-sensorial realities, such as heaven, Uddyotakara makes it clear that although sages capable of this higher-order perception have existed, he should not be counted among them.558 As for the commentaries on the Sāṅkhyakārikā, in the first millennium of the common era there is little evidence of the kind of creative engagement with the system that one might expect from authors who see themselves on the same plane as the traditions’ sages, such as Kapila, the venerable individual authorities responsible for the liberating teachings of Sāṅkhya. 559 The Yogasūtra does prescribe practices for developing the capacity to perceive free of discursive

558 Nyāyavārttika ad Nyāyasaūtra 1.7: na brūmaḥ asmadarśināṃ pratyakṣāḥ svargaṇāya ity api tu yasya pratyakṣāḥ tasyopadeśāḥ iti ‘We do not claim that [extra-sensorial] realities such as heaven are perceptible to people like us, but rather that [the instrument of knowledge known as verbal testimony] is the statement of that [unique] person for whom [these realities] are perceptible.’

559 LARSON (1979), p. 134: “The commentaries to the Kārikā, for example, do little more than explain the details of the text. Almost no attempt is made to raise new issues or interpretations. No creative re-workings of the doctrines occurs much before Vijñānabhikṣu in the sixteenth century.” It should also be admitted that inasmuch Sāṅkhya had become a “dead schoolroom philosophy” one would not necessarily expect to find commentarial literature that gives much more than a “schoolmaster’s exposition of a text-book.” I thank Dominic GOODALL sharing this point in a personal communication.
thought, a higher perception which the bhāṣya delineates as the source of āgama. However, there is little evidence that the scholastic commentators were serious practitioners of the form of yoga distilled in the sūtras and elaborated in the bhāṣya.\(^{560}\)

Is there a plausible explanation for why the person-centered model of religious authority articulated in these sources did not encourage subsequent authors to identify with the visionary power to directly apprehend the source of scripture? One possibility is that the process of revelation, whereby seers directly intuit realities and transformative truths beyond the realm of the senses, came to be considered the special purview of legendary sages and Vedic seers of a bygone era; a time when the Vedic canons or the teachings of Yoga-Sāṅkhya were first laid down. This hypothesis is further strengthened by our analysis of how the Purāṇas depicted the transmission of its scriptural teachings in chapter two. The Vedic seers act as essential intermediaries between an originally massive scripture that must be condensed as it is passed on to humanity. Furthermore, humanity, for its part, is portrayed as inhabiting the Kali Age and consequently deficient in the requisite lifespan, energy, and capability to grok the broader reaches of revelation. Thus the provenance and powers of these superhuman sages is distinctly set apart from human beings—mere mortals ensnared in an era of darkness.

\(^{560}\) VASUDEVA (2017), p. 1 mentions that the “commitment to Patañjali’s doctrine and practice” of two of the most important commentators on the Yugasūtras, Śaṅkara and Vācaspatimiśra, is “debatable.” Cf. BRYANT (2009), p. 54, describing the tenor of the commentary (Tattsvavatāradī) of Vācaspatimiśra: “This eclectic scholasticism contrasts with the experiential focus of yoga and makes one wonder whether Vācaspati Miśra was a practicing yogī.”
The common theme of religious authority being based upon the rare capacities and illuminating statements of “trustworthy” religious visionaries elucidated above, likely a widely held understanding of revelation in ancient India, never won universal acceptance as the model for the authoritative status of the Veda. This may be related to the fact that, unlike Mīmāṃsā, early Nyāya, and especially Yoga and Sāṅkhya, were not dedicated to interpreting the Veda. It follows that they never came to be recognized as traditional authorities for stipulating Veda’s nature as a revelatory source. It is of no surprise, then, that the Mīmāṃsakas’ influential notion of a beginningless and authorless “word” came to constitute the orthodox position on the Veda and to influence how other Brahminical traditions conceived of religious authority. This influence is, furthermore, predicated on the Veda’s perennial stature as a sanctioned benchmark of validity and truth. This fact, combined with a notion of time that progressively degrades human agency, may have distanced authors from the more radical implications of the person-centered model of religious authority implicit in Bhartṛhari’s Vākyapadīya, early Nyāya, and Yoga-Sāṅkhya.

In steps Abhinavagupta, buttressed by a mature Kaula idiom for religious authority with roots in notions of time, place, and self that significantly contrast the respective worldviews of Mīmāṃsakas, Naiyāyikas, Sāṅkhyanas, Paurāṇikas, and even early Tāntrikas. Abhinavagupta highly intensifies the person-centered model of religious authority latent in the concept of the verbal testimony of a reliable speaker. Revelation, from Abhinavagupta’s nondual doctrinal vantage point, is ultimately a self-reflective act of awareness on the part of universal consciousness, the one knowing and perceiving subject looking out through the
eyes of all beings. This omniscient pole of subjectivity is none other than Bhairava, the conscious substratum and source of all a priori convictions *(prasiddhi)* and the “inmost essence of all creatures.” What room does this conception leave for scripture being based on the testimony of individual trustworthy luminaries (*āpta*)? Interestingly, for Abhinavagupta, revelation, although rooted in a transpersonal subjectivity, can only be enacted in a particular place, time, and for a particular individual who is endowed with the right kind of competency (*adhikārin*) to benefit from it.

For every *āgama* without exception, whether it consists in injunctions or prohibitions, produces a realization that is necessarily restricted (*niyantrita*) to specific (*niyata*) persons who are qualified [for it] (*adhikārin*) [as well as to a specific] place and time, [specific] auxiliary causes, etc.

Given this highly contextualized notion of revelation, necessarily indexed to individual persons located in time and space, the model of revelation as the verbal testimony of a trustworthy individual becomes essential to Abhinavagupta’s logic of revelation.

At this point, we turn to Abhinavagupta’s discussion of revelation in the first half of chapter thirty-seven, which to my knowledge has yet to be closely

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561 *Tantrāloka* 35.11cd-12ab & 14: पूर्वपूर्वप्राप्तिवाचमार्गे सा क्वचि सवयं ||sarvajīnārūpe hy ekasmin nihiṣaṅkṣam bhāsate purā || [...] bhogāpavargataddhetuprasiddhiśataśobhitah || tadvimarśastabhāvo ‘sau bhairavāḥ paramesvarāh ‘When one inquires into the consecutively prior [conditions upon which this *a priori* certainty] depends, it becomes clear that it first shines forth in a unitary [reality] whose nature is omniscient... The one who is adorned with innumerable *a priori* certainties that bring about enjoyments and liberation is Bhairava, the highest God, whose essential nature is that self-awareness.’


studied in the secondary literature. For Abhinavagupta, the one universal āgama is not only differentiated on the basis of different degrees and domains of qualification of the recipients of scriptural teachings.\textsuperscript{564} He also delineates the levels of valid scripture in this one āgamic dispersion according to the caliber of teachers who can perceive and thus unerringly transmit a given horizon of scriptural truth:\textsuperscript{565}

[Even] if a scriptural system that teaches its own [partial] aspect [of reality], which has limited results, is [still] necessary to accept for those [who aim towards those limited goals], that which is directly perceived by all omniscient beings, which is contrary to that [partial scripture], is the most essential (śāstra) to adopt. And what is that? The [scriptural system] whose entire teaching produces an unsurpassable fruit.

Here Abhinavagupta distinguishes the highest revelatory teachings as those which are “directly perceived by all omniscient beings.” The implication, which will be further corroborated below, is that one of the key differentiating factors between lower and higher scriptural systems is the scope of knowledge, and thus reliability, of its teachers.

This criterion, based on the notion of trustworthy individuals acting as guarantors of different thresholds of religious authority, is also directly

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\textsuperscript{564} RATIE (2013), p. 412: “All scriptures are in fact expressions of the same self-realization of the (Śaiva) universal consciousness, and they only seem to contradict themselves because this unique consciousness determines them as being means of knowledge only in particular, different circumstances, with respect to particular, different objects and for particular, different individuals.” See also Tantrāloka 35.25: \textit{tasmin viṣayavaiviktaḥ vicitraphaladāyini | citropāyopadeśo ‘pi na virodhātvaḥ bhavet ‘Even though this teaching has many different means when it comes to bestowing different types of goals on the basis of particular contexts, a contradiction does not result [from this].’ In Tantrālokaviveka ad Tantrāloka 35.25, Jayaratha elaborates what Abhinavagupta means by “particular contexts”: \textit{deśakāldhikāryādviṣaya-bhedam āśritya ‘with reference to different contexts such as a given place, time, or a specific person who is qualified.’}

\textsuperscript{565} Tantrāloka 37.3 & 37.6: \textit{tadavaśyagrahātavye śāstre svāṁśopadesāni | manāk phale ‘bhuyupādēyatanām tadviparītakam | | tac ca yat svaścavajñādṛśaṁ tāc cāpi kim bhavet | yadasēṣopadesena sūyate ‘nuttaram phalam.}
correlated to a hierarchy of religious ends. Mokṣa, or liberation, the common term for the highest goal all of these traditions claim to bestow, is not a monolithic category. For the Śaiva Saidhdhāntikas, such as Sadyojyotīh (c. 675-725) and the Kashmirian Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha (c. 950-1000), the state of liberation (mokṣa) was a dialectical concept, a thematic site for refuting non-definitive views of coeval traditions while establishing the preeminence of Śaiva Siddhānta soteriology. In Sadyojyotīh’s Paramokṣanirāsakārikā and Rāmakaṇṭha’s commentary they introduce and disprove twenty theories of liberation before presenting their final settled position. The highest (Saidhdhāntika) view is that a liberated soul becomes the same as God (īśvarasamāna), which for all intents and purposes means the manifestation (vyaktī) of the divine powers of omniscience and omnipotence that are intrinsic to the soul. In Sadyojyotīh’s critical survey of the definitions of

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566 On this dating, see SANDERSON (2006a).

567 On this dating, see SANDERSON (2007), p. 418.

568 For a critical edition, translation, and annotation of this text, see WATSON & GOODALL (2013). See Ibid, p. 15: “The Paramokṣanirāsakārikā... is a text of 59 verses that lists and then refutes twenty positions regarding the nature of liberation (mokṣa). Its commentary by Rāmakaṇṭha... expounds the twenty positions, not necessarily in the way Sadyojyotīh understood them, and then refutes them, occasionally just by elaborating Sadyojyotīh’s refutation, but frequently by adding long digressions and new arguments.”

569 WATSON & GOODALL (2013), p. 63: “It has been noted above that the presentation of the twenty views to be refuted ends with three which all teach that liberation involves becoming the same as God (īśvarasamāna), and that a firm distinction is made between these three views and all of the other seventeen. Sadyojyotīh says (v. 6) that all of the other seventeen are the products of mere imagination on the part of those who are blinded by delusion, and who hence cannot see that liberation is becoming the same as God. Rāmakaṇṭha differentiates the three proponents of īśvarasamānatā from the other seventeen by describing the former as co-religionists (samānatāntrikas).” On the supremacy of the Saidhdhāntika view, see Rāmakaṇṭha’s vṛtti ad Paramokṣanirāsakārikā 1: dīksākhyaṣya yat phalaṃ vakṣyamānam aśeṣabandhanīcanti tvaṣṭa puruṣasarojādyakhyayuktāḥ tadāhāmadhyavabhāvabhāvabhāva phalāni varṇyante ‘Fruits taught in other systems are set out [below] as different from the later to be taught fruit of the ritual known as initiation, [that fruit being] the manifestation (vyaktī) of
liberation advanced by contemporaneous traditions, as he conceived them, liberation taught by Naiyāyikas is a highly inferior form of mokṣa, consisting in the complete “cessation of cognition and agency.”\(^{570}\) The sages that gave trustworthy testimonials on the principle of liberation in Nyāya are thus inferior, because they merely teach a transcendent form of liberation, characterized as a “freedom from”\(^{571}\) action and cognition which entail suffering. This understanding of mokṣa is diametrically opposed to a superior “freedom to” model of the Śaiva Siddhāntins, seen as the emergence of the capacity to know and do everything.

The Yoga of Patañjali and Sāṅkhya do not fare much better in the Saiddhāntika estimate of their postulation of the highest goal. The understanding of liberation as isolation oraloneness of the soul (kaivalya) assumes that there is no action in the liberated soul or object of experience, even though—unlike the Naiyāyika’s conception (as the Śaiva present it)—the soul (puruṣa) is conscious omniscience and [omnipotence], one’s own [innate] qualities, when all bonds cease.’

Translation of WATSON & GOODALL.

\(^{570}\) Paramokṣanirāsakārikā 5c: jñānakarītyavāyor nāsāh. Rāmakaṇṭha further expounds this position in his vṛtti ad Paramokṣanirāsakārikā 5c: muktātu buddher abhāve icchāprayatnayor abhāve kartṛtvanvāsth buddhyādīnām abhāve ca navānām atmāguṇānām abhavāt । yad āhūḥ buddhīsukhih khecchādevaśapravatnusāṃskāradharmādharmanāṃ navānām atyantavimokṣo ‘pavargaḥ iti’ ‘Agency ceases in liberation given that there is no desire or impulse towards action (prayatna) [then,] because there is no cognition (buddhi). And there is no cognition etc., because of the absence [in liberation] of [all] nine qualities [of the self]. As they have said, ‘The Highest aim of people (apavarga) is complete escape from the nine [particular qualities of the self]: cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, effort, traces, dharma and adharma.’ Translation of WATSON & GOODALL. This position is refuted in Paramokṣanirāsakārikā 47.

\(^{571}\) On this useful distinction of “freedom from” and “freedom to” models of liberation, see WATSON & GOODALL (2013), p. 19.
and sentient. Rather a step up from the Naiyāyika’s position, omniscience and omnipotence do not manifest in the Yoga-Sāṅkhya variety of liberation because the soul is still under the influence of karma based on reality levels, not recognized by Sāṅkhya, above the individual soul (puruṣa). Thus, the “liberating” teaching of sages like Kapila is also deficient, given that it only corresponds to a certain portion of the architecture of the Śaiva universe, and is blind to the limiting effect of karmas nested in the subtle regions beyond the vision of trustworthy seers in the Sāṅkhya system.

A few important caveats to the Śaiva Siddhānta conception of liberation must be raised. For one, the manifestation of omniscience and omnipotence intrinsic to the soul happens only at death, although this posthumous event is ostensibly guaranteed by the liberating initiation (nirvāṇadīkṣā) received by an initiand during their lifetime. Moreover, once these powers fully manifest at

572 For the refutation of this view, see Paramokṣanirāsakārikā 53-56, and the vṛtti ad loc.

573 These are the five coverings (kañcuka), which continue to conceal the true nature of the ātman. For a translation of this section of the text, with ample explanatory annotations, see Watson & Goodall (2013), pp. 442-447.

574 This is the official stance, anyways, of early Saiddhāntika exegetes like Rāmakāṇṭha. There is some ambiguity about liberation before death in the Siddhānta sources that predate its Kashmirian reception, particularly in regard to figures celebrated as Siddhas. For a representative example of this ambiguity, see Sadyojyotī’s Mokṣakārikā, vv. 57-62. An examination of the status of Siddhas in Śaiddhāntika scriptures and the writing of Sadyojyotī awaits a future study.

575 On the view that full liberation is only possible after death, including an interesting interpretation of the term jīvanamukta, which normally refers to just the opposite, namely “liberation while living,” see Rāmakāṇṭha’s vṛtti ad Kirāñatantra 1.21ab: tena [yad]asya samam iṣṭanimitam anīṣṭanimittam ca karma | yad ātuḥ na hṛṣyaty upakāreṇa nāpakāreṇa kupyati | yah sāmah sarvābhyāteṣu jīvanamuktaḥ sa ucyate iti | tasmin saṁjāte satī guruṇā mantraganeśvoareṇācāryādikaraṇena dīkṣyate nānyathā | tathābhūtakarmasamatoṣan vinācāryasya śāktipaṭīnīṣayāt | ... yadā tv asadyonirānadiśkaṇḍayā dīkṣito na punah saṁsārī yadā pūtītāsārīro bhavati tadā śīvātvaśyaktisasampūrṇo bhavati na prāgarabdakāryaṃkarmabhogaparodhena sarvātmanā

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the fall of the body, there is a potential conflict (in light of the Saiddhāntika’s dualist doctrine) between the actions of a plurality of souls or “liberated Śivas” (muktaśiva) all endowed with omniscient and omnipotent capacities. What happens if two omnipotent agents act in variance with each other? To resolve this quandary, the duty of dispensing grace and creating the universe is

576 Paramokṣanirāsakārikārtti ad 12b: tathā hi siddhasya tāvat tadānām labdhācārītārthasarvakartarvato yadā kartṛtvam paramēśvarasyāpi tadākartaṛtvam vibhīhnam ity aneccaśabdamabhavana navam idām astu purāṇam idām astv iti sarganirmāṇadāu vaśasanaśyāt ‘For to explain, when the perfected [soul], first of all, becomes an agent after attaining at that time an omnipotence that has not [yet] served its purpose, the Lord too [still] has an agency that is distinct. Thus because of the possibility of more than one agent, [one might think] ‘this [creation of the world] should be new’, [and the other] ‘it should be old’, so there may be a breakdown in the carrying out of creation and other [tasks of the Lord].’ Translation of Watson & Goodall.
exclusively commissioned to that one Śiva who has never been involved in cyclical existence (anādimuktaśiva). The other liberated souls, free of the passion and competitiveness that may inspire them to vie for this role, gracefully bow out of exercising their power in this way.

Abhinavagupta and the nondual Śākta Śaiva post-scriptural authors of Kashmir, drawing on Kaula scriptural sources, differentiate their system from the Siddhānta by claiming that a bonafide “liberation while living” (jīvanmukti) is the ultimate fruit promised by their more esoteric teachings. This is partially

577 Paramokṣanirśakārikāvṛtti ad 12cd: athāyaṃ vāḍī lobharāgādikāraṇatvāt punsāṃ matyanyathābhāvasya tan niścītya muktau rāgādyabhāvenānekasiddhayogenāpi matyanyathābhāvābhāvena sargānirmanādīdivaiśasam parihiṣyati ’Now this disputant, given that differences of opinions among souls are caused by greed, passion and the like, having pondered the matter thoroughly, may remove [logically] the breakdown in the carrying out of creation and other such [tasks] on the grounds that there would be no difference of opinion even if one were to involve many perfected [souls coming into being at once], because in liberation there would be no passion and the like [among them].’ Translation of WATSON & GOODALL.

578 Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.13: meyaṃ sādhāraṇam muktāḥ svātmābhedena manyaṃ | maheśvaro yathā baddhaḥ punar atyantabheda vā ’The liberated one, just like Śiva, cognizes the “shared” knowable reality as non-different from his own Self. The bound one, however, [sees it] as utterly distinct.’ This is elaborated by Utpaladeva, ad loc., in his auto-commentary (vṛtti): baddhamuktayor vedyam ekaṃ kim tu baddho ’tyantavihāde tād vṛti vimuktāḥ svātmadehatvena ‘There is one knowable reality for both the bound and the liberated, but the bound cognize it as utterly different [from them], [while] the liberated [know it] as the embodiment of their own Self.’; Spandakārikā 30: iti vā yasya sanvittīḥ kṛdātvenākhiḷam jagat eva paśya satataṃ yuktō jīvanmukto na sanśayāḥ ’Alternatively, one whose awareness perceives the entire universe as a play, in virtue of an unbroken meditative awareness, is definitely liberated in this life.’ See Kallaṭa’s vṛtti ad Spandakārikā 30: evamsvabhāvam yasya cittān yathā manmayaṃ eva jagat sarvam iti sa sarvam kṛdātvena paśyaṇ nityayuktatvāt jīvaṇa eva īśvaro vāt mukto na tu asya śārīrādi bandhakatvāna vartate ’The one whose thought is oriented in this way, namely, “I pervade this entire universe,” always seeing everything as a play on account of having unbroken meditative awareness, is liberated—like the Lord—in this very life. Moreover, his body etc. does not function as a source of bondage.’ Abhinavagupta discusses “liberation while living” at length in various passages throughout the Tantrāloka. He unambiguously states that it is the goal of his system in Tantrāloka 37.32-33ab, which will be cited and translated below.
the logical outcome\(^{579}\) of the premise that there is only one universal consciousness, and that every apparently “individual” soul is actually a manifestation of and ultimately identical with the one omniscient and omnipotent subjective awareness, Śiva-Bhairava.

As we will further elaborate below, this notion of liberation grants an extraordinary amount of power and authority to the gurus and scriptural teachers of this system, especially given the basic presumption that genuine Kaula gurus, often referred to as Siddhas, are seen to be living exemplars of this goal. Thus they are considered capable of wielding great power and often lauded as omniscient.\(^{580}\) Indeed, Abhinavagupta explicitly states that the omniscience of non-dual Śaiva teachers is an essential factor that differentiates Śaiva scriptures from the inferior dispensation of non-omniscient teachers.\(^{581}\)

\(^{579}\) On this point, see LYNE BANSAT-BOUDON (2013), p. 308: “In this system, the only true emancipation, the only freedom to which one should aspire, is emancipation in this life—a notion that appears to follow from nondualism itself, if one understands by “emancipation” going beyond contraries and reintegration within the One: there is no reason why a person, in this world, should not be as free as is Śiva, for he is not different from him, provided that he undertakes the real labor of recognizing that truth” (emphasis mine). This essay provides an excellent overview of the concept of jīvanmukti in the non-dual Śaivism of Kashmir.

\(^{580}\) Abhinavagupta says that if one is lucky enough to find an omniscient guru, they should venerate them alone. See Tantrāloka 22.47cd-48ab: sarvajñānanidhānaṁ tu guruṁ saṃprāpya susthītah || tam evārādhayed dhīṁāṁs tattajijñāsamontamukhāḥ ‘However, upon meeting with that guru who is a treasury of omniscience, a fortunate person, possessing intelligence and eager in his search for various spiritual insights, should honor that Guru alone.’ In his own life, Abhinavagupta’s one guru of this caliber was Śambhunātha, whom he credits as the source of his awakening and whom he describes as omniscient (sakalavīt). See Tantrāloka 37.61. Śambhunātha’s authority is further bolstered by the fact that in the Tantrāloka Abhinavagupta often attributes pivotal teachings to his personal instruction, including the theory of revelation set out in chapter thirty-five (see Tantrāloka 35.44) and the nine types or degrees of śaktipāta in chapter 13 (see Tantrāloka 13.254).

\(^{581}\) Tantrāloka 37.7-8: yadhādharādharapratiktaṁ tattvānubhāvanatah || uttaraṁ kathitam saṁvitisuddhaṁ tadā hi tathā bhavet || yadukāśīkāsamvittisiddhavastuniśrīpānāt || apūrṇasaraṁvitproktir jñāyate ’dharaśāsane.
Just as a higher doctrine is taught after reiterating the essential points taught in gradually lower doctrines, in the same way, that [higher doctrine] should be perfected in one’s own awareness. On the basis of an examination of the reality established in one’s own awareness that was taught in that [superior doctrine], one recognizes that the teaching found in the lower scriptural doctrines belongs to those whose omniscience is not yet perfected.

For Abhinavagupta, scripture must always be tested in the cauldron of one’s own experience, and this follows from his theory that the primary meaning of revelation is not an extrinsic “text” but an intrinsic awareness. As one gradually masters higher and higher levels of the one revelatory process encompassing all scriptural and intellectual traditions, and places their maturing understanding under critical scrutiny (nirūpāṇa), the “liberating” teachings of lower systems, the Vedas, Nyāya, Sāṅkhya, etc., will inevitably be recognized as inferior. This evaluation is indebted to the Naiyāyika notion of śabda as testimony. One is able judge Vaidika religious systems etc. as lower through the direct apprehension of the fact that the teachers of these systems were not able to grasp the full extent of reality, that is to say, their omniscience is incomplete (apūrṇasarvavit); not necessarily invalid, but fragmentary.

Abhinavagupta further explains the predicament of these non-omniscient teachers, in particular identifying them as none other than the “Vedic seers.” The ṛṣi, we should recall, is the paradigmatic figure who is able to directly apprehend the super-sensible realm of revelatory truth in the Purāṇas, Bhartṛhari’s Vākyapadiya, and early Nyāya, and arguably provides a template for the way in

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582 Jayaratha, in his viveka ad Tatrāloka 37.7, brings out the “experiential” dimension of this verse by glossing “established in awareness” (samvitsiddha) as “established in one’s own experience” (svānubhāvasiddha). For an extensive study on the “rhetoric of religious experience” in Kaula sources and the non-dual Śākta Saiva traditions of Kashmir, see WALLIS (2014), in particular the encapsulation and theoretical analysis in pp. 450-461.
which Śāṅkhya envisioned its teachers. Abhinavagupta is gearing up to unveil the ascendancy of the Kaula conception of revelation based on the omniscient teachings of Siddhas identified with Śiva. The first step towards this conclusion is radically demoting Vedic seers whose limited vision is responsible for the nature and status of teachings of śāstras deemed inferior:583

Given that there is the abandonment of the higher scriptural teachings, even after partially seeing them, the domain of māyā is [thus] detected in the lower scriptural systems, since [their purpose is to] preserve the emanated world. Moreover, Śiva teaches this in the auspicious Ānandaṭantra and elsewhere: “a wise person should never consider statements of the [Vedic] sages as an authority, given that they produce affliction, have unstable and marginal results, and are [ultimately] limited. [A wise person] should [instead] take refuge in the Śaiva scriptures alone.” What is taught in the Vedic canon as a source of evil is an expedient to perfection in the Left-handed teaching, because the Vedic teaching, in its entirety, abides [only] within māyā.

There are traces of the higher teachings in the lower scriptures, because even the sages situated in these partial and limited spheres of revelation catch glimpses of them.584 Nevertheless, unlike other Vedic seers who graduated to higher paths, eventually becoming initiates in the Mantramārga, the seers under consideration here decided to perpetuate teachings that operate on the premise of duality. Such teachings are dedicated to sustaining and protecting a world in which the all-

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583 Tantrāloka 37.9-12ab: ārdhvaśāsanavastvāṁśe dṛṣṭvāpi ca samujjhite | adhaḥśāstresu māyātvam lakṣyate sargarakṣanāt || śrimadānandasastrādau proktan ca paramesinā | rṣivākṣaṁ baḥukleśam adhvucālpapahānaṁ mitam || naiva pramāṇayeda vilvān śaivam evāgaṁ maṁ śrayet | yād ārṣe pātahetuktam tad asmin vāmaśāsane || āśusūdhyāv yataḥ sarvam ārṣan māyodarasthitam.

584 This is spelled out in Jayaratha’s introduction to the first verse in this citation. See the viveka introducing Tantrāloka 37.9: nanu adharaśaśanesv apy ātmā jñātavyo mantavyoḥ ity ādīrśā jñānādi uktam iti ātra kasmāda asarvajñāpranātītvaṁ jñāyate ity uktam ity āśankṣya āha ‘Objection: even in the lower doctrines, knowledge etc. is taught in accordance with the following perspective: “the Self should be recognized, the Self should be reflected upon”. On what basis does one recognize that the [teaching] being advanced here belongs to non-omniscient [teachers]? Regarding this doubt, he teaches [the following verse].’
pervasive nature of the self is alienated by the experience of separateness;\textsuperscript{585} in this way, they exist only within māyā, literally in its “belly” (udara). By the same token, that which is a product of a reality predicated on duality can never lead one to the intuition of higher nonduality (parādvaita)\textsuperscript{586} in which all beings and phenomena are united in singular dynamic Consciousness that not only permeates but also transcends the immanent universe. This explains why Abhinavagupta, citing with approval the Ānandatantra, describes the statements of the Vedic seers as conferring unstable and marginal fruits.

Abhinavagupta’s adaptation of a Naiyāyika notion of “word” as valid testimony is further corroborated by the next set of verses in the argument we have been sequentially tracing from the beginning of chapter thirty-seven of the Tantrāloka. Two elements in the following citation echo and elaborate the Naiyāyika paradigm\textsuperscript{587} for the instrument of valid knowledge that is “word” (śabdapramāṇa): the logical illustration of a neutralizing poison, i.e., a scripture’s

\textsuperscript{585} See RATIE (2013), p. 419: “All scriptures can be considered valid means of knowledge—and yet all scriptures but the Śaivas’ are ultimately erroneous because they are only partial aspects of Śiva’s self-awareness: the Veda for instance only concerns the universal consciousness’ realization of the domain of māyā, where objects and subjects appear fundamentally distinct from each other instead of being grasped as mere manifestations of consciousness... but it is erroneous insofar as it does not include the awareness that objects and subjects have no ontological nature of their own and are mere appearances taken on by Śiva.”

\textsuperscript{586} For a lucid description of Abhinavagupta’s “higher non-duality” (parādvaita), by way of a discussion of the fusion of powers in the heart of consciousness, see SANDERSON (2005), pp. 94-99.

\textsuperscript{587} To my knowledge this indebtedness to early Nyāya’s teacher-centered notion of valid testimony, especially evident here in chapter thirty-seven of the Tantrāloka, has yet to be adequately explored in the secondary literature on Abhinavagupta’s philosophy of revelation.
efficacy of producing noticeable effects, and the conspicuous use of the terms
“speaker” (upadeśṭr)\textsuperscript{588} and “trustworthy authority” (āpta).\textsuperscript{589}

Just as poison is destroyed based on the conviction resulting from an identification
with Garuḍa [as taught in the Gāruḍatantras], similarly the continuity of one’s karma
[comes to an end] thanks to conviction that one is Bhairava. Given that lower
scriptural systems are tainted by false teachers (anupadeśṭr), on account of their state
of ignorance, this scriptural tradition of Śiva must necessarily be adopted because it
is antithetical to those [scriptures, i.e., its teachers are omniscient]. In that [scriptural
system of Śiva] there are two qualified teachers (āpta): the illustrious Śrīkanṭha and
Lakulīśa.

The example of scriptures’ power to nullify poison, which in Abhinavagupta’s
tantric construal refers to identity with the deity Garuḍa as a salient internal
realization that produces pragmatic results (immunity to poison),\textsuperscript{590} is also found
in Vātsyāyana’s commentary on the Nyāyasūtra.\textsuperscript{591} In that context, this example is

\textsuperscript{588} For the use of this term, see Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya ad Nyāyasūtra 1.1.7, which is cited above.

\textsuperscript{589} Tantrāloka 37.12cd-14: yathā khageśvaribhāvānaviśeṣaśankatvād viṣaṁ vṛajet || kaśyam karmasthitis
tadvad aṣaṅkād bhairavatvataḥ || ajñātānupadeśtrvasamāḍṣe ‘dharāsāsane || etad viparyayād
grāhyam avāśyam śivaśāsanam || dvāvo āptau tatra ca śrīmacchārikaṇṭhalakuleśvarau.

\textsuperscript{590} Cf. ĪPV 80-81: āgamasya nāmāntarah śabdanārūpo draḍhāyaśamavimarsāthmā
cilvaḥbhāvāvayośvarasyāntarungra eva vyāpārah pratyaksāder api jñātārūpaḥ
|| tena yad yathāmṛṣṭam
tat tathāteva yathā naivad viṣaṁ māṁ māraṁtī gariḍu evōhaṁ iti’ ‘As for what is called āgama, it is
the essential activity of the Lord whose nature is consciousness – [an activity] which is
internal, which consists in speech, the essence of which is an extremely intense realization,
and which is as it were the life of perception and [inference]. That which is realized through
this āgama as being such is exactly such, as in ‘this poison cannot kill me [for] I am Garuḍa
himself.’ Translation, with an editorial amendment, of RATIE (2013), p. 380. It should be
noted that RATIE notices the connection with Nyāya. See Ibid, p. 380, footnote 17: “Such
formulas are presented in the Nyāya as analogous to āgama, their efficacy being invoked to
demonstrate by analogy the authority of the Vedas, and they are more or less equated with
āgama insofar as their validity is due to the fact that they are uttered by omniscient āpta-s.”

\textsuperscript{591} Nyāyasūtra 2.1.68: mantrāyurvedapramāṇavac ca tatprāṁṇyam āptaprāṁṇyayāt ‘The validity
of that [scripture] is based on the validity of its trustworthy teachers, just like the validity of
mantras and [the texts of] Āyurveda, which have undeniable efficacy, are composed by
trustworthy teachers.’ The example of mantras used to treat snake poison is supplied by
Vātsyāyana’s bhāṣya ad loc.: yat tat āyurvedenopadīṣyate idam kṛtvāṣṭam adhiṣcāchati idaṁ
varjayitvāniṣtam jahāti taṣyānusthītyamānyaṣa tathābhāvah satyārthatāviparyayah || mantrapadāṇāṁ
ci visabhbhūtanirpratisedhārthānāṁ prayoge ‘rthasya tathābhāvah etat prāṁṇyam. For a
translation and close reading of this passage, analyzed as one component in Vātsyāyana’s
greater inferential argument, see FRESCHI & GRAHÉLI (2005), pp. 303-305.
leveraged as a verification of the reliability and authenticity of the teachers who composed the scriptures: they are trustworthy because the mantric formulae that they teach have real and salutary effects. Abhinavagupta uses this illustration to make a further point: Śaiva scriptures transmit an efficacious awareness—identity with Bhairava—that alone can nullify the momentum of one’s karmic stream, which provides further proof of their eminence. Other scriptural systems are unable to promise this exalted goal, he goes on to say, because their teachers (upadeśṭr) are ignorant. Therefore, it is the main transmitters of the canon of the Atimārga and Mantramārga, unlike the sagely teachers of lower śāstras, who truly merit the appellation “āpta.”

After explaining the reason for the inferiority of lower scriptural systems, at this juncture Abhinavagupta reaffirms the hierarchy of scriptural streams within the Śaiva tantras. This hierarchy spans from the Śaiva Siddhānta scriptures to the right-(Bhairava tantras) and left-hand streams (Vāmaśāsana) of the Mantramārga, before rising up to the Vidyāpīṭha, whose highest essence is the Trika.592 The purpose of this section, already examined above, is to demonstrate that the Trika system, conceived of as an embodiment of the essence of the entire Kulamārga, comprises the highest reach and most beneficial stratum of all Śaiva revelation.593

Following this summary, Abhinavagupta partially aligns himself with the strategy of certain Kaula scriptures, such as the Kubjikā sources of the Western

592 Tantrāloka 37.16-25ab. Many of these verses are cited and translated above, at the beginning of this study on Abhinavagupta’s view of revelation.

593 Tantrāloka 37.25cd-26. This passage was also cited and translated above.
transmission, which level critiques at tantric methods (tantraprakriya). Even if the Mantramārga has the omniscient Śrīkaṇṭha as its trustworthy preceptor (āpta), it does not transmit the consummate insight and most direct means of awakening revealed by the lineage of Kaula Siddhas. Abhinavagupta describes the Śaiva Siddhānta, for instance, in highly unflattering terms. He points to the presence of countless rituals in the Siddhānta scriptures, which he considers an inefficient path to the goal. Moreover, like the Veda, these rituals are depicted as marred by impurity and notions of duality stemming from māya. Even the Bhairavatantras of the “right-stream” are overrun with rituals, albeit of a more fierce character, and thus fall short of the pure expediency of Kaula gnosis. For the direct awakening offered in the Kaula system, at least in its more mature iterations, renders the lion’s share of ritual practice, including the rite of initiation, obsolete.

594 Tantrāloka 37.27ab: siddhānte karma bahulaṃ malamāyādirūṣītam.

595 Tantrāloka 37.27c: daksīṇaṃ raudrakarmādhyam. Jayaratha gives examples of raudra or “fierce” rituals: rites such as those that cause death or ruin one’s enemies (māranoccātanādi). Abhinavagupta also finds fault with the Vāmaśāsana, specifically its fixation upon supernatural enjoyments, in Tantrāloka 37.27d: vāmaṃ siddhisamākulaṃ.

596 For an excellent summary of Abhinavagupta’s view on the role of ritual as a more gradual and thus inferior means to the goal, including the differentiation of Tantric and Kaula methods on this basis, see SANDERSON (1995), p. 89: “Just as all ritual is seen as the descent of knowledge into the less demanding medium of meaningful action, so within the latter there are thought to be degrees of this descent. The left sees a hierarchy of means of liberation (upāyāḥ), from a pure, non-sequential and nonconceptual intuition through sequential meditation in thought alone to sequential meditation supported by the substrate of ritual action. And it is a corollary of this view that ritual itself is ranked according to the degree of its elaboration: the more prolix the support the lower the status. So Kaula ritual is not only more intense than the Tantric; it must also tend towards brevity and compressions. Thus Abhinavagupta tells us that even when the Kaula worship of the deities takes its lowest form, that is to say, when the offerings are presented to the deities upon some inert substrate, there is no need for such preliminaries as ritual ablution or the complex impositions of mantras prescribed in the Tantric system.”
One who has graduated through these levels of Śaivism is thus ready for Abhinavagupta’s warning, which immediately follows this critique of Śaiva Tantra:597

Put great distance between yourself and the [tantric] discipline, which has little merit, is full of afflictions, does not include your own direct experience, and is devoid of [the highest] liberation and the feminine mantric formulae (vidyā).

What should a Śaiva initiate embrace who is poised at such a high altitude of revelation that even the Śaiva tantras appear to be full of afflictions and extrinsically imposed rituals that do not require the powerful grasp of internal awareness, i.e. revelation in its primary sense? Abhinavagupta tells us:598

When the Guru reveals that [state] that is free of conceptualization, at that very moment a person is liberated. Only the instrument [of the body] remains.

The implication of this statement is that this direct method, in which the guru instantly transmits liberation without the need for ritual, yoga, or scriptural instruction, is the ultimate path to the definitive form of freedom, namely liberation while living. That this is the goal that the trans-ritual Kaula method reveals is signaled in this verse, a citation from a Kaula scripture the Kularatnamālā,599 by the phrase “only the instrument [of the body] remains.”

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597 Tantrāloka 37.28: svalpapuṇyaṃ bahukleśaṃ svaprattītivivarjītam | mokṣavidyāvihīnāṃ ca vinayaṃ tyajā dūrataḥ. Jayaratha’s viveka, ad loc., glosses vinayam as tantrapradhānam, in case the context alone did not make it obvious that it is the tantric mode of practice that is under critique here.

598 Tantrāloka 37.28: yasmin kāle ca gurunā nirvikalpaṃ prakāśitam | muktas tenaiva kālena yantram tiṣṭhati kevalam.

599 Abhinavagupta tells us that this verse is found both in the Ratnālā or Kularatnamālā and the Śrīgamaśāstra when he cites it, with slight variation, earlier in the text. See Tantrāloka 13.230-13.231ab. The fact that the Kularatnamālā is a Kaula Trika source is confirmed by its citation at Tantrāloka 37.25cd-26, translated above, and a close look at the frequent references to it in chapter twenty-nine dedicated to the Kulayāga. Abhinavagupta also quotes a variant
statement signifies that although one is embodied, the presence of the body is no longer an obstacle to the manifestation of liberation.  

This differentiation of the highest Kaula teachings, we should note, is taking place in a highly inclusive vision of revelation, which sees lower teachings as valid, and even necessary, given the existence of audiences who require a more “gradualist” path of awakening.

Abhinavagupta concludes this first part of chapter thirty-seven by making a remarkable statement about the Tantraloka within this greater scriptural horizon. By a natural extension of his emphasis in this chapter on the role of

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600 That this is the intended sense of “only the instrument [of the body] remains” is verified by the fact that this is offered as a scriptural proof for a statement about embodied liberation in a previous citation. In that context, the preceding verse, which this citation is meant to scripturally support, is Tantraloka 13.229cd: tadā ca dehasaṃsthō ’pi sa mukta iti bhānyate ‘And then, even while inhabiting a body, that person is described as “liberated”. For further consideration of the meaning of this oft cited hemistich: yantrāṃ tiṣṭhati kevalam ’only the instrument [of the body] remains,’ see LYNE BANSAT-BOUDON (2013), p. 314, footnote 26.

601 This spirit of inclusivism, moreover, has roots in the Bhairava tantras, and also the Nīśvāsamukha, as we touched upon in chapter two. See Tantraloka 35.26-27: laukikāṃ vaidikāṃ sāṅkhyaṃ yogāṃ pāñcarātrakāṃ | bauddhārhatanvāyaśastraṃ padārthakramatantraṃ | | siddhāntatrantrasāktādi sarvaṃ brahmodbhavanāṃ yataḥ | śrīsvacchandādiśu proktam | sadyojātādibhedataḥ ‘Worldly traditions, Vedic revelation, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra, the scriptures of the Buddhists, Jains, and the authoritative treatises of Indian logic, the intellectual systems related to grammar, the Siddhānta scriptures, and also Sākta traditions all arise from the absolute reality, since it is taught (by Śiva) in the glorious Svacchanda[tantra] and elsewhere that they [all] are based upon the [five] different [faces of Sādāśiva] beginning with Sadyojāta.’; Tantraloka 35.36: sāṅkhyaṃ yogāṃ pāñcarātrakāṃ vedāṃś caiva na nindayet | yataḥ śivodbhavāḥ sarva iti svacchandaśāsanē ‘One should not criticize Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pāñcarātra, and the Vedas since they all arise from Śiva. Thus [it is set forth] in the scriptural teachings of the Svacchanda.’ See Tantralokaviveka ad loc. for citations of the relevant passages from the Svacchandatantra.

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“trustworthy teachers” as an essential criterion in validating revelation, this statement is highly suggestive regarding his own unique status as an author.\textsuperscript{602}

On account of the ease with which it bestows the great goal of liberation while living in the manner [just described], [and] well-established as a [text] that grants the ultimate [supernatural] enjoyments one could desire, this [\textit{Tantrāloka}], the essence of the Trika, is a genuine systematic treatise that must certainly be adopted.

This is not the first time Abhinavagupta has made an extraordinary claim about the efficacy of his own composition. At the outset of the \textit{Tantrāloka}, after providing a brief description of the topics of each chapter of the text,\textsuperscript{603} he declares:\textsuperscript{604}

The wise person who constantly practices these thirty-seven chapters [comprising the \textit{Tantrāloka}] becomes Bhairava incarnate. Since it is Bhairava whose awareness is all-encompassing\textsuperscript{605} in the midst of the thirty-seven [reality levels], is it surprising that even an individual soul would attain the state of Bhairava by the [mere] glance of this [person]?\textsuperscript{606}

Chapter thirty-seven of the \textit{Tantrāloka} is dedicated to an analysis of why Abhinavagupta‘s composition should be adopted (\textit{upādeyatva}),\textsuperscript{607} in other words,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{602} \textit{Tantrāloka} 37.32-33ab: ittham dadadanāyāsāj jīvanmuñctimahāphalam | yathāpsitahmahābhogadāṛtvena vyavasthitam || śadārdhasārām sacchāstram upādeyam idam sphuṭam.

\item \textsuperscript{603} \textit{Tantrāloka} 1.278-284ab.

\item \textsuperscript{604} \textit{Tantrāloka} 1.284cd-286ab: iti saptādhikāṃ enāṃ triṃśatāṃ yaḥ sādā budhāḥ | āhnikānāṃ samābhyasyet sa sāksād bhairavo bhavet || saptatrimśatāṃ sampūrṇabodho yaḥ bhairavo bhavet || kiṃ citram anavo ’py asya drśā bhairavatāṃ iṣyuh. Jayaratha cites this verse ad \textit{Tantrāloka} 37.32-33ab.

\item \textsuperscript{605} The translation of \textit{pūrṇa} as “all-encompassing” is indebted to SANDERSON.

\item \textsuperscript{606} Another interpretation of this final portion of the verse, suggested to me by Dominic GOODALL, is that an individual soul becomes Bhairava not by the glance of the person who has realized their identity with Bhairava from studying the thirty-seven chapters of the \textit{Tantrāloka}, but rather from looking at Bhairava in the form of the text.

\item \textsuperscript{607} \textit{Tantrāloka} 1.284ab: ... śāstropādeyatvanirāpanam ‘[The topic of chapter thirty seven:] is the analysis on why [this] śāstra must be adopted. This is restated at the conclusion of chapter
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
it supplies a rationale of the *Tantrāloka’s* ultimate value, which Abhinavagupta directly relates to the fact that it epitomizes the Trika Kaula tradition.\(^{608}\)

However, at this point in the chapter Abhinavagupta commences the largest and most detailed “autobiographical” excerpt in his corpus. Topics covered include his patrilineal descent, geographical and cultural setting in Kashmir, his wide-ranging tutelage, the events that culminated in his assumption of the role of Śaiva guru, and significant details on the virtues and life circumstances of his disciples.

The remaining portion of chapter thirty-seven of the *Tantrāloka*, combined with his other autobiographical passages, comprises the main subject of the final chapter of this study. Given this focus of chapter thirty-seven of the *Tantrāloka*—the indispensible “value” of Abhinavagupta’s systematic text—it is notable that the foregoing elucidation of the hierarchy of revelation is directly related to the pedigree of scriptural teachers (adapting the teacher-centered Naiyāyika model of valid testimony). In this context, it is not surprising that Abhinavagupta must now transition to a demonstration that he is not only a trustworthy author (*āpta*),

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\(^{608}\) For the sense of *upādea* as “value” and the insight about the source of that value, see SANDERSON (2007), p. 374: “Abhinavagupta ends his treatise with a chapter on the value of his composition (*śāstropādeyatvam*) (37). He states the position of the *Mālinīvijayottara* in the Śaiva canon: above the Saiddhāntika scriptures are those of Bhairava; within those the highest are the texts of the Śākta-oriented Vidyāpīṭha; of those the foremost is the *Siddhayogesvarīnata*; and the *Mālinīvijayottara* is the latter’s ultimate distillation. The value of the *Tantrāloka*, then, lies in his view in the fact that as the systematic exposition of the teachings of this Tantra it conveys the highest essence of the entire Śaiva revelation.”
but one capable of producing a text that can transform its audience into Bhairava. Abhinavagupta just established the Śaiva canon of the Mantramārga as “higher” on the strength of its teachers (in contrast to the Vedic seers) being endowed with omniscience. If the Tantrāloka is all that he claims, namely the veritable epitome of the Kaula Trika tradition, the most esoteric animating core of all revelation that trumps even the Śaiva tantras, then in this context the reader is naturally compelled to muse, or maybe become awe-struck, about the unique standing of its author. Abhinavagupta indulges this speculation, which he himself helped to generate, by narrating the ideal conditions in which a text and author of this caliber could come to light.

When we look closely at how Abhinavagupta represents his genesis as a fully-enlightened guru in the next chapter, we will be better prepared to demonstrate the way in which he creatively employs a mature Kaula idiom of religious authority in his self-portrayal. Implicit in Abhinavagupta’s strategy of self-representation is the reimagining of the Kaula guru as a teacher who deeply embraces the cosmopolitan values of Indian scholasticism and aesthetic refinement. To fully appreciate this transformation, and some of its antecedents in post-scriptural Kashmir, we need to first consider Abhinavagupta’s conception of an ideal guru, a topic on which he wrote extensively. In looking at

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609 The underlying question of authorial capability or capacity is exactly how Jayaratha explains Abhinavagupta’s reasons for writing about himself and his world at the conclusion of the text. See Jayaratha’s viveka introducing Tantrāloka 37.33: idānām etadgraṇthābhidhāne svātmāni yogatāṃ prakāśayitum satīśayatvaprayojakakāreṇa deśavamśadaśaśīkādikramam utṭāṇkya svetīrytām abhidhatte ‘Now in order to illuminate the competency that resides in himself when it comes to teaching this text, as a way of making [his own] excellence a motivating factor [for his audience], [Abhinavagupta] characterizes his region, lineage, the sequence of his teachers, and narrates the events of his own [life].
the defining features of the ideal religious preceptor, a parallel structure will become visible: at each vertical rung of revelation is positioned a religious preceptor with corresponding credentials. One goal of this exposition will be to further show how the trustworthy teacher and the process of revelation are intimately linked in Abhinavagupta’s vision. Before proceeding to an encapsulation of his view on the guru, we will first offer an analytic breakdown of key themes of Abhinavagupta’s view on revelation, and introduce some new insights in the process.

Abhinavagupta describes the ultimate form of revelation as the prasiddhi (a priori certainty) or intense realization of a universal omniscient knowing subject. This primary or literal meaning of revelation is the foundation for the validity of the secondary sense of āgama: the diversity of scriptural texts or collections of words. Immanent revelatory traditions, although arising from a single (Śaiva) source, contradict each other. The only way to resolve these incongruent truth claims is to posit individual scriptures as instantiations of that universal revelation in a particular place, time, and related to a particular qualified recipient. Correlated to this contextualized notion of scripture, is a hierarchical spectrum of scriptural transmitters. The greater the proximity to that one animating subjective power of representation, the more pervasive is the authority of a given scripture. Therefore, it is the Śaiva āpta teachers (and, unsurprisingly, the Śaivas lay exclusive claim to fully omniscient gurus) who guarantee their scriptures are more definitive than those taught by non-omniscients such as the Vedic seers, the Buddha, and Kapila, the founding sage of Sāṅkhya.
This theory results in an emphasis on authority being established by the realization of individual teachers of scripture, their awareness and cognitive capacity more fundamental than the collection of words they transmit. In theory, then, these teachers would not be completely enthralled to an external “scripture” that extrinsically regulates their doctrinal commitments, conduct, and practice. If Mīmāṃsakas, who raise doubts about the scope of perception and inference in relation to āgama, “decentered the person,” then in Abhinavagupta’s theoretical elaboration a Kaula understanding of religious authority, the person is now center stage. However, this “person” is the not the māyic subject under the influence of cosmic necessity (niyāti), or the visionaries who translated their super-sensual knowledge into the śruti and smṛti, but rather the Siddha adepts who see themselves as Śiva, the one omniscient and omnipotent knowing subject.

Torella notes how the revelation theory of Abhinavagupta and his grand guru, Utpaladeva, constitutes a frontal attack on the orthodox Mīmāṃsaka conception of āgama. For in contrast to Abhinavagupta, the Mīmāṃsakas present a picture of revelation that is “parochial” (exclusively restricted to the Veda) and “immensely distant” (dissociated from the temporal and geographical lives of

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610 See Ratie (2013), pp. 395-396: “The only reason why there can be no smoke without fire is that at every single moment, this all-encompassing consciousness creates the universe as being determined by innumerable necessary relations which include that of fire and smoke. But because it freely chooses to subject the created world to this necessity, it can also transgress a rule that it has playfully edicted; and so can anybody who has realized his or her identity with the universal consciousness” (emphasis mine).

human agents, and completely extrinsic to human consciousness). In many ways, Abhinavagupta is much more aligned with revelation as it is imagined by Bhartṛhari, early Naiyāyikas, the Sāṅkhyaakārikā, and the Yogasūtrakabhāṣya. Although not exactly alike, these systems all connect scriptural truth to the extraordinary perceptual powers of sages. This basic premise is replicated in Śākta Śaiva sources we surveyed at the outset of this chapter: Siddhas directly experience revelatory teachings and only then, out of compassion, transmit them to worthy pupils. When married to a Kaula conception of enlightened Kaula Siddhas as pivotal agents in scriptural transmission, and the mature Kaula idiom which encourages first-person claims of enlightenment and ongoing reenactments of that enlightened awareness by future teachers, revealed tradition as valid testimony becomes “immensely present.” In the absence of this Kaula orientation, the subsequent history of Śāṅkhya, Nyāya, and Pātañjala Yoga primarily relegated its sages to the past, and subsequent authors continued to efface their own selves and the horizons of their textual productions. Abhinavagupta’s model of truth, he clearly states, can only be actualized in the in relationship to specific individual teachers, qualified recipients, places, and times. This is a beautiful articulation of a process traced throughout this thesis, culminating in a mature Kaula paradigm, in which agents of revelation and the context of their dispensation progressively came into sharper focus.

The Kaula idiom of religious authority is not, however, a mechanism or set of rules that strictly governs human behavior or predictably regulates

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612 The words in quotes are Torella’s, but the parenthetical inferences are mine.
tradition. The prestige of an outstanding Siddha always has the potential to cast a shadow over future authors, effecting a feeling of “distance” from the source of revelation or the gravitas of those who directly perceive it. There is always the possibility of alternative understandings of teacherly authority, model authorship, and revelation coopting this radical Siddha-centric framework, leading to deferential codification or a general atmosphere of exegetical diffidence. Abhinavagupta’s statements, to a certain extent, appear as if they were aimed to occlude these possibilities. His description of the power of his own text to transform a disciple into Bhairava incarnate is definitely indicative of his own extraordinary prestige as a “trustworthy” guru. That said, in the same breath he describes this fortunate beneficiary of the highest goal as a liberated guru in their own right, able to deliver a person into the state of Bhairava through their “mere glance.” The point here, evidently, is to inspire future disciples to “reenact” the same liberated awareness Abhinavagupta writes from, to further perpetuate revelation as an internal conscious event, to revitalize the Kaula paramparā.

§ 4.3 ABHINAVAGUPTA’S IDEAL GURU

In initiatory Śaivism, the guru or teacher, already a deeply revered figure across Indian philosophical and religious traditions, acquires additional prestige as the conductor of the all-important rite of initiation (dīkṣā). Liberating initiation (nirvāṇadīkṣā) is one of the primary distinguishing features of premodern Śaiva tantra and the preeminent instrument of Śiva’s unfailing power of grace. The

613 Tantrāloka 1.286ab. Cited and translated above.
scriptures of the Kulamārga, as we discussed in chapter three, further exalted Kaula gurus as playing a crucial role in inaugurating and sustaining its lines of scriptural transmission (anvaya or santati). This included recurrent emphasis on the oral teaching (gurumukha) and non-conceptual transmission (saṅkrānti) of Siddha gurus, the spotlighting of paramount agents of revelation (avatāraka), and the worship of the masters of the four ages (yuganātha) and their consorts in the central maṇḍala of Kaula ritual observance. In the Western transmission of the Kubjikā scriptures we even find references to its Kaula teachings as the “Tradition of the Guru” (gurvāmnāya).

Much like his systematic exposition of the Kaula model of revelation, Abhinavagupta significantly elaborates upon what the scriptural sources have to say about the nature and status of the Kaula guru. A guru who has recognized their own ultimate nature, once and for all, is described by Abhinavagupta as one with the godhead, often designated as “Bhairava,” a perfectly full consciousness encompassing all of reality. Jayaratha elucidates this understanding succinctly in his comment to Tantrāloka 1.333:

The [highest gurus] know the potency of the mantra consisting of the supreme awareness of “I” (aham). For this reason alone, they are one with the true nature of

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614 DYCZKOWSKI (1988), p. 63: “Thus the Paścimāmnāya lays particular stress on the importance of the master. He is the sole essential element of this, the “Tradition of the Master”, also known as that of the “Mouth of the Master.” Cf. Ibid., pp. 167-168, footnotes 42-43: “Now I will therefore tell [you] the doctrine of the master knowing which the Tradition of the masters is transmitted”... “This is the meditation, hard to obtain [even] by the gods, which belongs to the tradition of the Mouth of the Master; he who knows this, O Śambhu, is a Kaula master.” These are both citations from the Manthānabhairavatantra.

615 Tantrālokaviveka ad 1.333: te parāhamparāmarśātmakamantravīryajñāḥ... ity arthaḥ ata eva śivasadbhāvaunayāḥ parapramātrekātmajñānasādilinaḥ iti yāvat ata eva ca gurāvaḥ tātātikārthikopadesānāḥ yad vakṣyat [Tantrāloka 3.224:] guror lakṣaṇam etāvad adim āṇtyam ca vedayet | pūjyaḥ so ‘ham iva jñānti bhairavo devatātmakāḥ.
Śiva, that is to say, they are full of direct knowledge of the one self, the supreme knowing subject. And that is the reason why these gurus are teachers of the true doctrine, since [Abhinavagupta] will teach [this in Tantrāloka 3.224:] ‘The defining feature of a guru is that they know the first and last [phoneme] to this extent. [Thus, Śiva teaches:] That guru, worthy of veneration like me, is Bhairava, the essence of divinity.’

The first phoneme in the Sanskrit syllabary is ‘a’ and the last is ‘ha’, and here Abhinavagupta is referring to the way in which these syllables combine, with the phoneme ‘m’ (seen as the anusvāra = bindu) to form the Sanskrit first person pronoun “I” (aham). The first and last syllables represent the entire Sanskrit syllabary, and by extension all speech. Abhinavagupta says that these two phonemes provide the vital power for all mantras, and they signify both supreme reality (a = anuttara) and the entire immanent universe (ha = visarga or emanation). In virtue of cognizing all speech and reality as “I” (aham), the guru is Bhairava, the all-embracing consciousness that experiences the full gamut of

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616 For a clear explanation, see Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 3.224. Abhinavagupta’s understanding of “aham” is also the subject of an excellent analysis in PADOUX (1999), p. 286ff.

617 Tantrāloka 3.223cd: adimāntyavīhinās tu mantrāḥ syuh śaradabhravat ‘Mantras, devoid of the first and last [phonemes], would be [impotent] like autumn clouds.’

618 These correlations are expounded in great detail by Abhinavagupta, especially in the Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa. See PADOUX (1999), p. 286ff.

619 For a look at the creative etymology that Kṣemarāja gives for the word “Bhairava”, which helps us appreciate the significance of identifying with this reality, see SANDERSON (1995), p. 63: “The deity of these cults is called Bhairava (i) because he holds and nourishes the universe (vṛbhṛ ‘to hold’ and vṛbhṛ ‘to nourish’), in the sense that he manifests upon the screen (bhittiḥ) of his identity; (ii) because he is held and nourished by the universe (id.), in the sense that it is only in as much as he is embodied as everything that he is manifest in everything; (iii) because he expresses the universe as sound (vṛru ‘to roar’), in the sense that he contains this projection within his subjectivity, reducing it to the resonance of his own internal state, and (iv) because he emits the universe (vṛvam ‘to vomit’, metaphor. ‘to emit’), in the sense that even though it is identical with that internal consciousness it is experienced as though it were outside it.”
reality subjectively rather than objectively (as “this” [idam]). This helps make sense of what Abhinavagupta means when he described the ideal recipient of the Tantraloka as becoming Bhairava incarnate, i.e., one whose “awareness is all-encompassing (pūnā) amidst the thirty-seven tattvas (reality levels).”

The implications of identity with Bhairava as a defining feature of a true guru are fascinating when considering the relationship between the process of revelation and the guru in Abhinavagupta’s writings. To begin with, Abhinavagupta explicitly names the one knowing subject within which all a priori convictions and āgamas arise and repose, “Bhairava.” In our examination of the post-scriptural Krama tradition in Kashmir, we highlighted SANDERSON’s insight that a guru’s awakening was seen as an internal “reenactment” of Jñānanetra’s liberating encounter with Goddess Kālī (Maṅgalā) in the Karavīra cremation ground of Uḍḍiyāna. A similar notion of revelation as reenactment is

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620 This very idea is spelled out in descriptions of jīvanmukti cited above. In particular, these two passages are germane: Kallaṭa’s vyrtti ad Spandakārikā 30: evam svabhāvaṁ yasya cittaṁ yathā manmayaṁ eva jaṅg sarvam iti ’The one whose thought is oriented in this way, namely, “I pervade this entire universe,”...’; Utpaladeva’s vyrtti ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.13: baddhamuktayor vedyam ekaṁ kim tu baddho ’There is one knowable reality for both the bound and the liberated, but the bound cognize it as completely distinct [from their self], [while] the liberated [know it] as the embodiment of their own Self.’ See also Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.12: sarvāṁ vibhava ity evam parijñānataḥ | viśvātmavaṇa vikalpānāṁ prasare ’The one who knows "all of this my expansive glory," who is one with the universe, is [none other than] Śiva, even amidst the flow of conceptualizations.’

621 In the following stanza and brief comment of Utpaladeva, he portrays the highest realization with reference to all of these themes: aham, the phonemes, and tattvas. See Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.14: sarvāṁ vibhava ity evam parijñānataḥ | viśvātmavaṇa vikalpānāṁ prasare ’However, full of the entire collection of endless principles of reality (tattva) that are dissolving within, that one is Śiva, replete with the bliss of consciousness, the embodiment of the supreme phonemes.’ Utpaladeva elaborates this in his brief comment, vyrtti ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.14: sarvāṁ vibhava ity evam parijñānataḥ ’However, when objective reality completely dissolves within, in the all-encompassing cognition “I”, there is only the state of Śiva.’
implicit in the identification of the guru and Bhairava, who we should recall is
the primary teacher in the dialogically structured scriptures of the non-
Saiddhāntika Tantras and the scriptures of the Kulamārga. According to
Abhinavagupta, the all-encompassing nondual consciousness, often referred to
as Bhairava, assumes both the form of the guru and the disciple who reenact the
primordial scriptural dialogue.\(^{622}\) In chapter twenty-eight of the \textit{Tantrāloka}
Abhinavagupta cites a Kaula source that also suggests that the fully realized
guru, in transmitting the teachings, reenacts the original setting of revelation.\(^{623}\)

It is also taught in the auspicious \textit{Niśāṭanatreatra}: When the [words] that have come
forth from the Guru’s mouth, even casual speech or an inquiry, reach one’s ear, at
that very moment a person is liberated; only the instrument [of the body] remains...
The [guru] endowed with knowledge (\textit{jñānin}), by his mere proximity, makes a place
pure. In that place, God is present, accompanied by the Goddess and his attendants.

The casual speech of the guru, whose authority derives from their knowledge
(jñānin) or direct insight into reality (\textit{tattvajñāna}), has the power to bestow
liberation in this very life. Therefore, sitting in the presence of a guru of such
distinction is equivalent to having an audience with God himself, encircled by

\(^{622}\) \textit{Tantrāloka} 1.256: \textit{sva}ya\textit{mv}aboda\textit{ca} tathā pr\textit{a}ṣnottarā\textit{tmakaḥ} \textit{guru}ṣiyapade ‘py e\textit{ṣa}
deha\textit{bhedo} hy a\textit{ṭṭvikā} ‘Thus consciousness itself at the level of the Guru and disciple consists
in both the question and the answer. The difference based upon [their separate] bodies is not
ultimately real.’ In Jayaratha’s comment, his first citation reveals the scriptural source that
Abhinavagupta rewrites to express this idea, namely the \textit{Svachchandatantra} 8.31, and then
adds another relevant citation with a greater Śākta leaning. Jayaratha’s \textit{viveka} ad \textit{Tantrāloka}
1.256: t\textit{ad} ukt\textit{am} guruṣiyapade s\textit{ṭhitv}ā sv\textit{a}ya\textit{ṃ} dev\textit{aḥ} sad\textit{ā}ś\textit{a} \textit{ḥ} p\textit{ū}\textit{rvottarapadair v\textit{ā}y\textit{ai} as tan\textit{tr}ā\textit{n}
\textit{samavatārayat iti} tathā pra\textit{ṣṭrī ca} pr\textit{a}ti\textit{v}ak\textit{trī ca} sv\textit{a}ya\textit{ṃ} dev\textit{ī} \textit{v}yav\textit{a}v\textit{a}ṣ\textit{hi}t\textit{ā} ‘That is taught [in the
scriptures accordingly]: “becoming established on the plane of the Guru and the disciple,
Lord Sadāśiva himself causes the \textit{Tantra} to descend through statements in the form of
questions and answers,” and also “the Goddess herself manifests as both the questioner and
the replier.’’ The connection between this verse and the \textit{Svachchandatantra} is identified, and

\(^{623}\) \textit{Tantrāloka} 28.72-73ab & 28.74cd-75ab: śrīm\textit{annyaśța}’e\textit{ṃ} ukt\textit{aṃ} k\textit{athan}ā\textit{na}ṣe\textit{a}n\textit{ā}d a\textit{pi} ।
śro\textit{trābhya}antar\textit{asa}m\textit{prā}pte gur\textit{u}v\textit{akt}rād \textit{v}i\textit{na}rg\textit{ate} । । m\textit{uktas} lada\textit{iva} kālē tu yan\textit{trap}ā\textit{ṃ} ti\textit{ṣṭ}h\textit{a}ti ke\textit{valam} । ।
p\textit{ary}antar\textit{a}ś\textit{t} yo jñā\textit{ṇī} de\textit{s}us\textit{y}ā\textit{ṃ} p\textit{av}itr\textit{a}kāḥ । । t\textit{atra} sa\textit{ṃ}n\textit{n}ik\textit{ha} dev\textit{aḥ} sa\textit{dev}o\textit{kaḥ} sak\textit{īn}k\textit{ara}ḥ.
his full retinue, and the original revelatory dialogue with the Goddess can be reenacted through the guru’s words.⁶²⁴

In further exploring Abhinavagupta’s conception of the guru, we must first account for an extremely important proviso. The guru who has realized his or her identity with Bhairava is rare, impossible to favorably encounter without God’s grace, and distinct from a whole range of lesser Śaiva gurus, which Abhinavagupta also enumerates and details. Abhinavagupta lived in a world full of different kinds of teachers who all could be dubbed “guru.” This cast of ritual preceptors, scholars, and adepts included Buddhist, Jain, and Vaiṣṇava masters, the ritual officiants of the brahmanically congruent Śaiva Siddhānta, scholars who instructed pupils in the foundational sciences of grammar, logic, and scriptural interpretation, itinerant yogis and ascetics, as well as masters qualified to give esoteric initiations without even a modicum of ritual. Many of these teachers, Abhinavagupta notes in a humorous depiction of his contemporary scene,⁶²⁵ were charlatans. Above we observed how Abhinavagupta ranked a

⁶²⁴ SANDERSON notes that “the Krama teaching is seen as the explication of the dynamic structure of the ultimate reality embodied and made manifest in that sacrificial assembly” of Bhairavī and Bhairava in Uddiyāna (/Oddiyāna) in the Kālīkulakramasadbhāva and he also mentions how “the process of Krama worship is seen as the means of realizing it through reenactment.” See SANDERSON (2007), pp. 261-262 for a translation and examination of the relevant passage. SANDERSON also mentions (Ibid., p. 262 footnote 88) how this concept is also found in the Devyāyāmala based on Abhinavagupta’s citations of this scripture in the Tantrāloka, which is evidence that Abhinavagupta subscribed to this view of ongoing revelation as the reenactment of the primal sacrificial setting of the original teaching of scripture of Goddess and God. In addition to the passages of the Devyāyāmala mentioned by SANDERSON in this footnote, in chapter twenty eight Abhinavagupta cites this Kaula Trika scripture in its description of how God manifested himself as ten ancient guru’s who assumed human forms. See Tantrāloka 28.390-393.

⁶²⁵ Parātriśikāvicaraṇa, closing verses 16-17: bhrāmyanto bhramayanti mandadhiṣanās te jantucaṅkam jadām svātmikṛtya guṇābhidhānavāsato buddhavā drḍhaṃ bandhanaiḥ | drṣṭotetthaṃ gurubhārvāhavidhaye yattānuṛtān paśuṇ tatpāśapraṇavikartanāya ghaṭitaṃ jñānatriśulāṃ mayā ||
scripture by the fruits it was able to procure for a qualified adherent, and also according to the breadth of the horizon of knowledge that a scripture’s teacher was able to grasp. Using this barometer, the Vedic seers scored rather low, but even the Siddhānta and Bhairava corpuses were set apart from Abhinavagupta’s Kaula-inspired Trika in connection with their preoccupation with ritual.

This same logic is recapitulated in Abhinavagupta’s gradations of gurus, who can be judged on their degree of their awakening. As one ascends within the Šaiva tradition, from the orthodox Šaiva Siddhānta to the more restricted domain of the Kaula teachings, abandoning non-definitive gurus along the way, each new threshold of revelation requires its own initiation, and thus initiatory guru. The teachers of the Šaiva Siddhānta, the exoteric base of the

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626 Tantraloka 13.346cd-47ab lokādhīyatātmātmāgādikarmayaravipītanāthaṃ | saṁbodhotkara-bhūhūyāyākramotkrśāṅ vibhāvyet ‘One should know the gradations of excellence [of other teachers] based on relative degrees of the superiority of their awakening in accordance with the practice of ritual and yoga found in the worldly [traditions], Vedānta, the Atimārga etc.’

627 Tantraloka 13.356: yasyāt thāvapathaprepesur adharaṃ gurum āgamam | jihāsec chaktipātena sa dhanyah prornukhikrtah ‘But the one seeks to attain higher paths should abandon the Guru and the revealed text that is lower. That fortunate one is inspired by the descent of Śakti.’

628 Tantraloka 22.40cd-22.42ab: siddhānta dīkṣitās tantre daśāṣṭāsabhedini | bhairaviye catulāṣṭau tān paśān dīkṣyaḥ trike | siddhavirāvalisāre bhairaviye kule ‘pi ca | pañcadiṣṭakramopattā dīkṣānuttarasamjñitā ‘One should initiate those bound souls who were previously initiated into the Siddhānta scriptures—with their eighteen divisions [10 Śivabhedas and 8 Rudrabhedas]—into the Bhairava tantras with their sixty-four divisions. In the Trika scripture, the Siddhavirāvalisāra, and the Bhairavakula as well, the initiation that is designated as the ultimate one is granted only after a series of five [previously received] initiatives.’
Mantramārga from Abhinavagupta’s vantage point, although genuine teachers capable of efficaciously bestowing Śaiva initiation, are nonetheless depicted as mere “ritual functionaries” (karmin). The question of whether or not these gurus are enlightened does not even arise for the Saiddhāntika exegetes, given their conception of liberation as a post-mortem future state. Moreover, their characterization as “ritualists” is related to an ongoing debate, particularly in the post-scriptural literature, regarding the means for removing the impurity (mala) and its occluding power so the state of liberation can fully manifest. The Saiddhāntika commentators, in harmony with their view of “impurity” as a substance (dravya), argue that only ritual action can serve as the means of its removal, like an eye doctor physically removing cataracts. In taking the role of “doctor,” Śiva himself inhabits the Saiddhāntika guru as he operates on the soul through the ritual procedure of initiation. Abhinavagupta and company, on the other hand, see impurity as nothing but ignorance, banishable only by correct

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629 I first encountered the term “ritual functionary,” used to describe the guru in the Siddhānta system, in WALLIS (2014), p. 266, which I adopt here as a translation of the guru that Abhinavagupta designates as a “karmin”. It provides an excellent English rendering of the karmiguru, because both words together, particularly the word “functionary,” effectively convey the derogatory tone that Abhinavagupta certainly intended.

630 SANDERSON (2007), p. 247: “Moreover, the liberation to be achieved through initiation is a future state, one that will become manifest only at death. So the question of who is liberated does not arise for these Saiddhāntikas. The only issue is that of who will be liberated and that being dependent on whether or not one has been accepted for initiation is a matter entirely within the control of the Siddhānta’s institutions.”

631 GOODALL (2006), p. 93: “[initiation] ... est conçu comme l’instrument au moyen duquel Śiva lui-même est censé intervenir dans le trajet karmique d’une âme. Dans un tel rite d’“initiation”, Śiva occuperait le corps de l’officier, le maître initiateur, et interverrait sur l’âme, retirant tous les fruits de ses actes qui ont une signification éthique (karma), ceux du passé ainsi que ceux de l’avenir.”
insight into reality, and so Kaula gurus need not rely on ritual to initiate their disciples.\textsuperscript{632}

With all of this mind, we are ready to visit some of Abhinavagupta’s caricatures of Siddhānta gurus, which he delineates in order to make a dramatic contrast with Kaula masters who transcend the laborious ritual preoccupations of the Saiddhāntika priestcraft. Jayaratha frames the following verses as a response to the query: “but why is this restriction,” that a guru mustn’t be blind in one eye or bald, “not observed in our scriptural system.”\textsuperscript{633} Abhinavagupta explains:\textsuperscript{634}

The exclusion of [gurus] such as those who are blind in one eye applies to that teacher who [acts solely] as a ritual functionary (\textit{karmin}), because there is nothing more important [for such a guru] than the ritual whose integrity is based on the ritual factors [including the condition of the ritual agent]. And we find in the \textit{Devīyañāmala} that [a person] should avoid gurus from [regions beginning with the letter ‘K’], such as Kāñci, because of the faults that are seen in them such as anger. [But] how can this apply to a Guru who has perfect knowledge?

In the Siddhānta scriptures we find various lists of the essential defining features (\textit{lakṣṇa}) of a person eligible for election to the seat of guru by way of consecration (\textit{abhiṣeka}), and many of them include stipulations regarding the

\textsuperscript{632} Sanderson (2007), p. 247: “For the Śāktas too the performance of ritual and the bestowing of qualification through publicly verifiable ceremonies were important, but they were subordinated to a gnostic perspective that allowed the possibility of liberation and qualification to office through illumination alone, gradual or sudden, without the necessity of ritual. Moreover, the cause of bondage was defined simply as ignorance and therefore the state of liberation brought about by its removal could be seen as a goal that could be achieved before death.”

\textsuperscript{633} Jayaratha’s \textit{viveka} introducing \textit{Tantrāloka} 23.13: \textit{asmacchāstre punaḥ kasmād ayaṃ niyamo noktaḥ}.

\textsuperscript{634} \textit{Tantrāloka} 23.13cd-23.15ab: \textit{yas tu karmitayācāryas tatra kāṇḍādivarjanam} || \textit{yataḥ kārakasāmaṇgryat karmano nānākāḥ kvacit} || \textit{devīyañāmalāśāstre ca kāṇḍyādiparivarjanam} || \textit{taddṛṣṭadosāti krodhādeḥ samyakjñātary asau kutah}. 

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candidate’s physical form, family background, and geographical provenance. Abhinavagupta here gives an explanatory account for why these factors are important: in the role of ritual agent (kartr) a defect or impurity in the physical person of the guru, who is a key factor (kāraka) in the orchestration of ritual, would compromise the integrity of the rite. Therefore, these restrictions do in fact apply, but only to gurus who mainly serve as ritual officiants.

For the guru whose main qualification is direct insight into their own all-pervasive nature, naturally arising from identification with Bhairava in this very life, all of these defining features need not apply:

For this reason, without the least bit of regard for defining features such as [a guru candidate’s] region, family, decorum, or physical form, a master should appoint a guru whose insight is all-encompassing.

As long as a guru is endowed with complete knowledge (jñānin), consisting of intuitive “insight” into reality, it is of no consequence if they happen to be a

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635 On exclusion to the post of ācārya for people blind in one eye or squint-eyed, missing limbs, and with unnatural accumulations of bodily fluids etc., see Sarvajñānottara 19.6-7. There is also the restriction of people with a shortage or excess of limbs in Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha 10.4. Kriṣṇatantra 56.6cd too mentions excluding people from the office of guru with too many or too few limbs, and also bars those who have broken limbs or bad nails (kunakhin). I am grateful to Dominic Goodall who informed me of these and other passages on the defining features of the guru in the Siddhānta scriptures.

636 See Sarvajñānottara 19.3, which asserts that an ideal ācārya should be one who was born into a distinguished family (viśiṣṭakulajjā).

637 For a more general geographical criterion, see Svacchandatantra 1.13, which stipulates that a guru must be born in Āryadeśa.

638 Tantrāloka 23.16cd-17ab: ato deśakulācāradehalaksanakalpanām || anādṛtyaiva sampūranājñānam kuryād gurur gurum.

639 The translation of jñāna as “insight,” which is how this term is frequently interpreted in WALLIS (2014), is fitting in this context. This is the case given that the ritual guru also requires mastery of many forms of knowledge (jñāna), and so it is jñāna in the sense of an intuitive grasp of the whole of reality, and thus a kind of ‘insight’, that fully distinguishes
buck-toothed, squint-eyed fisherman with bad nails from an undistinguished family. Abhinavagupta also sheds light on another revealing distinction between the ritual functionary (karmin) and the guru of insight (jñānin). When the karmin guru transfers their power to a newly consecrated guru his own authorization goes with it, i.e. he no longer preserves his independent status as a Śaiva ācārya. The guru of insight, by contrast, having empowered another person to assume the role of guru, like one lamp ignited from another, can carry on teaching the scriptures, initiating disciples etc., without any restrictions.

In addition to the guru of insight and the ritual functionary, Abhinavagupta makes space for another general class of Śaiva guru, the tantric adept (yogin) who teaches yogic disciplines and other techniques to those who seek (sādhaka) the acquisition of supernatural enjoyments (siddhi). Abhinavagupta

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640 Tantrāloka 23.25: jñānahīno guruḥ karmī svādhikāraṇaṃ samarpya no dīkṣādyadhiṅkṛtiṃ kuryād vinā tasyājñayā puṇah ‘A ritual officiant is a Guru who is devoid of insight [into reality]. After transferring his own religious authority [to another], he should not exercise his [previously] authorized duties, such as initiation, without the permission of that [teacher he consecrated].’

641 Tantrāloka 23.26cd-28a: tataḥ prabhṛty asau pūrvo gurus tyaktādhiṅkarakaḥ | | yathecchaṁ vicared vyākhyādikṣādau yantraoṣṭhitah | kurvan na bādhyate yasmād dipād dipavad tādrśah | | santāno... ‘From that moment on, this previous guru [i.e., the guru of insight], without relinquishing his authority, free of constraints, continuing to perform scriptural discourses, initiation, and so on, is not restricted since a succession of this kind is [transferred] in the way that one lamp [is lit] from another.’
is not particularly sympathetic to yogic pursuits, and consistently depicts the path of yoga, rather reductively and disparagingly, as a “time-consuming” endeavor within the repertoire of seekers (sādhaka) of this-worldly rewards. Nevertheless, although non-ultimate, the fruits of supernatural enjoyments are promised by the scriptural literature of his tradition, and Abhinavagupta must therefore incorporate into his system gurus with expertise in the intricate disciplines required to attain these powers.

642 Vasudeva (2004), p. 444-445: “Yoga does not figure prominently in Abhinavagupta’s discourse of liberation... When Abhinavagupta demotes yogic egress to a practice for pleasure-seeking he is successfully completing his task of relegating yoga fully into the (for him irrelevant) domain of Sādhakas intent on Siddhis.”

643 Sanderson (1995), p. 25: “But while liberation is certainly seen as the goal of the exceptional few in most forms of non-Tantric Hinduism, here it is the path of powers and rewards followed by the sādhaka which is by far the more exacting and disruptive of ordinary life... The religious activities of the sādhaka were much more complex, time-consuming and intense; and they required him to adopt observances (vratam, niyamah) in such matters as dress, food, residence and behaviour which segregated him, sometimes dramatically, from the normal social world... Liberation, then, was the more accessible of the two goals of Tantric Śaivas; and it was this accessibility, I suggest, which enabled the cults to take form root in Indian society... Liberation was accessible to all because it was presented to the individual as something that would be accomplished for him rather than by him. It was believed that only Śiva can liberate the soul...”

644 Tantrāloka 13.338-339: yas tu bhogāṃ ca mokṣāṃ ca vāñched vijñānam eva ca | svabhastajñānānāṃ yogasiddhāṃ sa gūrūṃ dāśrayet || tadbhāve tu vijñānāmokṣayor jñānānāṃ śrañey | bhūkyāmēśe yogināṃ yas tatphalāṃ dātiṃ bhavet kṣamaḥ ‘One who desires enjoyment, liberation, and indeed knowledge should resort to a Guru who possesses highly cultivated insight [into reality] and is perfect in Yoga. But when that [kind of master] is not present, he should resort to a [guru] of insight for knowledge and liberation and for the enjoyment part [he should resort to] a Yogi [guru] who is capable of bestowing that reward.’ Cf. Tantrāloka 13.330: adhañeṣu ca tattvēṣu yā siddhiḥ yogajāṣyaḥ sā | vimocanāṃ nopāyaḥ sāhitāpi dhanadāravat ‘His supernatural enjoyment of lower reality levels that is generated by yoga is not a means for liberation; [this kind of attainment] is something like wealth or a wife [i.e., a source of joy, but not liberation].’
Abhinavagupta’s preference for teachers of insight over teachers of yoga may emanate, in part, from his social milieu, and flies in the face of his main exegetical source-text, the *Mālinīvijayottara*, which is predominantly given over to sophisticated teachings on tantric yoga. The *Mālinīvijayottara* also prioritizes the master of yoga over a person endowed with knowledge (jñānin), which results in a curious inconsistency requiring Abhinavagupta, and his commentator Jayaratha, to perform fancy exegetical footwork to make his most revered scriptural source say just the opposite. However, in early Vidyāpīṭha

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645 VASUDEVA (2004), p. 148: “The audience of Abhinavagupta’s subsequent exegesis were predominantly ‘householder ritualist-gnostics’, who would have had no opportunity to spend years in retreats, pursuing demanding yogic disciplines.”

646 See the following comment in VASUDEVA (2004), p. 216, footnote 69: “This [i.e., Abhinavagupta’s reading of vicaksanah as jñānin] implies that only gnostics and not Yogins have a synonym for the *Mālinīvijayottara*’s final state. Abhinavagupta treats this as evidence that yoga cannot bring about final emancipation. The *Mālinīvijayottara* (4.39-4.41), to the contrary, ranks perfect Yogins above gnostics.”

647 Abhinavagupta, therefore, argues that the highest Yogi in the *Mālinīvijayottara*’s system, i.e., the Susiddha Yogi who is same as Sadāśiva, only bestows liberation “indirectly.” See Tantrāloka 13.331 and Tantrālokaviveka ad loc. Jayaratha’s citation of the *Mālinīvijayottara* (*viveka* ad Tantrāloka 13.331) selects a reading of these pivotal verses, which assert that the highest Yogi is superior to the Jñānin, that effectively transforms their meaning into a description of the Siddhayogin. In this way, Jayaratha diverts the powerful contrast that the scripture would otherwise be making. Jayaratha also reads the particle “ca” as both misplaced and indicating a sense of restriction (avadhāraṇa, i.e. ‘eva’) in his *viveka* ad Tantrāloka 13.332cd-13.333ab. The controversial passage in question, which requires such interpretive finesse, is *Mālinīvijayottara* 4.39-4.40: uttarottaravaivāśiyam eteṣam samudāḥṛtam | jñāninām yoginām caiva dvayor yogavid uttamaḥ || yato ‘syā jñānam api asti pūrvo yogaphalojjhitah | yataś ca mokṣadāh proktāh svabhastajñānāvān budhaih | These [four types of Yogis] are taught in ascending order of excellence. Between persons endowed with knowledge (jñānin) and Yogins, the knower of Yoga is the higher of the two, since this [Yogi] also possesses knowledge, and since the previous one, [i.e., the jñānin], is devoid of the fruits of Yoga. The bestower of liberation is taught by the wise as one who is endowed with knowledge that is well-practiced [through Yoga].’ In the place of dvayor yogavid Jayaratha reads siddhayogavid (*viveka* ad Tantrāloka 13.331), and in the last line, yataś ca mokṣadāh, Jayaratha claims the ca means eva and must be understood as “out of place,” (bhinnakrama) and thus presumably meant to follow svabhastajñānavān, which is far from a natural reading. It should be noted that the above citation of the *Mālinīvijayottara*, which reads dvayor, is from the critical edition of VASUDEVA (2004). The KSTS edition has siddho yogavid uttamaḥ, which still does not provide Jayaratha with sufficient leeway to assert that
scriptures, which often exalt siddhi over liberation, we find definitions of the guru emphasizing them as empowered agents capable of bestowing initiation resulting in veritable signs that the recipient has been penetrated by the power of Śiva. These and other descriptions of the guru’s transmissible power help lay an essential foundation for the charismatic disposition of the Kaula guru.

In the preceding discussion, we have seen Abhinavagupta argue that the most important defining feature of a guru is to be endowed with thorough insight (jñāna) into the true nature of self and reality. He reiterates this again and again throughout the *Tantrāloka*. This persistent emphasis on the priority of knowledge as insight into reality over ritual and yoga derives from Abhinavagupta’s ultimate allegiance to the Kaula model of religious authority,

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648 *Siddhayogesvarimata* 2.4-5; *Mālinīvijayottara* 2.10 & 2.13. Cf. *Siddhayogesvarimata* 1.16 = *Timirodghāṭana* 11.18cd-20ab. For a historical analysis of the transmission and transformation of this verse, which also adapted in (the Kaula) *Kubjikāmata* 3.48, see TORZSŐK (forthcoming). A variant of this verse is cited in *Tantrāloka* 13.336. For an early articulation of the principle that the guru must be possessed of power (śakti), see *Niśvāsattvasamhitā*, uttarasūtra, 5.41.

649 *Siddhayogesvarimata* 2.6-10; *Mālinīvijayottara* 2.14-17.

650 *Mālinīvijayottara* 2.11: dṛṣṭāḥ saṁbhāṣītās tena spr̥ṣṭas ca prātacetās | narāḥ pāpāh pramucyante saptajanmakrtair api ’Human beings who are seen, addressed, or touched by that [guru] whose heart is pleased are released from their demerits, even those accumulated across seven births.” Cf. *Niśvāsattvasamhitā*, mūlasūtra, 7.17.

651 *Tantrāloka* 4.59-4.60ab; *Tantrāloka* 15.9-11; *Tantrāloka* 23.6.
together with the expedient methods of awakening that are innovations of the Kulamārga. The guru in the Kaula scriptural sources takes on additional significance due to his or her decisive role in transmitting revelatory teachings, but this added prestige is also linked to the fact that the spontaneous movements of his or her empowered presence alone can replace the ritual of initiation. Via a word, glance, or touch of the Kaula guru, the power of Śiva is directly transmitted into the body of the disciple, and this transference is predicated on the guru’s own fusion with the reality of Śiva.

To conclude this section on Abhinavagupta’s conception of the guru, we will explore what he has to say about the ideal guru of unparalleled authority,

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652 TÖRZSŐK (2007), p. 511: “Now if it is Śiva in the form of the mantras who purifies everything, he could just as well purify one directly, and do that once and for all. This is the point of view of the Kaulajñānānārṇaya which affirms that he who has learnt the science of conquering old age from the Kaula texts will be able to purify anything by touching or by looking, thanks to the powerful rays of the Bindu. In the same way, elements of the initiatory ritual are also found purposeless: the tracing of the maṇḍala, which is necessary in other systems for the Samaya rite to introduce the neophyte into the Śaiva community, the construction of the fire-pit (kuṇḍa) together with all ritual around the fire, which are principal means of initiation in the tantric systems. Instead, the Timirodghāṭana, for instance, states that the real fire-pit is in the body (dehaṃṣṭha mahākūṇḍaḥ), and that liberation occurs not through initiation with fire ritual, but through the transmission of knowledge.”

653 Ibid., p. 511: “In a similar spirit, the Kulasāra maintains that one can be initiated simply by the touch of a Kaula yogi.”

654 Myriad descriptions of how a guru directly transmits (saṅkrānti) God’s power into the body of a disciple are furnished in the two Kaula scriptures, the Timirodghāṭana and Úrnikaulārṇava. For an illuminating investigation into these sources in relation to this very theme, see WALLIS (2014), pp. 250-270.

655 Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 13.174, citing the Nandiśikhā (tantra): śivaśaktikarāveśād guruḥ śisyoprabodhah || adharottāragair vākyaiḥ prabhuśaktypapanbhitah ‘That Guru, on the basis of their immersion in the rays of Śiva’s power, awakening the disciple by means of the statements found in the lower and higher [scriptures], is empowered by God’s energy.’ This verse is cited in WALLIS (2014), p. 356. Commenting on it, he says (Ibid., pp. 356-357): “Here we see āveśa as a requirement for the guru’s authority, as is typical for Kaula sources. The āvīṣṭa guru becomes a medium for the sakti to flow to the aspirant, which triggers his awakening. Even the everyday discourse of such a guru can accomplish this transmission.”
and the unique genesis of such a master. What follows will demonstrate a natural symmetry between Abhinavagupta’s understanding of the highest form of revelation as an internal event and the consummate agent of revelation, the Siddha guru. This symmetry, moreover, is in full fidelity to a Kaula model of religious authority. However, Abhinavagupta, in his characteristic style, delves beyond the descriptive into the theoretical, telling us more about the inner logic of the Kaula guru’s authority than any of the Śākta Śaiva sources considered above.

Abhinavagupta identifies the ideal guru as “Innately Perfected” (sāṃsiddhika).656

Now for some people discriminating insight [into reality] arises spontaneously [lit. from their own self], and such a [guru] is called Innately Perfected (sāṃsiddhika) in the scriptures, [since] he is reliant upon that source (pratyaśa) [of knowledge] that is his own self.

To elucidate the main sources of revelatory knowledge, and their relationship,

Abhinavagupta quotes Kiranātantra 9.14ab:657

Since it is taught in the Kiranā(tantra) [knowledge devoid of māyā is acquired] “from the guru, the scriptures, and oneself.” Among these [three], the latter one is predominant and each preceding one is a means [for the one that follows].

Abhinavagupta adds some information, not present in the scripture he cites, about how these three sources of revelatory knowledge, the guru, scripture, and

656 Tantrāloka 4.40cd-4.41ab: sa tāvat kasyacit tarkāḥ svata eva pravartate \ sa ca sāṃsiddhikāḥ śāstre proktāḥ svapratyayātmakah.

657 Tantrāloka 4.41cd-4.42ab: kiranāyām yad apy uktam gurutāḥ śāstratāḥ svataḥ | tatottrottaratam mukhyam pūrvapūrca upāyakah.
one’s own self, should be interrelated. The most primary or fundamental source is one’s own self, and both the guru and scripture serve as a means to knowledge that is ultimately revealed within. In his comment to this verse, Jayaratha describes this preeminent source as one’s own inner realization (svaparāmarśa). The Śāṃśiddhika guru is unique inasmuch as the full revelation of reality beyond the dualistic presuppositions of māyā dawns within them spontaneously (svataḥ), without recourse to any external support, including the rite of initiation, scriptural instruction, or tutelage with a guru. Even more radical is the fact that they acquire the status of guru in the absence of the certifying rite of consecration, and correspondingly, the religious community’s direct witness of this official authorization.

658 Jayaratha explicates the finer points of these interrelations in his viveka ad Tantrāloka 4.41cd-4.42ab: yad api kiraṇākhyāyāṃ sanīhitāyāṃ māyādharmaḥ śūnyam paraṃ tattvaṃ jñātum śūnyam evamvidham jñeyam gurudhā śāstrataḥ svataḥ ityādānam karaṇatrayam uktaṁ tatra uttarottarāṇaḥ muhūryaḥ vivikṣitam yathā gurudhā śāstraṃ tato ‘pi svaparāmarśaḥ yathā pūrvah pūrva yaṭḥ gurudhā śāstrād upāyāḥ tad api svaparāmarśe evam upādāyāpyo heṛṣā tān upāyaṁ pracaṅkṣate ityādyuktayuktyā guruśāstraṃ upāyaavāḥ āmukhyātvām iti svaparamārṣasyaiva prādhānyāṁ yenātṛṣayāva upādānam ‘Moreover, since supreme reality is to be known as devoid of the properties of māyā in the scripture called the Kiraṇā, three causes [of that kind of knowledge] are taught in [teachings] such as this one, “the object of knowledge that is devoid [of māyā] in such a manner arises on account of the guru, scripture, and oneself.” Among those [three sources], the latter is intended to be predominant. For example, the scripture is [learned] from the guru, and from that [scripture] there is one’s own internal realization. Hence, each preceding member [is a means], for example the guru is a means for scripture, and that [scripture is a means] for one’s own internal realization. In this way, because of the rationale given in the following quote: “After employing it, one regards those means as dispensable,” the guru and scripture are subordinate, because they have the status of instruments. Therefore, one’s own inner realization alone is predominant, since in this system that alone is [ultimately] employed.’
Abhinavagupta supplies a provocative and memorable vindication of the Sāṃsiddhika’s internal accreditation to act not only as a Śaiva guru, but the most authoritative teacher of all.\textsuperscript{659}

The one who is in possession of true discriminating insight (into reality), arising from his own self, endowed with qualification in every context without exception, is initiated and consecrated [as a guru] by the goddesses of his own awareness. Among all teachers, that [guru] alone is celebrated as the best.

The rare possibility of being initiated and installed upon the seat of the “ultimate” guru by the “goddesses of one’s own awareness” represents an ingenious strategy of including but mystically overwriting traditional standards for the conferral of religious authority.\textsuperscript{660} This innately perfected guru, raised up as the ideal master, serves as an important placeholder in Abhinavagupta’s broader theoretical reflections on the sources of religious authority, as we will see below. For an individual to be spontaneously—without any recourse to ritual—transformed into the highest religious authority is also a direct affront to the sensibilities of the more ritualistic and doctrinaire Śaivism of the

\textsuperscript{659} Tantrāloka 4.42cd-4.43: yasya svato 'yaṃ sattarkah sarvatraivādhihikāraṇā || abhisiktah svasaṃvittidevībhir dīkṣitaś ca saḥ | sa eva sarvācāryānāṁ madhye mukhyāḥ prakīrtītaḥ.

\textsuperscript{660} Abhinavagupta’s strategy is insightfully explicated by SANDERSON. See SANDERSON (1995), pp. 45-46: “The view that the highest gurus achieve their status and liberation without recourse to ritual was in flagrant conflict with the central principle of the common core of Śaiva doctrine. The left, therefore, had to disguise its heresy; and it did so by claiming that such gurus far from being uninitiated have actually received a higher kind of initiation. While the ordinary candidate must pass through a ritual conducted by a consecrated officiant, these mystics (jñāṇi) are empowered directly by Śiva himself, as was believed to happen in the case of souls awaiting release in worlds (bhuvanam) other than ours. As for the ritual of consecration (abhisekāḥ), in which an initiate is raised to the office (adhipārah) of officiant (ācāryaḥ) by having water impregnated with the power of the relevant set of mantras poured over him, this too is accomplished, we are told, within the mystic himself ‘by the goddesses embodied as his own internal awareness.’ The goddesses take the place of the young girls (kumāṛī) who pour the empowering water on to the candidate’s head in the cults of the left. The action, though attributed to the goddesses, is really Śiva’s—just as the girls are directed by the officiant—since they are the personification of his Powers.”
Saiddhāntikas, and holds potentials for unprecedented avenues of religious innovation.⁶⁶¹

How can the Sāṃśiddhika guru serve as the preeminent teacher without having studied the scriptures? Citing Mālinīvijayottara 2.16cd, Abhinavagupta utilizes a statement regarding the signs that an initiand has been infused with Śiva’s power as proof of a spontaneous and global knowledge of scriptural wisdom, not well documented in the world, which the Sāṃśiddhika guru sources from within.⁶⁶²

For there is no truth that pure wisdom cannot illuminate. This is [shown] in a statement from the Mālinīvijayottara by means of the word ‘without a cause’: “One’s status as a knower of the meaning of all scriptures arises without a cause.” This cause, which is not well documented in the mundane world, is described [here] as ‘causeless.’ And that is simply the manifestation of God’s pure wisdom.

The reason that such a being requires no training in the canon of scriptures is that they possess direct insight, animated by the pure wisdom of Śiva, into the primary scripture, which is an internal awareness, not a codified text or particular arrangement of words or mantras (śabdarāśi). This kind of spontaneous scriptural wisdom, a form of pure intuition (prātibha), is a result of the second most powerful of nine degrees of the descent of Śiva’s grace (saktipāta). This rare degree of grace, which emerges directly from Śiva without the mediation of a

⁶⁶¹ SANDERSON (2007), p. 247: “Of course, liberation through insight alone and recognition as a Guru without passing through visible ceremonies but by an internal and therefore unverifiable “consecration by the goddesses of one’s own mind and senses,” were seen as exceptional. But the possibility was there for charismatic individuals to enter and innovate in a way and to a degree that was hardly conceivable within the more institutionalized Siddhānta.”

⁶⁶² Tantrāloka 4.45-47ab: śuddhavidyā hi tan nāsti satyāṇaḥ yad yan na bhāsayet । sarvavāgīśvaratārvattiyavam akasmāc cāsyā jāyate । iti śrīpūrvavākyaṃ tad akasmād iti śabdataḥ । lokāprasiddho yo hetuḥ so ‘kasmand iti kathaye । | sa ca iṣa paramesāṇasuddhavidyāvijīrmbhitam.
guru, instantly dissolves one’s ignorance but preserves the body, so the Sāṃsiddhika guru can transmit their unimpeachable insight, based on its intrinsic character, to others.

Leveraging further scriptural support for the potential existence of such an ideal guru, Abhinavagupta goes on to cite Parātrīśikā v. 18, which suggests, in a Kaula fashion, that one can be initiated without any ritual rigmarole.

‘Whoever truly knows in this manner will enjoy perfection, will forever be a Yogin, and also an initiate, even if they have not seen the initiatory diagram (maṇḍala).’ The one who knows in this way, according to reality, has that initiation leading to liberation (nirwāṇadikṣa)—this is taught in the scriptural discourse of the Parātrīśikā. Jayaratha’s exposition of this scriptural citation fully appropriates its meaning to the discussion of the Sāṃsiddhika guru underway:

Whosoever knows his own Self in just this manner, that is to say, [who knows the Self] as it really is from [the source that is] their own self due to the absence of a particular [external] cause—that person is an initiate. The sense is: he becomes a vessel for the direct insight into the Self, preceded by the dissolution of [all] bonds, by means of the goddesses of his own awareness alone. For this very reason he is

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663 For a highly condensed summary of the relationship between the gurus described in chapter four of the Tantrāloka and the levels of śāktpāta, see SANDERSON (1995), p. 45.

664 Tantrāloka 13.130cd-132: tīvraśīrṣāḥ śāktpāta dehaḥāvivāśat svayam || mokṣapradās tadavānyakāle vē tīratamyataḥ | madyaitārūt punah sarvam ajñānāṃ vinivartatale || svayam eva yato vetti bandhamokṣatayātmataḥ | tatprātiṣṭham mahājñānāṃ śātrācāryānapekoṣi yat ‘The most intense descent of Power, because of making the body fall away, spontaneously bestows liberation, or at a later time, due to its [other] gradations. However, from the medium intense [descent of Power] all ignorance comes to an end, since [such a recipient] of his own accord knows [not from śāstrī or a guru] the Self in virtue of his bonds being released. That is intuitive insight; it is the profound knowledge that does not depend upon scripture or a teacher.’

665 Tantrāloka 4.49-50: aḍṛṣṭamandalo ‘py evaṁ yah kaścid vetti tattvatoḥ || sa siddhibhāg bhaven nityaṁ sa yoṣi sa ca diṅṣṭaḥ || evaṁ yo vetti tattvena taśya nirvāṇaṁ || diṅṣā bhaved iti proktam tāc chrīrāvīṣaṁkasāsane.

666 Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 4.49-50: yah kaścī tattvīkena rūpeṇa viśeṣānupādānāt svātmānaṁ vetti sa diṅṣṭaḥ svasaṁvītidevibhir eva pāśakṣapāpuraḥsaraṁ svātmajnānapāṭrātām āpi sūddataḥ ata eva sa nityam yoṣi vyutṭhānakāle ‘pi pariṣṭaṁvākātmyavān ata eva sa siddhibhāk āvān eva mokṣalakṣaṇāṁ siddhīni bhajamānaḥ.
forever a Yogan, i.e. even at the moment of emerging [out of samādhi] he is [still] identified with Paramēśvara, and on account of this he enjoys perfection, in other words, he experiences the realization characterized as embodied liberation.

The elliptical statement of the Parātrīśikā, “he who knows in this way,” is capitalized upon by Jayaratha as referring to the intuitive knowledge that arises from within, devoid of any external impetus. Likewise, becoming an initiate without seeing the initiatory diagram, which is shorthand for the entire ritual procedure of initiation, refers to (in Jayaratha’s gloss) to being initiated by the goddesses of one’s own awareness.

This internal initiation and consecration of a person who is thereby an “untrained” or a “natural” (akalpita) guru, also described as a self-generated (svayambhū) master, may be a once and for all event, but for others awakened in this way, meditation or other disciplines are required to sustain their intuitive grasp of the source of revelation. These are “Natural and Trained” gurus (akalpitakalpaka). Other masters may actually need to refresh their spontaneous

667 Tantrāloka 4.51ab: akalpito gurur jñeyah sāmsiddhika iti smṛtah ‘That one who is traditionally taught as an Innately Perfected guru should be known as Natural (akalpita).’

668 Tantrāloka 13.134cd-135ab. Interestingly, one of Abhinavagupta’s most esteemed scriptural sources, the Devyāyāmalamala, explicitly prohibits “self-made” gurus (svayambhū). Abhinavagupta presents a clever interpretive solution to this incongruency with scripture by arguing that this exclusion only refers to gurus who are “ritual functionaries” (karmin). See Tantrāloka 23.15cd-16ab.

669 Tantrāloka 13.136.

670 Tantrāloka 4.51cd-4.53: yas tu tadrāpabhāgātāmabhāvanātāh paraṁ vinā || sāstravit sa guruḥ sāstre prokto ‘kalpitakalpakaḥ || tasyāpi bhedā utkṛṣṭamadhyamandādyupāyatāḥ || bhāvanāto ‘tāhā vā dhyānāyā jāpāt svapnād vratādḥ huteḥ || prāpnoty akalpitodāram abhiṣekam mahāmañjī || ‘However, on account of the [fact that] meditation upon the Self [is still required], that guru of such a nature [i.e. Innately Perfected] who knows the scriptures without [the instruction of] another [teacher], is taught as a “Natural and Trained” (akalpitakalpaka) [guru] in the scriptures. There are also several types of that [Natural and Trained guru] according to whether the means [of
inner realization through scriptural study. However, in all of these cases, it is
the “untrained” (akalpita) element, naturally arising from pure innate wisdom,
which is the most excellent source of their intuitive insight. This is based on the
following principle, which Abhinavagupta conveys through an illustrative
analogy:

Regarding this division [of gurus], just as liberated Śivas are indeed lower than Śiva,
whose perfection is beginningless, those who possess knowledge procured [from an
extrinsic source] are lower than the one whose knowledge is innately perfected
(sāṃsiddhika). In the presence of that [Sāṃsiddhika guru] those [other gurus] do not
have authority, just like MuktaŚivas [in the presence of Śiva]. That [trained guru]
should either remain silent or follow that [Sāṃsiddhika guru] in their actions.

Interestingly, Abhinavagupta finds an illuminating analogy for contrasting
innately perfected gurus and those who require training in the doctrine of the
dualist Saiddhāntikas: the difference between multiple mutually distinct souls
who become “liberated Śivas,” and that one Śiva who was never subject to karma,
impurity or māyā. There is an important distinction regarding souls that are

his awakening, i.e. the degree of the descent of Śiva’s power] is intense, moderate, or light.
That highly intelligent person becomes consecrated as a venerable [guru] that is “Natural”
(akalpita) either on the basis of meditation, visualization, repetition [of the mantra], a dream,
vow, or offering oblations.’ Cf. Tantrāloka 13.142cd-143ab.

671 Tantrāloka 4.69cd-4.70ab: "But the one who does not attain the awareness
known as Pure Wisdom (śuddhaiddhyā) without recourse to the scriptures, seeking out
scriptures from a Guru, should put into practice the methods taught therein.

672 Tantrāloka 4.73cd-4.74ab: "But “Natural” (akalpita) part of that [guru] is taught as the
most excellent, since the excellence of a guru is produced according to the relative degree of
their share of Pure Wisdom.’

673 Tantrāloka 4.74cd-76ab: "in place of the KSTS edition’s bhede... is indebted to SANDERSON’S draft edition of chapter four of the
Tantrāloka, which I had the opportunity to briefly examine.
“liberated,” becoming equal to Śiva through the manifestation of their innate powers of omniscience and omnipotence—their realization relies upon the intervention of grace, and is thus dependent. Similarly, the “trained” (kalpita) guru is one whose knowledge is contingent upon an extrinsic source, namely an external guru or scripture. Another revealing factor is the difference in authority between liberated Śivas and the one Śiva who is forever liberated. The former do not have authorization regarding the duty of cosmic creation and dispensing grace. By way of analogy, when the innately perfected guru is in the room, the trained guru must either remain silent or follow the lead of that guru of spontaneous insight.⁶⁷⁴

The guru that does rely on external support also eventually becomes a veritable Kaula guru, in other words, “Bhairava incarnate.”⁶⁷⁵ This is accomplished, moreover, by making that extrinsically sourced knowledge an internalized conviction.⁶⁷⁶ Therefore, beyond the issue of the exercise of religious

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⁶⁷⁴ This analysis is indebted to Jayaratha’s commentary on these verses, which incisively elaborates the force of the analogy. See the viveka ad Tantrāloka 4.74cd-4.76ab.

⁶⁷⁵ Tantrāloka 4.76cd-4.77ab: yas tv akalpitarūpo ‘pi saṃvādadrhātākṛte | anyato labdhasamākārah sa sāksād bhairavo guruḥ ‘Now the guru who, although having the nature of a “Natural” guru, is further refined by another [source] to produce a firm conviction based upon a natural agreement [between their innate and received knowledge], becomes Bhairava incarnate.’

⁶⁷⁶ See Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 4.76cd-4.77ab: yah punar akalpitarūpo’pi guruḥ svānubhavamāṃtrogocarasya svayampravrūttaśya jñānasya paratrāpi tathopalabhyaṃānātvātmanā samvādānena evam etat nānyathā evam rūpam dārḍhyam kartum anyato gurupāsentraḥ sanastād gurutah śastrato vā vyastāt prāptaśayah sa svātmanī nairākānṣyena sāksād bhairavah pāṃparasamvidāviṣṭa ity arthaḥ ‘But that guru, although having the nature of a “Natural” (guru), attains the highest eminence from another [source], either from both the guru and the scriptures or individually, in order to produce the firm conviction of this type: “this is so and not otherwise,” through the conformity consisting in the fact that the self-arising knowledge whose sphere is merely one’s own experience is now being perceived in the same way in another [source] as well. That very [guru], without any desire in his own Self, becomes
authority in a gathering of multiple gurus, ultimately it matters not how a guru of insight (jñānin) comes to be, given the common result of their knowledge expanding to Bhairava-sized proportions.\(^{677}\) Such a realization, whether spontaneous or supported by others, culminates in the direct apprehension of all phenomena as resting in one’s own subjective awareness. Towards this end, the three sources, guru, scripture, and oneself, can come together dynamically throughout the process of a guru’s cultivation.\(^{678}\) One is encouraged to harness whatever resources are needed to realize their identity with Bhairava if they are not fortunate enough to be the beneficiaries of an intense suffusion of god’s grace-giving energy (śaktipāta).\(^{679}\)

Abhinavagupta also speaks to how a guru possessing insight into their Bhairava-nature lives in the world. With all delusive karmic momentums exhausted, every action of these masters is dedicated to the upliftment of humanity.\(^{680}\) Moreover, their grace in action is congruent with how the Kaula Bhairava incarnate; in other words, he is immersed in highest consciousness that is all-encompassing.’

\(^{677}\) *Tantrāloka* 4.77cd-4.78ab: yataḥ śāstrakramāt tajjñāguruprajñānuśilanāt \| ātmapratyayitaṁ jñānam pārṇatvād bhairavāyate ‘On the basis of a series of scriptures [or] the constant application of the intuitive wisdom of a guru who knows those [scriptures], his knowledge that was sourced in his own Self becomes equivalent to Bhairava’s, because of being all-encompassing.’

\(^{678}\) *Tantrāloka* 4.78cd-4.84.

\(^{679}\) For an explication of the nine degrees of śaktipāta in Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra*, see WALLIS (2014), p. 339ff.

\(^{680}\) *Tantrāloka* 2.39: svaṁ kartavyam kimapi kalayaṁ loka eṣa prayatnāt no pārakyam prati haṭayate kāñcana svātmavṛttiṁ | yas tu dhvastāḥbhāvanalo bhairavībhāvapūrṇah kṛtyam tasya sphaṭam idam iyal lokakartavyamātram ‘The worldly, engaging in their own work with effort, accomplish certain [tasks] for their own good, not for the sake of others, but the action of one who has become perfect due to their identification with Bhairava, in whom all of the
guru is described in scriptural sources: without premeditation or any particular agenda the Innately Perfected guru transmits their awakened consciousness to worthy disciples by a mere glance:  

In that context, this [guru] of immaculate consciousness is conferring grace to those who deserve to be favored without any particular act of assistance. Thus, this [master] bestows grace to them by a mere glance, without an agenda, by making them equal to himself from the transference (saṅkrānti) of his own consciousness.

The model of religious transmission from the guru who has exhausted all selfish motive, according to which their own consciousness can suddenly flood someone else’s body and awareness, is related to Abhinavagupta’s nondual understanding of self and universe, in which individuality can and should be “blurred.” This conception of self is radically different from the “autonomism” of the Saiddhāntika exegetes, conforming in certain contexts to Mīmāṃsaka predilections, which “stressed in accordance with its metaphysical pluralism the primacy and irreducibility of individuals acting for their own benefit.”

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681 Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 4.47cd-4.48: 

682 Tantrāloka 1.256d: 

683 This quote is from an interesting discussion of the dichotomy between Saiddhāntika and Śākta conceptions of self related to the issue of post-mortem initiations and shared merit,
It is not coincidental that the interior model of revelation, which directly informs Abhinavagupta’s elucidation of the ideal guru, includes the possibility of knowing the essence of all the scriptures without having studied them. The source of the scripture is inside one’s awareness, and thus it can be accessed directly, and on that account, more authoritatively, without the circumvention of an external tantrāvatāra of which one is a mere recipient. Identity with Bhairava, the original speaker or “voice”\(^\text{684}\) of the scriptures, is based on awakening to the omniscience inherent in consciousness. In a way, we might phrase this as empowering a guru to play the role of Avatāraka, an independent agent of revelation. The criteria for recognizing the most authoritative guru—that their awakening is internally sourced—directly reinforces the theory that the primary

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\(^{684}\) For a translation of vāc as “voice” in this context, see TORELLA (2013), p. 477: “This active divine presence is what may also be called āgama, and has the form of the innate language principle which imbues all cognitions and actions. It is the divine Voice (vāc) of the Lord that speaks in living beings.”
sense of āgama is an internal awareness. It is of no surprise, therefore, that the words of these agents of revelation and fully-enlightened “living” gurus came to carry weight comparable to scripture.

Even the “Trained” guru has to confirm the wisdom revealed extrinsically in their own awareness. This is what locates religious authority squarely in the Kaula guru, and their oral transmission, contra a scriptural tradition of written or memorized texts or the time-honored mandates of a religious institution. Therefore, the notion of revelation as internal to consciousness, directly apprehended (sākṣātkāra) without mediation as a powerful act of self-reflective awareness (svaparāmarśa), is an essential feature of Abhinavagupta’s greater view of tradition. Enacting religious authority is based upon internal mastery, an inner awareness that ineluctably invests scriptural instruction with potency. What kind of trustworthy teachers are able to play such an active and ongoing role in tradition? Kaula gurus with all-encompassing insight; enlightened masters who have realized their identity with Bhairava, having successfully interiorized revelation, not to mention, the manifest universe. With this we are prepared to better decipher the rhetorical power of Abhinavagupta’s literary representation of himself as a “trustworthy” guru of such caliber.
CHAPTER FIVE

Abhinavagupta as a Cosmopolitan Siddha

INTRODUCTION

For Abhinavagupta the ideal Guru is not just a book-smart expositor of the scriptures or a ritual functionary whose mere performance of the rite of initiation and recitation of the requisite mantras does the work. And yet, beyond being fully established in the autonomy of his innate nature and thus capable of spontaneously transmitting Śiva’s power to a disciple (even without the mediation of ritual), we can marshal further evidence on what Abhinavagupta’s ideal Guru should be from his autobiographical epilogues.

Abhinavagupta fashions himself as a self-realized Kaula guru in numerous statements that exhibit a remarkable degree of religious self-awareness. He also presents himself as a Siddha who is virtuosic at intellectually navigating Kashmir, one of India’s premier medieval center of learning, during the height of its “creative ferment.”685 This self-presentation is advanced through poetically embellished verses that evoke the cultural sophistication and sanctity of Kashmir and specify the many facets of his own comprehensive education. In putting his own schooling and career as a teacher on display, Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical excerpts construct a space where esoteric religious currents,

685 FRANCO & RATIÉ (2016), p. vii. This edited volume, “Around Abhinavagupta: Aspects of the Intellectual History of Kashmir from the Ninth to the Eleventh Century,” includes a number of excellent contributions dedicated to the textual artifacts of the cultural efflorescence of this period in Kashmir from disciplines such as literary theory, histrionics, epistemology, Buddhist philosophy, grammar, etc.
scholastic expertise, and aesthetic sensitivity coalesce. These passages authorize Abhinavagupta’s texts, and legitimize his lofty claims about their efficacy, through a powerful demonstration of authorial competency. We will also argue that they model a comprehensive curriculum for religious education that can help produce future agents of revelation as spiritually accomplished, sophisticated, and enamored with knowledge as the author himself.

§ 5.1 “AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL” NARRATIVE EPILOGUES

This chapter centers on Abhinavagupta’s longest autobiographical passage located in chapter thirty seven of the Tantrāloka; beginning at verse thirty three, the excerpt consists of fifty three verses (concluding with verse eighty-five, the grand finale of what is arguably his magnum opus686). Tracing the general thematic sequence of this passage, our analysis will be supplemented with two other significant autobiographical excerpts, the concluding epilogue of the Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa (twenty one verses) and his longer commentary (vivṛttivimarśini) on Utpaladeva’s Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā (seventeen verses). Passing reference will also be made to the briefer autobiographical statements that conclude his commentary (Abhinavabhāratī) on Bharata’s Nātyaśāstra (six verses), his gloss (locana) of Ānandavardhana’s Dhvanyālakalocana (three verses), and his shorter commentary (vimarśini) on the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā (three verses). The textual extracts just mentioned total 103 verses dedicated to descriptions of the context in which Abhinavagupta’s texts came to light. This total does not include abundant self-references strewn throughout his corpus as

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686 At least within the realm of his tantric exegesis. Regarding his philosophical writings, the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvivṛttivimarśini reserves that honor.
well as the opening salvos (and benedictory praises) that commence his works, which will also be woven into our discussion where pertinent.

These statistics on Abhinavagupta’s dilated discourses on his own regional environment, revered teachers, family line, and individual person should give pause to anyone familiar with the intellectual practice of past and coeval Sanskrit authors. In the context of classical and medieval Sanskrit knowledge systems, we rarely learn more than an author’s name, and if we are lucky, scant details on their immediate ancestry and preceptorial lineage. How are we to understand Abhinavagupta’s rare impulse to write so profusely about his own local world and status as an author or, for that matter, his unconventional practice of dating three of his works?  

Much of the content and argumentation of the preceding chapters has been devoted to illuminating one hitherto unexplored source for explaining the logic of Abhinavagupta’s self-representation—the Kaula perspective on revelation and religious authority. The Kaulas glorified Siddhas as consequential agents of revelation, which in the post-scriptural Śākta Śaiva literature helped inspire first-person claims of enlightenment and brief accounts of the ideal conditions of that transformative event, occasionally written in a first-person voice. This mature Kaula idiom, a radical person-centered mode of religious

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687 The dates that Abhinavagupta provides are utilized by Alexis Sanderson to estimate the relative historical provenance of a number of Abhinavagupta’s forerunners by making use of preceptorial lineages. See SANDERSON (2007), p. 411: “To determine the chronology of the Kashmirian Śaiva literature in its most creative phase we have only three precise dates, found in the concluding verses as the end of three of Abhinavagupta’s works. These report that his Kramastotra was completed in [40]66 (= A.D. 991), his Bhairavastotra in [40]68 (= A.D. 993), and his Īśvarapratyabhijñāvoirtivimarśini in [40]90 (= A.D. 1015).”
authority requiring the continual intervention of enlightened individuals to sustain an internally realized transmission, provides an essential frame of reference for productively interpreting the structure and rhetorical power of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical excerpts.

The preceding portion of chapter thirty-seven (vv. 1-32), examined in chapter four of this study, was dedicated to establishing a correct understanding of the hierarchy of revelation. This vertical ranking, furthermore, was in service of a demonstration that the nonpareil scriptural wisdom of the Kaula Trika, envisioned as a vital breath animating all other revealed traditions from within, should ultimately be adopted (upādeya). Abhinavagupta’s main tool for making interreligious assessments on the relative position of a scriptural system is the degree of omniscience of its religious teachers.\(^{688}\) Given this criterion, which Abhinavagupta adapts from the early Naiyāyika view that religious authority is determined through the testimony of reliable speakers (āpta), it is the full omniscience of the individual who reveals a text that allows one to entrust their entire being to its revelatory teaching. Abhinavagupta goes on to claim that the Tantrāloka, in virtue of encapsulating the very core of the Kaula Trika, naturally bestows the highest goal of life, liberation while living, not to mention all the supernatural enjoyments one could entertain. The implication of this statement is that Abhinavagupta must be among the highest caliber of authors in whom the omniscience of Bhairava is fully operative. The autobiographical excerpt that immediately follows, read in this context, would perforce be designed to make

\(^{688}\) See Tantrāloka 37.3; 37.6-9; 37.13-15. These verses are all translated and unpacked in chapter four.
this explicit, to instill confidence in the *Tantraloka*’s audience regarding the reliability of Abhinavagupta as an author.\(^\text{689}\)

This focus on the individual revealer of a text and the context within which it is revealed is bolstered by Abhinavagupta’s articulation of a decidedly Kaula orientation towards scriptural transmission: the realization of revelatory truth must, “without exception,” be delineated according to a qualified individual located in space and time.\(^\text{690}\) The autobiographical epilogue accomplishes just this by giving Abhinavagupta’s dispensation a spatial and temporal address, and an occasion to formulate his own credentials and qualifications. Bearing in mind that the revelation under consideration here is the most subtle and precious teaching on offer, the conditions for its current iteration via the *Tantraloka* must also be prodigious. This interpretation of the purpose of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passage, based on a close reading of its

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\(^{689}\) Abhinavagupta argues that this is the function of Utpaladeva’s self-reference as the son of Udayākara in the final verse of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*. See Abhinavagupta’s *vimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 4.18: udayākarasya putras śrīmān utpaladevo ‘smat paramagurur idam śāstram akāśīd iti tatprasiddhyā jānai pravartata iti pravartanadvāreṇa so ‘nuḥṛāto bhavatīti ubhayanāmanirdeśah ‘The son of Udayākara, the illustrious Utpaladeva who is our guru’s guru, composed this śāstra. By means of a firm belief (prasiddhi) in this [author], a person will engage [this text]. By engaging it, they will receive grace. That is the reason for the mention of both the names [of the author and his father].’

\(^{690}\) See RATIE (2013), p. 409, footnote 75: “ĪPV II 82-83: sarva eva hṛ āgamo niyatādhikārideśakālasahākāryāyādiniyantritam eva vimarsam vidhatte vidhirūpa nisedhātmā vā.” RATIE’s translation of this statement is given in chapter four. See also *Tantraloka* 35.25: *tasmin visayavaiviktyād vicitraphaladāyini | citropāyopadeśo ’pi na virodhāvah abhavet ‘Even though this teaching has many different means when it comes to bestowing different types of goals on the basis of particular contexts, a contradiction does not result [from this].’ In *Tantralokaviveka* ad *Tantraloka* 35.25, Jayaratha elaborates what Abhinavagupta means by “particular contexts”: *deśakālādhikāryādyāśayabhedam āśritya ‘with reference to different contexts such as a given place, time, or a specific person who is qualified.’
context and conceptual horizon within the *Tantrāloka*, is further supported by Abhinavagupta’s thirteenth-century commentator, Jayaratha:⁶⁹¹

Now in order to illuminate the competency *(yogātā)* that resides in himself when it comes to teaching this text, as a way of making [his own] excellence a motivating factor [for his audience], [Abhinavagupta] characterizes his region, lineage, the sequence of his teachers, and narrates the events of his own [life].

Against a Mīmāṃsaka strategy of extricating an authoritative teaching from its regional, temporal, and human contexts to assuage all potential doubts regarding its veracity, Abhinavagupta, in alliance with a mature Kaula idiom of religious authority, must demonstrate that it is the preeminence of these very contextual factors that guarantees its truth. What we are encountering here is a rather conspicuous inversion of the Mīmāṃsaka model of truth, which partially accounts for Abhinavagupta’s rare inclination to narrate the context of his textual production.

The main “autobiographical” themes that we will address, which mutually orchestrate Abhinavagupta’s demonstration of his unique capacity as a trustworthy teacher, are as follows: the pedigree of family lineage, the extraordinary environment of Kashmir, his comprehensive education, awakening, and eventual accession to the seat of guru, as well as some of the precise circumstances in which he researched and composed the *Tantrāloka*. Where it is apropos to our discussion, we will also consider Abhinavagupta’s characterization of his disciples and their lives, which we will argue effectively envisions the ideal conditions for textual reception. Here Abhinavagupta is

⁶⁹¹ Jayaratha’s *viveka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 37.33: *idānīṃ etadgranthābhidhāne svātmāni yogātāṃ prakāśayitum sātisāvatvaprajakikārena deśavāṃśadasāsiśādikramam uṭṭhānaya svetiṣyttam abhidhatten.*

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looking forward, charting a future for the vast tradition he has encapsulated and synthesized to be carried on through a strong vessel of individual luminaries. This alone is what can withstand entropy in all its forms, including social and political contingencies, which in the end were not inconsequential factors in the erosion of the Trika tradition as Abhinavagupta taught it.

§ 5.2 THE PEDIGREE OF FAMILY LINEAGE

Abhinavagupta begins his longest autobiographical passage (in the Tantrāloka) by establishing the excellence of his patrilineal descent:

In this land known as Kanyā [modern-day Kanauj], there is a district that is extremely exceptional where legend has it the foremost scholarship (śāstravara) serves as an eye. [In such a place,] who would even think of condemning a person for taking birth in a family of people blind from birth for whom luminaries such as the sun are as black as split charcoal [given that everyone sees with the true eye of śāstra]? That abode of all scholarship is traditionally called Madhyadesā. In that region an extraordinary brahmin who excelled in virtue was born as Atrigupta, whose class can be derived from his name, [but whose] Agastya clan designation was apparent from his ability to relish the ocean of śāstras [like the sage Agastya drinking in the entire ocean]. Out of the intensity of his affection [for Atrigupta], Lalitāditya invited him to his own region known as Kashmir, situated at the head of the Himalayas.

At the outset of his narration of his family line, Abhinavagupta homes in on a pivotal moment when his ancestor Atrigupta resettled from the center of learning of Kānyakubja (modern Kanauj) to Kashmir, beckoned by king

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692 Tantrāloka 37.37-39ab: kanyāḥvaye ‘pi bhuvane ‘tra paraḥ mahīyān deśaḥ sa yatra kila śāstravaranī caksuḥ | jātyandhasadāmi na jāmna na ko ’bhininded bhinnāṁjanāyita-ravipramukhaprakāśe || nihṛṣṭaśaśtrasadānaṁ kila madhyadeśas tasminn ajaẏata guṇābhyyadhiko dvijānāṁ | ko ’py atriṣṭu iti nāmanirukttagotraḥ śāstrādbhīcaravāṇakalodyadagastyaṣṭogotraḥ || tam atha lalitāditya rājā niṇaṁ puram ānayaḥ praṇayārabhasāḥ kaśmirākhyāṁ himālayamāṛḍhagam.

693 This event is also referenced in Parātīrīṣkāvivaraṇa, closing verse 11: atriṣṭvāṁ atriṣṭu bhṛtihdānaḥ prāpyotpattāni prāviṣṭaḥ prāgraṇjānāṁ | śrīkāśmirāṁ candracūḍāvatāraṁ niḥsambhākaṁ pāvītopāntabhāγāṁ ’Being born in Antarvedī, a person of excellent birth called Atrigupta later migrated to Kashmir whose borders are purified by countless incarnations of moon-crested [Śiva].’ There is also mention of Atrigupta in the first concluding verse of Abhinavagupta’s viśvitiṁariṇi on the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā and the first concluding verse of Abhinavagupta’s abhinavabhāratī on the Nātyaśāstra.
Lalitāditya. Lalitāditya is often invoked in Kashmirian authors’ references to the earliest member of their family lineage, a trend that indicates the symbolic significance of this sovereign in the cultural memory of local poets and scholastics.

Kānyakubja became a prominent city in part thanks to the legendary career of Harṣvardhana in the seventh century, the patron of Bāṇa who narrates his political rise in the Harṣacarita (‘The Exploits of King Harṣa’). The thirteenth-century poet and royal chronicler Kalhana depicts Lalitāditya’s victory over the king of this region, Yaśovarman, which would have taken place close

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694 For a later reference to another Kashmirian sovereign, Gopāditya, bringing ancestral scholars from Madhyadeśa to adorn Kashmir, see Vikramāṇkadevaśācarita 18.73. The author, Bilhaṇa, also describes the impact of his fame in Kānyakubja during his travels in Vikramāṇkadevaśācarita 18.90.

695 See the first closing verse of Helārāja’s prakāśa on the Vākyapadīya: muktāpīda iti prasiddham agamat kaśmiradeśe nṛpah śrīmān khītyayaśa babhāva nṛpates tasya prabhāvānugah | mantrī laksṇa ůty udārcaarticī tasyāṇavāvyay bhavo helārāja imaṁ prakāśam akaroc chṛihūtirījātmajah ‘There was an illustrious king in the region of Kashmir, who became well known as [Lalitāditya] Muktāpīda, whose fame is celebrated. The minister Laksṇa, a man of noble deeds, was a servant of the that king’s royal dominion. Born in his lineage, Helārāja, son of Bhūtirāja, wrote this prakāśa [on the Vākyapadīya].’ If this Bhūtirāja is none other than the guru of Abhinavagupta’s father, whom Abhinavagupta eulogizes (see Tantrāloka 1.9), that would place Helārāja very close to Abhinavagupta, possibly one generation before him. For another reference to a Kashmirian author’s narrative of their family line and its ties to Lalitāditya’s reign, see opening vv. 5-12 of Abhinanda’s Kādambarīkathāśāra, cited and translated in DEZSÖ (2004), pp. v-vi. This passage is also cited in KATAOKA (2007a), pp. 313-314.

696 For a study of the historical setting of the reign of Harṣavardhana (AD 612-647), see BAKKER (2014), pp. 95-133.

697 On the dating of Bāṇa, and the imperial rise of the city of Kanauj, see SMITH (1985), pp. 17-19.

698 See Rājatarāṅgini 4.144-146, translated in STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 134 of the translation: “Yaśovarman, who had been served by Vākipātrirāja, the illustrious Bhavabhūti, and other poets, [himself] became by his defeat a panegyrist of his [Lalitāditya’s] virtues. What more [shall I relate]? The land of Kānyakubja from the bank of the Yamunā to that of the Kālikā, was as much in his power as the courtyard of his palace. Passing over Yaśovarman, just as
to one hundred years after Harṣavardhana’s reign (i.e., the eighth century). To Yaśovarman’s accolades, Kalhaṇa reports that he is the patron of the poets Vākpatirāja (author of the Gaṅḍavaḥo) and the playwright Bhavabhūti of Uttarāmācarita fame. Whatever the exact historical veracity of this narrative of Lalitāditya’s conquest of Yaśovarman’s kingdom in Kānyakubja, and there is much to doubt in Kalhaṇa’s grandiose account of Lalitāditya’s world conquest, it nevertheless provides a context for the migration of Abhinavagupta’s ancestor in the local imagination of Kashmir’s past. The great scholar Atrigupta, in coming to Kashmir from Yaśovarman’s capital Kānyakubja, is thus situated in a moment of Kashmirian history distinguished by its emergence on the greater cosmopolitan and political stage, at least according to Kalhaṇa’s poetic imaginaire. Given the symbolic capital of such narratives given by Kalhaṇa, which are themselves derived from earlier, no longer extant chronicles of Kashmirian kings, together with other sources, their questionability in terms of providing

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699 On the dating of Yaśovarman’s “dethronement” not long after 736 A.D., see STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 89 of introduction.

700 See above footnote with the translation of Rājatarāṅgini 4.144-146.

701 For an assessment of legendary nature of Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa’s world conquest (digvijaya) in the Rājatarāṅgini, with reference to independent historical sources, see STEIN (1900), volume 1, pp. 90-92.

702 Kalhaṇa mentions Suvara’s compendium of earlier chronicles of Kashmirian dynasties in Rājatarāṅgini 1.11-12, and Kṣemendra’s Nṛpāvali at Rājatarāṅgini 1.13. In Rājatarāṅgini 1.14 he tells us that he has consulted eleven texts in all on the dynastic history of the region. Rājatarāṅgini 1.17 refers to the Pārthivāvali of a certain Helārāja whom he describes as a Mahāvratin. It appears the Rājatarāṅgini may have successfully supplanted these earlier accounts, given that they are no longer extant.
historically accurate information does not detract from their importance in how the Kashmirian intelligentsia envisioned their own regional past.

Atrigupta’s prized asset, by Abhinavagupta’s account, is his intellectual prowess, which is related to the scholastic affluence of his home city (Kānyakubja) and his prestigious clan affiliation (Agastya) vindicated by his ability to drink up an ocean of knowledge. As a result, we are told that the Kashmirian sovereign Lalitāditya not only invited this great scholar to Kashmir, an act that a poet might describe as emblematic of the intellectual spoils of imperial conquest, but also built him a palatial estate on the banks of the Vitastā river in Śrīnagara.704

The next person in this exceptional family line that Abhinavagupta briefly portrays is his grandfather, Varāhagupta.705 Abhinavagupta’s father, Varāhagupta’s son, is distinguished by both his intellectual capability and devotion to Śiva.706

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704 Tantrāloka 37.52: tasmin kuberapuracārisitāṃśumaulisāṃmukhyadasanavirūḍhapavitrabhāve | vaitastarodhasi nivāsām amuṣya cakre rājā dvijasya parikalpitabhūrisaṃpat ‘In that [Pravarapura = Śrīnagara], on the bank of the Vitastā [river] which is purified and elevated thanks to face-to-face encounters with [Śiva] crowned by white moon-beams (sitāṃśumauli) who roams in the northern region, King [Lalitāditya] built a greatly endowed estate for that Brahmin [Atrigupta].’

705 Tantrāloka 37.53: tasyāṃvaye mahati ko ’pi varāhaguptanāmā babhūva bhagavān svayam antakāle | gīrvāṇasindhulaharikalitāṃgārdhā yasyākarot param anugraham āgraheṣa ‘In that great lineage of that [Atrigupta], there was a certain person named Varāhagupta to whom [Śiva]—whose crown is decorated by the waves of the heavenly Gaṅgā—himself bestowed supreme grace out of affection at the end of his life.’ This bestowal of grace at the end of his life by Śiva “himself”, i.e. without the mediation of a guru, may imply that Abhinavagupta’s grandfather achieved full liberation directly from Śiva at the moment of death.

706 TĀ 37.54: tasyātmajās cukhalaketi jane prasiddhā candrāvadātadhiṣaṇo narasiṃhaguptah | yāṃ sarvaśāstrarasamajanaśubhacittanā mahēśvarī param alaṃkurute śma bhaktih.
His [i.e. Varahagupta’s] son, Narasimhagupta, his intellect bright like the moon, was well known among people as “Cukhala.” His mind radiant from being steeped in the blissful essence (rasa) of all scholastic traditions [or scriptures], he was completely adorned with devotion to Śiva.

Abhinavagupta’s next description of his father displays even greater poetic finesse:

After wrestling the tempest of the sea that is youth, having forcibly boarded the steady little skiff that is dispassion, arriving at the gem mountain that is devotion, he smashed [all] the tragedies of worldly existence with the jewels that are meditations upon Maheśa.

The literal reading that boarding “the steady little skiff of dispassion” refers to Abhinavagupta’s father choosing a life of renunciation is highly speculative and partially inaccurate, although a similar idea can be read into another verse dedicated to Narasimhagupta. What is important in Abhinavagupta’s idealized

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707 TĀ 37.55: tāruṇyasāgarataraṅgabharān apohya vairāgyapotam adhiruhyā drḍhaṃ haṭhena | yo bhaktirohaṇam avāpya maheśacintāratnair alaṃ dalayati sma bhavāpadas tāḥ.

708 For proof that rohaṇa refers to a mountain of gems by that name, which makes sense of the reference to jewels (ratna) that follows, see Abhinavagupta’s vimarsini ad Ṣivapratyabhijñākārikā 1.1.1: tuta evāha samasta iti paramesvaratālabhe hi samastāḥ sampadas tannāhgyandamayyaḥ sampannā eva rohaṇalābho ratnāsampara iva." For that very reason, he said: [in order to cause the attainment of] “all” [success]. For when one attains the state of Supreme Śiva, all successes, consisting in the flowing forth of those [properties of Śiva], are attained, just like there is a wealth of gems when one arrives at [Mt.] Rohaṇa.'

709 PANDEY (1963), p. 14: “But soon after the death of his mother, his father also, though still young, renounced the world and took a life of asceticism.” The verse referred to here comes before the mention of the death of Abhinavagupta’s mother, which problematizes the narrative order of PANDEY’s speculative interpretation. Furthermore, this reading is exemplary of PANDEY’s purely documentary approach to Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogue, which ignores Abhinavagupta’s poetic style and the passage’s potential rhetorical, not to mention, prescriptive power. It should also be noted that neither PANDEY (1963) nor RASTOGI (1987) translate Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages, but merely summarize them.

710 Parātrīṣikāvivarana concluding verse 12: tasyāṅnavaṇye mahati prasūtād varāhaguptāt pratilabdhaṇjanmā | samsāravyttāntaparāṇāmukho yāḥ śivaikacitaś cukhalābhidhānāḥ.’There was man named Cukhala, son of Varahagupta who was born in the great lineage of that [Atrigupta]; shunning the affairs of samsāra, his mind was only on Śiva.’
rendering of his father is his role as an archetypal Śaiva scholar and devotee, and as we will see, the idea that these virtues strengthen our appreciation of Abhinavagupta by establishing a particular kind of family pedigree. In addition, Narasimhagupta’s direct involvement in Abhinavagupta’s education, specifically in imparting the vast and technical science of grammar, is directly stated. Abhinavagupta’s overall indebtedness to his father’s tutelage is also expressed in two of his benedictory verses in which he is eulogized.

It is of interest to note that when Abhinavagupta describes his position and place in this kin-based lineage, he often refers to his body; it is as if the superior conditions of his birth, both in terms of his ancestral heritage and ideal parentage, primed the vessel of his body for eventually becoming the perfect

711 *Tantrāloka* 37.59. This verse will be translated below.

712 *Tantrāloka* 1.12: \( \text{yāh pūrṇāṇandaviśrāntasarvaśāstrārthapārāgaḥ} \ | \ sa śrīcukhulako diśyād iṣṭām me guruṛ uttamah \ ‘May auspicious Cukhulaka, that superlative guru who reposes in perfect bliss and has mastered all the śāstras, teach me what I desire [to know].’ See also *Mālinīślokavārttika* 1.5: \( \text{gurubhyo 'pi gārīyāṃsam yuktāṃ śrīcukhalābhidham} \ | \ \text{vande yatkṛtatsamskārah śhito 'smi galitagrahah} \ ‘I adore [my father], a scholar whose name is Cukhala and who is more venerable than even the teachers. It is through his education (ṣaṃskāra), that I have become free from attachment.’ Translation of HANNEDER (1998), p. 59.

713 *Parātrīṣikā-vivaraṇa*, closing verse 13: \( \text{tasmād viveśitasamastapādārthajātāl labdhvāpi dehapadavām paramesapātān} \ | \ \text{prāptabhāyō bhinvaguptapadābhidhānāh prācēsayaḥ trikasattattvām idām niṇādham} \ ‘In receiving a body that is purified by Lord Śiva from that [Cukhala] by whom the catalogue of all existent things was discerned, the one named Abhinavagupta who has become fearless has introduced this secret truth of the Trika system.’ See also the second opening verse of Abhinavagupta’s *viśvīrtivimarśini* on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*:

\[ \text{labdhvānugrahām īśvarān niṇāmahḥsambhārāsaṃtipino dehe 'smi narasimhaguptaghaṭaḥte labdhāspadāḥ pāście} \ | \ \text{ṣrīmailakṣmanaguptadanāśtrapathā śrīpratyabhijñāviśvādhu ṛtkārthapraṃvimarśīṁ racayate vertyām prāśīṣyo gurōḥ ‘Having received divine favor from Lord blazing with the fullness of his innate power, [Abhinavagupta] whose authority has [thus] been attained in this final body produced by [his father] Narasimhagupta, [and] who has learned the path of the auspicious system of Recognition from venerable Lakṣmanagupta, that grand-pupil of the Guru [Utpaladeva], now composes a commentary that elucidates the meaning of [Utpaladeva’s] extensive auto-commentary.’ Abhinavagupta also mentions his body in tandem with his father in the second concluding verse of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā-viśvīrtivimarśini*, which will be translated below.
vehicle for the Śaiva revelatory tradition. In fact, we have evidence that in addition to the caliber of his patrilineal ancestors, Abhinavagupta also saw the circumstances of his very conception via a Kaula ritual of sexual union performed by his parents (as he suggests in his signature maṅgala714 to his Trika works) as providing the extraordinary preconditions for his subsequent calling as a Kaula Guru. What this verse is designed to convey, SANDERSON argues, is that Abhinavagupta is “competent to instruct his readers in the nature and means of liberation,” since the “body of one conceived in such a union is the receptacle of enlightenment even before birth.”715

After charting his paternal line and ruminating on his father’s excellences, at this juncture in the Tantrāloka Abhinavagupta narrates an event in his childhood that left an indelible impression:716

Abhinavagupta is his [i.e. Narasiṃhagupta’s] renowned son who was purified by the pollen of the lotus feet of the auspicious moon-crowned Śiva. His mother was suddenly torn away from him during childhood. Indeed, fate refines a person in preparation for their future destiny. The mother is the most important relationship, so the saying goes. Indeed, affection [for one’s mother] tightly fastens one’s bonds. When the root bond of those [attachments] fell away for him [i.e. Abhinavagupta], indeed, I consider that liberation in this very life was [then] secured.

714 SANDERSON (2005) is dedicated to a study of this signature benediction.

715 Ibid., p. 100: “By claiming that he is himself the product of such a union he asserts that he is specifically competent to instruct his readers in the nature and means of liberation. For he tells us elsewhere that the body of one conceived in such a union is the receptacle of enlightenment even before birth. That for which others must strive is his instinctively. For the experience of the heart in Kaula union animates the united emissions of semen and menstrual blood which form the embryo.”

716 Tantrāloka 37.56-57: tasyātmajo ‘bhinaṇgaṇa iti prasiddhah śrīcandraśūdasmiṣājaśāpaṇapāpāh | mātā vyayāyuṣad amuṇaḥ kāla bālyya eva daivaṁ hi bhūnitirikarmāṇi saṁśkaroti | | mātā paraṁ bandhur iti prāvāḍah sneho ‘tigādhikurute hi pāśan | tanmūlabandhe galite kāśyapā manye sithā jīvata eva muktih.
What appears to be an incredibly intimate and personal detail regarding Abhinavagupta’s loss of his mother is immediately transposed into a demonstration that this tragic childhood event was instrumental to his attainment of liberation in this very life. Apparently transparent descriptive accounts of his life are immediately put in service of an exposition of how such circumstances contributed to his requisite qualification (liberating while living) to author a text that is the essence of the most liberating teaching available to humankind. This strategy, and the reference to “destiny,” are both clues of the didactic purpose of these narrative accounts, more geared towards presenting Abhinavagupta as an embodiment of a paramount teacher/author than crafting a memoire whose purpose is to capture the details of his life.

The three elements explored here under the section heading of the “pedigree of family lineage” are an account of Abhinavagupta’s patrilineal descent, his divine conception, and the childhood loss of his mother, which collectively suggest that the person who wrote the Tantrāloka was truly born for this vocation. The portrayal of these elements is also in harmony with an earlier narrative (examined in chapter four) of a Śaiva Śākta author in Abhinavagupta’s Traiyambaka lineage, Somānanda. In illuminating Somānanda’s ancestral lineage, which also reported how one ancestor in his patrilineal line emigrated to Kashmir, there is a recurrent emphasis on the fact that subsequent heirs were endowed with the same qualities (tathāvidha) as their father. Following this line of reasoning—that excellent attributes are to be transferred from father to son—Abhinavagupta’s effusive tributes to his father’s devotion and erudition can be
seen as proof of Abhinavagupta’s innate talent as a Śaiva scholar. This is further bolstered by his divine inception in a Kaula sexual rite, and, with the loss of his mother, freedom from life’s most binding attachment at a tender age. One notable difference with the lineage narrative of Somānanda is the hyperbolic flair of Abhinavagupta’s literary style, evidently adopted from the repertoire of court poetry (kāvya), a feature of his autobiographical epilogue to be further considered below.

§ 5.3 BORN IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

In the Tantrāloka epilogue, describing his ancestor Atrigupta’s emigration to Kashmir gives Abhinavagupta occasion to compose an extended and glowing description of the Himālayan vale. This section of the Tantrāloka epilogue that pays tribute to Kashmir shares themes touched upon in the genres of local Purāṇas, story-literature (kathā), and Kashmirian Māhātmyas; some of his descriptions of Kashmir find parallels, for example, in the Nīlamata, Śāradāmāhātmya, Kathāsaritsāgara, and Vitastāmāhātmya. However, the literary form of his ode to Kashmir and the city of Pravarapura (Śrīnagara), which utilizes complex metrical verses accumulated with figures of speech, has even

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717 Here we should note that Abhinavagupta does not give much credence to caste when it comes to access to the Śaiva teachings or eligibility for liberation, and so the emphasis on family lineage, birth, and the unique features of his “body” are not specifically related to the fact that he is a brahmin. That said, Abhinavagupta’s status as a brahmin, we must imagine, did little to impede his pursuit of the finest education. For a clear statement that no one can be excluded from the liberating teachings of his Śaiva philosophical tradition on the basis of caste, see Abhinavagupta’s vimarśinī ad Iśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 4.1.18: nātra jātyādyapekṣā kācid iti sarvopakāritvam uktam ‘In this system there is no specific consideration given to the class, etc. [of a qualified audience]. Therefore, we teach that [this text] can benefit all.’

718 This segment of the autobiographical epilogue runs thirteen verses, from Tantrāloka 37.39-37.51.
greater affinity with the literary techniques of courtly literature (kāvya). In fact, idealized descriptions of the city or environment of a hero or heroine, which prefigure the success of their endeavor, are a recurrent feature of classical Sanskrit kāvyas.\(^{719}\)

As we will illustrate, this section of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogue has a great deal of affinity—stylistically and thematically—with the literary portrayals of Kashmir found in two Kashmirian kāvyas that postdate him, Bilhaṇa’s Vikramāṅkadevacarita (ca. 1085)\(^{720}\) and Maṅkha’s Śrīkantṭhacarita (ca. 1128-1144).\(^{721}\) There are also compelling parallels with the poetic portrayal of Kashmir in Kalhaṇa’s Rājataranṛgini (1148-1150)\(^{722}\) and Jayadratha’s Haracaritacintāmani (thirteenth century),\(^{723}\) which will be highlighted below.

\(^{719}\) A description of the environment or locale of the main character is found in the beginning of Bāna’s Kādambarī, the Kumārasaṃbhava of Kālidāsa, and in the third chapter of Māgha’s Śiśupālavadha. Bhāravi’s Kīrtārjunīya, slightly altering this pattern, opts for a description of the city of the enemy. On these and other references, see SMITH (1985), p. 30.

\(^{720}\) On this dating of Bilhaṇa’s composition of the Vikramāṅkadevacarita, see BÜHLER (1875), p. 23.

\(^{721}\) On this date range for the Śrīkantṭhacarita, see STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 12.

\(^{722}\) This dating is noted in STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 6, and is based on the text’s start and finish dates furnished by Kalhaṇa himself, in Rājataranṛgini 1.52 and 8.3404.

\(^{723}\) Jayadratha is the brother of the author of the Tantrālokāviveka, Jayaratha. For the dating of Jayaratha [and therefore his brother] to the thirteenth century, see SANDERSON (2007), pp. 418-419. On the fraternal relation of these two authors, and a brief description of the Haracaritacintāmani, see SANDERSON (2007), p. 378, footnote 475: “From Jayaratha’s brother Jayadratha we have the Haracaritacintāmani, a collection of accounts of Śiva’s deeds in the world of men, the majority of which are told in versions that associate them with local sites of pilgrimage and the local religious calendar. The Śaivism of initiates transcends this level of common observance. But Jayadratha integrates it by introducing these narratives with verses that present their content as symbolic of the higher truths taught in the Śaiva scriptures.”
One verse in the Rājatarāṅginī’s paean\textsuperscript{724} to Kashmir at the outset of the work succinctly captures some of the recurrent leitmotifs found in poetic descriptions of the region:\textsuperscript{725}

Learning, lofty houses, saffron, icy water, and grapes: things that even in heaven are difficult to find, are common there.

Local descriptions of the region also frequently refer to the legendary creation of the Kashmirian vale from a great body of water by the Prajāpati Kaśyapa,\textsuperscript{726} allusions to Kāmadeva’s presence (frequently in tandem with the beauty of Kashmirian women),\textsuperscript{727} the founding of Pravarapura (Śrīnagara)\textsuperscript{728} by the sovereign Pravarasena,\textsuperscript{729} the holiness of the Vitasta river,\textsuperscript{730} the coolness of

\textsuperscript{724} Rājatarāṅginī 1.25-1.43.
\textsuperscript{725} Rājatarāṅginī 1.42: vidyā veśmāni tuṅgāni kuṅkumam sahinam payaḥ | drākseti yatra sāmānyam astī tridivadurlabham. Translation of STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 10 of translation.
\textsuperscript{726} Nilamatapurāṇa 1.12-13; Śrikanṭhacarita 3.1; Rājatarāṅginī 1.25-27. This event is not alluded to in Abhinavagupta’s regional descriptions.
\textsuperscript{727} On the theme of Kāmadeva’s presence in the region, see Śrikanṭhacarita 3.5, 3.8, 3.31. On the beauty of the women of Kashmir, see Śrikanṭhacarita 3.15, 3.22-23, 3.25; Vikramāṅkadevacarita 18.11-13, 18.17, 18.20-21. For references to both Kāmadeva and women, see Śrikanṭhacarita 3.27, 3.29-30.
\textsuperscript{728} On the identification of Pravarapura as Śrīnagara, see STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 98 of the translation, footnotes to vv. 3.339-349.
\textsuperscript{729} Tantrāloka 37.47-48; Vikramāṅkadevacarita 18.28; Śrikanṭhacarita 3.21; Rājatarāṅginī 3.336ff.
\textsuperscript{730} Tantrāloka 37.50-51: rodhaḥpratiśṭhitamaheśvarasiddhalingasvāyanibhuvaśrīvibh�nanirapanaṇeśvaragandha-puspaiḥ | āvāryāmānatanuvīcinajānaughāvīdhaṇapataḥpamunisiddhānusyaścandeyā | bhogapavarga-prapitarakalpavātī bhogaikādānānāśikāṃ surasiddhasindhum | nīkkurviṇī harapinānakalāvīrīṣṇa yaḥ bhūṣayatī aviratati taṁtiṁ viśasta ‘Where the river Vitasta constantly adorns that [land] together with the fragrant blossoms that are the ritual ointment for the adoration of the Shiva and Siddha litga that are established on its banks. [That river is] descended from the crescent [moon] on the trident of Śiva. When it comes to the fruition of enjoyment and liberation it is a wish-fulfilling creeper that puts to shame the [divine] river of the Gods and the Siddhas [the heavenly Gaṅgā], which has rasa only inasmuch as it gives enjoyment [and not liberation]. [That river] is praised by sages, siddhas, and humans [since] their deep faults are destroyed from immersing themselves in its delicate ripples which wash
Kashmirian summers, and numerous major and minor regional shrines, temples, sanctuaries, monastic institutions, and Nāga springs.

Abhinavagupta is now turning to a description of “place” (deśa), a key criterion in his Kaula conception of revelation. To establish the eminence of Kashmir as an auspicious abode for the genesis of the Tantrāloka, Abhinavagupta has recourse to a poetic style and literary topos that have regional precedents, but are totally absent from his extant Śaiva sources. This code-switching, shifting to a high literary register at the conclusion of his monumental Śaiva compendium, is indicative of Abhinavagupta’s recourse to literary sources beyond the horizon of tantric Śaivism. Abhinavagupta is here adopting a literary practice of regional representation well-attested in Kashmir, a fact that has led scholars to frequently remark on the augmented “local” awareness of premodern Kashmirian authors. Moreover, this amplified attention of Kashmirian poets to

[those faults] away.’ For the Vitāstā river in the imagination of other Kashmirian poets, see Śrīkanṭhacarita 3.7, 3.20, & 3.24; Vikramāṇkadevacarita 18.22; Rājatarāṅgiṇī 1.29; Haracaritacintāmani 1.27 & chapter 12, which is dedicated to the story of the Goddess’s incarnation as the Vitastā.

731 Rājatarāṅgiṇī 1.41.

732 The vast majority of the Tantrāloka is composed in anuṣṭubh meter, but Abhinavagupta does use other meters on occasion. In his autobiographical excerpt, on the other hand, a major shift in his compositional practice is noticeable in his sudden use of a vast array of complex meters (e.g. upajāti, harini, śārdūlavikṛṣṭi, mandākrānta, vasantatilaka, vamśasthavila, etc.) and figures of speech.

733 Reference to a heightened regional self-awareness in Kashmir is often in conjunction with discussions of the Rājatarāṅgiṇī of Kalhana, but a close study of the poetic portrayals of Kashmir in the literary works of Ratnākara, Somadeva, Kṣemendra, Bilhaṇa, Maṅkha, and Jayadratha is still a desideratum. Such a study would also benefit from a survey of the local customs, shrines, and tīrthas detailed in the Nīlamata, Vitāstāmāhāṭmya, and the Śāradāmāhāṭmya.
their local context provides another important background for reflecting on Abhinavagupta’s proclivity to represent the world outside of his texts.

To impress upon his audience that not only the preeminence of his familial genealogy, but also the unique environment of Kashmir during his formative years contributed to his actualization as a trustworthy guru, Abhinavagupta evokes the trope of Kashmir as the land of Śāradā, the Goddess of learning:

[That is the region] where [the Goddess of knowledge], bright as the autumnal moon, is celebrated among people as Śāradā. Well-disposed from relishing the devoted service of Śāṇḍilya,735 She unites all the citizens with her innate powers [of eloquence, learning, etc.]. Abhinavagupta here refers to a famous Kashmirian shrine of the Goddess Śāradā,736 and the devoted pilgrim and beneficiary of this sacred site, Śāṇḍilya,737 who features in local narratives that promote the shrine’s transformative power. Abhinavagupta speaks directly to the efficacy of the presence of Śāradā-Sarasvatī on Kashmir: She unites all people with her own powers of learning. What this statement illuminates, Jayaratha tells us, is that the abode of Kashmir is an

734 Tantrāloka 37.41: yatra svayaṃ śāradacandrapuspṛṣṭā śūntadi prathitā janeṣu | śāṇḍilyasevārasasuprasannā sarvam janam svair vibhavair yunaktā. This translation benefits from consulting with Dominic GOODALL.

735 Another rendering of this compound, śāṇḍilyasevārasasuprasannā, could be “made bright [ /spotless] by the flow of Śāṇḍilya’s service.”

736 For a memorable description of his journey to this shrine, which includes an excellent description of its surviving structure and surrounding environs, see Stein (1900), volume 2, pp. 279-289 (appendix B).

737 See SANDERSON’s 2010 edition of the Śāradāmāhātmya, published on Academia.edu, which gives an account of Śāṇḍilya’s devoted service and its results.
“ocean of all knowledge.” Kashmir’s symbolism as the Land of Śāradā and references to this Goddesses’ pilgrimage site are not only celebrated by local poets, but even figure in a story about Hemacandra (c.a. 1088-1172), the great Jain polymath of Gujarat, the poet Śrīharṣa, as well as in accounts of India’s sacred geography in the works of Al-Bīrūnī and Abu’l-Fazl.

Kashmir’s glorification as a treasury of learning is further accentuated in another one of Abhinavagupta’s charming verses:

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738 Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 37.41: svair vibhavair yunaktīty anenātra sarvavidyākarasthānatvam prakāśitam.

739 Śrīkaṇṭha-carita 3.10, 3.19; Vikramāṅkadevacarita 1.21; Rājataṇgiṇī 1.37, 8.2556, 8.2706, and 8.2492.

740 STEIN (1900), volume 2, p. 280: “In a more legendary light the temple of Śāradā figures in a curious story related of the great Jain scholar Hemacandra (A.D. 1088-1172), in the Prabhāvakacarita... The story is, that when Hemacandra was commissioned by King Jayasimha, of Gujrat, to compose a new grammar, he requested to be supplied with the necessary materials in the shape of eight older grammars, which could be found complete only in the library of goddess Sarasvatī, in Kaśmir. Jayasimha sent at once high officials to Pravarapura to obtain the manuscripts. Arrived there they proceeded to the temple of the goddess and offered their prayer. Pleased by their praises the goddess appeared and commanded her own attendants to transmit the desired works to her favourite Hemacandra. The manuscripts were thereupon delivered to the king’s envoys and brought by them to Hemacandra, who, after perusing them, composed his own great grammatical work, the Siddhahemacandra.” STEIN goes on to argue that the Sarasvatī shrine in question was none other than the Śāradā temple, and also offers a justification for the discrepancy of the account’s location of the shrine in Pravarapura.


742 See STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 8 of translation, note to verse 1.37: “The pilgrimage to this shrine must have enjoyed considerable renown in old days, as even Alberūni heard of it. ‘In inner Kashmir, about two or three days’ journey from the capital in the direction towards the mountains of Bolor, there is a wooden idol called Śāradā (sic) which is much venerated and frequented by pilgrims’ see India, i. p. 117. Abu-l-Fazl, Āin-i Akb., ii. p. 366, also mentions the shrine of Śāradā, adding a story according to which the temple begins to shake on the 8th S’udi of each month.”

743 Tantrāloka 37.46ab: sarvo lokāḥ kavir atha budho yatra śūro ’pi vāgmin candroddyotā maśyagatayah pauranāryaś ca yatra.
Where everyone is either a poet or a scholar, where even warriors are eloquent, and where the urbane ladies, whose gait is gentle, have a moon-like radiance.

The sophistication and beauty of Kashmirian women, which provides Kāmadeva with considerable artillery, is something Kashmirian poets are quite keen to point out. The depiction of Kashmir as an oasis of knowledge, in addition to conforming to literary conventions of how the region is envisioned, can also be appreciated in relationship Abhinavagupta’s accommodation of multiple domains of study when modeling his own religious education. Although Abhinavagupta does not spell out why studying poetry or mastering Indian philosophy is necessary for a guru of the Kaula Trika tradition, using Kashmir’s status as a bastion of literary and scholastic brilliance to further bolster his own prowess as a qualified author and tantric guru is not an arbitrary move. Growing up in this moment in Kashmir’s history, this passage suggests, and other poets make clear, is to be looked after by the nurturing gaze of Śāradā herself.

Not only is Kashmir filled with scholars, poets, and eloquent soldiers as a result of Śāradā’s graceful presence, Abhinavagupta paints it as a sanctuary of religious merit over which Śiva himself presides:

[Śiva,] the beloved of Gaurī, inhabits that [region] in order to spontaneously repel attacks on his kingdom (bhoga) together with [his] instruments, [the Rudras] such as

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744 For references, see footnote 727.

745 Śrīkaṇṭhacarita 3.19: kaṭāksite sāradayā dayāṃṛtadravārdradṛṣyā śrutiśāskulpadam | na sāstrabhogānaśanavratakiṣṭayaḥ bālāpyatra bibhṛati ‘In that [region of Kashmir] which is glanced at side-longingly by Śāradā whose eyes are moist with the nectarean flow of compassion, even the little children do not have auditory channels [made for] listening [to knowledge] that are subject to the austerity of fasting from the food that is the śāstras.’

746 Tantrāloka 37.39cd: adhivasati yad gaurikāntaḥ karair vijayādibhir | yugapad akhilaṃ bhogādāraṃ rasāt pariccitum.
Vijaya [/ in order to examine the floods of wealth (raised) as tributes through his (temples) such as Vijyeśvara].

In this double entendre, Śiva’s presence in Kashmir is referred to in conjunction with one of the major Śaiva shrine’s in the valley, Vijayeśvara. Apart from the sanctity and protection of Śiva’s presence in this shrine, even abandoned images of God manifest divine power in a place like Kashmir. Therefore, Kashmir, with its rare spiritual atmosphere, and adorned with its unique flora and fauna, doubles as a sacred garden for the adoration of the Goddesses of the Trika:

Scattered at every step with saffron flowers that are variegated with rows of trembling filaments that have a deep red luster inside [the blossoms], with violet petals opening out from white buds that are bursting forth, the earth in that [region] becomes a veritable garden for the veneration of the triad of Goddesses. The implication of this verse is that the practice of the Trika is especially efficacious in this region. This is due to the distinctive beauty of the land, celebrated for its harvest of saffron and grapes, providing the perfect natural stage for the Śākta liturgy. In this instance, Abhinavagupta is relating a common trope, the radiance of Kashmirian saffron, to the Trika tradition he has

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747 For further references to this site, see Rājatarāṇī 1.38 & 1.105-106, and STEIN’s footnotes ad loc.; Haracaritacintāmani 1.5 & chapter ten, which narrates the story of the inception of this form of Śiva; the third concluding verse of the Abhinavabhārata on the Nāṭyaśāstra; and a brief reference in SANDERSON (2009), p. 34, which cites evidence that the Vijayeśvara temple was under the jurisdiction of the Śaiva Saiddhāntikas during the thirteenth century.

748 Tantrāloka 37.48cd: sadṛṛttasāragurutaijasamūrtayo hi tyaktā api prabhugunān adhikāṃ dhvananti ‘Indeed, [that is the abode where] the solid metallic images [of the deities] that are beautifully formed powerfully suggest the qualities of God, even though they have been abandoned [i.e., are no longer worshipped].

749 Tantrāloka 37.45: udyadgaurāṅkuraviñātaḥ śyāmaraṇtaḥ palāsair antargadhāruṇarucilasats-kesarātvicitraḥ | ākṛṇā bhūḥ pratipadam asau yatra kāśmīrāpūṣpāḥ samyag devīritayajanodyānam āvīṣkaroti.

750 See Vikramāṅkadevacarita 18.72; Śrīkanṭhacarīta 3.6, 3.17; Rājatarāṇī 1.42.
systematically encapsulated in this masterpiece on tantric literature, the
Tantrāloka. This same strategy is visible in his verses on the wine made from the
grapes of Kashmir, also a recurrent theme\(^{751}\) in literary descriptions of the region.
Abhinavagupta adapts the trope to the context of Kaula ritual, which in utilizing
wine as a sacrament, identifies this intoxicating liquid with Bhairava:\(^{752}\)

In that [region] where the wine that is [a form of] Bhairava is shining intensely with
[Bhairava’s] four-fold energies: the lovely shade of the fruit of the orange tree; a
beautiful white hue of pale blossoming wheat; the delightful golden luster of a wild
citron that has been broken open; and shining with a dark radiance similar to a
kandali [plantain] blossom.

Given frequent statements of the deities’ adoration of wine as a premier ritual
substance in the scriptures of the Vidyāpīṭha, it is sometimes identified with
Bhairava.\(^{753}\) Kashmir, famed for its grape vineyards, not to mention a wine
festival, which according to the Nilamata\(^{754}\) was celebrated after the first snow

\(^{751}\) On references to wine vineyards and grapes, see Vikramāṅkadevacarita 18.72;
Śrīkaṇṭhacarita 3.5; and Rājatarangini 1.42, which is cited above.

\(^{752}\) *Tantrāloka* 37.42: nāraṅgārunaṅkānti paṅduvikacadballāvadātcchavi prodbhinnāmamātuluṅga-
kanakacchaḥbhāhāmaprabham ākerkuntalakandalipratikṛtiśāmmaprabhāhāsvaram yasmiṁ
śākīcatuṣṭaṇjojvalamalam madyaṁ mahābhairavan. Along with GNOLI (1999), p. 639, footnote 6,
I am uncertain of the botanical referent of kerīkuntalaj in this verse.

\(^{753}\) *Tantrāloka* 29.12cd-29.13: drākṣottham tu paraṁ tejo bhairavan kalpanojjhitam || etat svayam
rasaḥ suddhaḥ prakāśānandacinmaḥ āvadhūnāḥ priyaṁ nityaṁ tasmād etat pibet sadā. On this
identification, and the use of wine in Kula ritual, see also DUPUCHE (2003), pp. 87-89: “The
rejection of the terms ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ is first expressed in the use of the forbidden
ingredients and particularly in the use of wine which is described as ambrosia or nectar-of-
the-left (*vāma-amṛta)*... Wine has a series of other associations which start with *soma*...
However, generally speaking alcohol is proscribed so that the significance of alcohol in the
Kula ritual lies not so much in its intoxicating effect as in its sinfulness, for even a small
amount, even a whiff, is gravely wrong. The most important of the alcohols is wine which
takes on all the ambiguity associated with alcohol... Abhinavagupta explains the import of
alcohol by associating it with both liberation and enjoyment. He further explains the
overriding importance of wine by linking it with consciousness and Bhairava.’’

\(^{754}\) *Nilamata* 1.469-471 describes the festival known as *navamadyapāṇa* (*Drinking of the new
wine*) which is celebrated when the first snow has fallen, and includes vocal and
fall, naturally produces the preeminent ritual substance (in colorful varieties) to be consumed by tantric adepts.

Kashmir is not only the ideal environment for the pursuit of liberation through the Kaula Trika tradition, it is also an excellent place to enjoy worldly and otherworldly pleasures. Abhinavagupta underscores this fact in an enthusiastic endorsement, which sounds almost like a phrase one might find in a modern brochure:

Therefore, I am of the opinion that for either the realization of all the supernatural enjoyments that one desires or for the satisfaction of a perfect lifestyle, no [other] region compares to Kashmir.

The emphasis on earthly pleasures, wine, the sport of tantric consorts, often in conjunction with the influential presence of Kāmadeva, all expand upon Abhinavagupta’s vision of Kashmir as the ideal environment for spiritual realization by also billing it as a paradise of worldly enjoyments.

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755 *Tantra-loka* 37.40cd: *tan manye ḥam samabhilaśītāśeśasiddher na siddhyai kaśmiṁrebhyah param atha puraṁ pūrṇavṛty na tuṣṭyai.*

756 *Tantra-loka* 37.49: *saṁpūrṇaccandra-vimalaladyuvirākāntāgādhāngarāgagahanukūṃkumapiṇjarārīḥ | proddhā-taveta-salatāsita-cāma-raughai rāja-pāhi-sekam anīśaṁ dadaṁi smarasya ‘Where [it is as if] the golden shine of saffron excessively applied thickly all over the bodies of the beloved consorts of [tantric] heroes, similar to the pure rays of the full moon, is continuously performing the royal consecration of Kāmadeva [as King of Kashmir], in concert with the collection of white chowries that are the [white puffy] reeds waving around.’

757 For a memorable verse in this section of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical excerpt, in which he relates the effects of wine to Kāmadeva’s power, see *Tantra-loka* 37.43: *trinaya-nahākopajavāvillīna iha sthito madanaviśiṅkhavrīto madyacchaleṇa viṣmbhate | katham itarathā rāgaṁ moḥam maḍaṁ madanajvaraṁ vidadaḥ anīśaṁ kāmātaṅkair vaśīkurute jagat ‘It is here that Kāma’s collection of [flower] arrows, which incinerated by the blaze of Shiva’s intense anger, survive under the guise of wine. How else can we account for the fact that [wine], which constantly produces passion, delusion, intoxication, and the fever of love, could hold sway over people through these afflictions of Kāma?’
Abhinavagupta is not writing about Kashmir in a vacuum. The motifs of these local descriptions, as we have demonstrated in citations above, are shared with antecedents and later regional poetic portrayals, and need to be read in this broader Kashmirian literary context. Further consideration of this greater literary framework will militate against the facile conclusion that we are confronted with straightforward descriptions of Kashmir as it was in the tenth to eleventh centuries when Abhinavagupta flourished. In understanding the various factors that informed Abhinavagupta’s decision to write so copiously about himself and the world outside of his text, there are multiple sources to consider. In addition to the mature Kaula idiom treated in chapter four, we should also look to another potential influence: the Kashmirian literati’s particular disposition towards the local and the literary resources they deployed based upon that orientation. Abhinavagupta does, however, customize themes shared with other regional narratives to further underscore Kashmir’s innate suitability for the practice and transmission of the Kaula Trika tradition.

This section of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogue illuminates a local world that lends itself to a wide spectrum of cultivation, a land that is graced by the compassionate gaze of Śāradā, where everyone is “either a poet or a scholar.” In the descriptions of Kashmir’s exceptional intellectual environment, we can witness the Kaula model of religious authority being updated with new emphases, namely, the importance of coming of age in a cosmopolitan hub of Sanskrit intellectual culture. Being born and raised in Kashmir, for Abhinavagupta, is to be reared in the lap of Sarasvatī, a goddess, whom we should recall, provides the archetype for the supreme Goddess of the Trika, Parā
In addition to his idealized description of “place”, we are extremely fortunate to have a large number of self-referential statements, in this passage of the *Tantraloka* and other texts, that trace Abhinavagupta’s own intellectual formation. These verses depict the trajectory of a career student who took full advantage of Kashmir’s diverse arenas of knowledge.

§ 5.4 A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

Born into a family tradition of great erudition, in one of the most vibrant centers of learning in medieval India, Abhinavagupta’s account of the arc of his notably wide-ranging education reveals his fervor for knowledge. Although many of the descriptions of Abhinavagupta’s religious, scholastic, and literary training can be read as unembellished accounts of the various disciplines he mastered in the course of his life, when we consider the potential didactic dimension of these

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758 The adaption of Goddess Sarasvatī into Parā by the redactors of the *Siddhayogesvarīmata*, noticed by TÖRZSÖK and discussed in chapters two and four, is obvious in the text’s *parāsādhana*. See *Siddhayogesvarīmata* 12.2-12: “Listen, O Goddess, to the highest secret, which is to be protected with care, by which poetic talent will come about; listen to it attentively. After worshipping the deities properly, with their own forms, making effort, and after making fire offerings as prescribed, one should do the following visualization. One should visualize Parā with her form, sitting on a lotus in the air, with the book of all knowledge in her left hand, o Beautiful One, and holding a beautiful, heavenly rosary of crystal in her right hand. One is to visualize a garland on her neck, a garland of heavenly beauty, made up with beads which are round like the buds of the kadamba tree and which shine forth like fire. This garland reaches down to her feet and is as spotless as crystal all over. One should then visualize her as pouring out the divine nectar of immortality, in the middle of a kadamba grove. One should see her pouring forth the nectar of all knowledge in great floods and one should see this nectar enter in one’s mouth, and that one’s self has the same form. After this, the best of Śādhakas should visualize that this nectar comes out of his mouth as a flow of Śāstras. If one has done this visualization, he will be able to produce fascinating ornate poetry within a month. He will be a teacher of all doctrines; and after six months, he will be able to produce Śāstras himself. He will know all the sciences as the fruit of the Myrobalan in the hand [i.e. clearly, as if they were self-evident truth]. Whatever has something to do with words and whatever is to be known in this world, will be his, both as to its formulation and content.” Translation of TÖRZSÖK (1999).
autobiographical details, a number of interesting insights follow. Abhinavagupta’s descriptions of his comprehensive education arguably model a particular interdisciplinary ethos that builds upon trends in the intellectual culture of post-scriptural Kashmir. This ethos, furthermore, is generalizable, that is to say, it traces an ideal course of study or a curriculum of religious education for future Śaiva aspirants. For Abhinavagupta, expertise in grammar, logic, and scriptural exegesis, and courtly literature, not to mention the metaphysical systems of competing religious traditions, is not extraneous to seeking the highest and most liberating esoteric knowledge. We will now explore Abhinavagupta’s inventory of his own education, and attempt to deduce some features of the philosophy of education implicit in his account. In reconstructing Abhinavagupta’s notion of a model education we are greatly assisted by his rather elaborate argument for studying with multiple gurus (in chapters thirteen and twenty-two of the Tantrālōka), a proposition which, based on the textual evidence, was evidently controversial in his time.

In looking into education in post-scriptural Kashmir it is vital to carefully distinguish between the various domains of learning that Abhinavagupta discusses, attending to the scope of those domains, and also their interrelation within the greater environment of Abhinavagupta’s intellectual culture and religious milieu. In an anecdotal reference to himself, Jayaratha, Abhinavagupta’s thirteenth-century commentator, makes a general domain distinction between scholastic training in the trivium of classical Sanskrit knowledge systems—grammar, Mīmāṃsā, and Nyāya—that are all “worldly”
(laukika), and training with a Śaiva guru, a process of cultivation that is “supermundane” (lokottara):\(^{759}\)

In this context I myself am an example, since in my search for knowledge in the transcendent [domain], namely the dualistic and non-dualistic Śaiva scriptures, I obtained a single guru who possessed all-encompassing insight, the illustrious Kalyāṇa, an abode of the highest good fortune who made that known by his gracious glance alone. On the other hand, regarding worldly [disciplines], such as grammar, Mīmāṃsā, and logic, [my guru] was Śaṅkhadhara, whose name is auspiciously invoked.

In Abhinavagupta’s narration of his own education we find references to these two domains as foundational to his training, both his mastery of the “supermundane” Śaiva revelatory sources and his command of the “worldly” Sanskrit scholastic traditions of grammar (pada), logic (pramāṇa), and Vedic exegesis (vākya). Regarding the mundane sciences, these three fields of scholarship form something of a classical trivium\(^{760}\) of Sanskrit knowledges that is prescribed across Indian intellectual and religious traditions, especially by erudite exegetes. Sanskrit grammar (padaśāstra), the gateway to any systematic Sanskrit education, is a natural starting point for any pupil’s study. Logic (māna / pramāṇa-śāstra), which refers to the classical system of Nyāya, provides post-scriptural authors like Śaṅkarācārya, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakṛṣṇa, Utpaladeva, and Abhinavagupta the tools for apologetics, i.e. defending their scriptural corpus against hypothetical critiques. By extension, this training also supplies methods for rationally establishing the validity of Śaiva axioms on the basis of a canon of

\(^{759}\) Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 13.342: atra cāham evodāharaṇaṁ yad vijñānārthāṁ maṁ lokottare dvayādvayātmani śaivasāstrādān abhikhyāmātraprakhyāpitaparasrīyahsamśrayaḥ śrīmān kalyāṇah pūrnavijñānāvān ēka eva gurur labdhaḥ padavākyapramāṇūdau laukike śrīmān sugrīhitāmadyayāḥ śaṅkhadharaś ceti.

\(^{760}\) For the characterization of these three fields as the traditional “trivium” of Sanskrit knowledge, see POLLOCK (2001a), p. 5.
rational proofs that were widely-accepted. Mīmāṃsā (vākyāśāstra), for its part, furnishes sophisticated principles of scriptural exegesis, which would also be vital to a project the likes of the Tantraloka, which navigates, organizes, and interprets a vast field of scriptural literature.

In marked contrast to the disparagement of scholasticism in Kaula literature, referred to as the snare of learning (śāstrāla) in the Krama tradition, Abhinavagupta reiterates his own mastery of grammar, logic, and exegesis throughout his texts as key features of his edification that qualify him as an author. In an illuminating verse that concludes both of his commentaries on the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, Abhinavagupta argues for the indispensability of these two fields of discourse, worldly scholastics and otherworldly revelation, in the process of Self-realization:

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761 See second closing verse of Abhinavagupta’s vivṛtivimarśinī ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā: tajjamadehapadabhāk padavākyamānasānakārasānaskṛtāmatiḥ paramesāsaktah | sāmarthyataḥ śivapadāmāmbujabhaktibhāgī dārāṁjaiaprabhṛtibandhukathāṁ anāptah ‘[Abhinavagupta] is endowed with the vessel of the body that was born of that [kind of person, namely Cukhalaka], his intelligence refined by his training in grammar, Mīmāṃsā, and Nyāya. Endowed with devotion to the lotus feet of Śiva because of the inherent capacity of the energy of the supreme Lord, he never entertained the drama of family [life], [taking] a wife, [having] a son, and so on.’; Cf. The second closing verse of the Dhwanyālokalocana: śrīsiddhicelacaranābdajapārāgapiḥbhāṭendurājaḥimationisāṅskṛtabuddhileśah | vākyapramāṇapada-vediguruprabandhavevāraso vyaracayad dhvanivastuṛttim ‘His limited intelligence refined by the intellect of Bhaṭṭendurāja who was purified by the pollen of the lotus feet of Siddhicela, Abhinavagupta, who delights in devoting himself to the texts of the masters who are experts of scriptural exegesis, logic, and grammar, composed this commentary on the topic of poetic suggestion (dhvani).’

762 Closing verse 12 of the vivṛtivimarśinī and closing verse 2 of the vimarśinī ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā: vākyapramāṇapadatattvasadāgamārthāḥ svātmopayogam amutaḥ kila yānti śastraḥ | bhunān rasāṁ jalānyānāṁ ca na sasyapuṣṭyai muktvārkaṁ ekam iha yojaṉitaṁ kṣamo ‘nyāh. My understanding and interpretation of this verse benefits from reading and discussing it with Dominic GOODALL.
It is only because of that knowledge system (śāstra), [Pratyabhijñā],\textsuperscript{763} that the principles of exegesis, logic, grammar, together with the doctrines of the authentic [Śaiva] revelatory tradition, become instruments for [the realization of] one’s own Self. What else besides the sun is able to integrate the essences of earth and water to produce an abundant harvest of grain?

Abhinavagupta here employs a semantic figure of speech, arthāntaranyāsa, which further illuminates a particular point through a general adage. The adage is that only energy of the sun can draw together all of the ingredients essential to agricultural cultivation, earthly and watery essences (rasa), to produce grains. Lining up each element of this general principle with Abhinavagupta’s specific statement, the resultant meaning is that only the radiance of Śaiva philosophy of recognition (pratyabhijñā) is able to synthesize the essences of knowledge that are “of the earth” (bhauma)—grammar, logic, and hermeneutics—with the more subtle liquid essences (jalamaya), the Śaiva scriptures, to generate the harvest of Self realization. Only in the radiant presence of Śaiva philosophy do other Indian scholastic traditions become useful, otherwise they are not helpful, which implies that in isolation these knowledge systems lead one astray. In addition to this exaltation of Pratyabhijñā, this verse also suggests that these fertilizing elements, grammar, epistemology, exegesis, and the Śaiva scriptures, are indispensable to realizing the highest goal; the sun cannot transform a seed into grain in the absence of water and earth, and the nutrients within them.

Abhinavagupta is making a strong statement here. There is no room for anti-intellectualism on this path of liberation. It is true that the necessity of

\textsuperscript{763} The identification of “that” (amutah) śāstra in this verse with Pratyabhijñā is based on the previous verse, Iśvarapratyabhijñāvīrtiśimśiṇī closing verse 11, the topic of which is the Iśvarapratyabhijñā[kaśīka]: paricinuta tad evām Iśvarapratyabhijñāṁ dahata hydi niviṣṭaṁ vāsanācakraśālaṁ \| jvaladanaśākāntarlelihānāraṇeṣṭhiraśputicayabhāk kim sūtaye bijapūrṇaḥ.
scholasticism is in some ways a natural consequence of the social and intellectual features of the post-scriptural milieu of Kashmir. This was an environment which placed exegetical demands on learned commentators engaged in the business of logically establishing the truths of their revelatory traditions in the pan-Indian discourse of Sanskrit philosophy. Beyond this circumstantial exigency, connected in part to an expanding audience and social domain for Śaiva tantric discourse, Abhinavagupta here implies that these skills are indispensable for liberation itself. We have strayed slightly from the Tantrāloka in our above analysis of various statements in which Abhinavagupta champions a scholastic training. It is not surprising that there would be strong emphasis on a foundation of scholasticism in Abhinavagupta’s śāstric commentaries cited above, but does this same evidence appear in concluding epilogue of the Tantrāloka?

Two verses, which immediately follow his description of losing his mother, confirm that these intellectual disciplines were indeed essential to the formation of the author of the Tantrāloka. They also introduce an additional domain of expertise that Abhinavagupta invokes in portraying his own education, the ability to relish poetry:764

After being initiated into the “thicket of words” [grammar] by my father, my mind cleansed of impurity by the spray of waves from the ocean of logic, while engaged in the intense pleasure of aesthetic emotion from [reading] poetic works I was seized by an intoxicating devotion to Śiva that spontaneously caught hold [of me]. Having become immersed in that [intoxicating devotion], I never again had regard for any of

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the worldly ways of life. In order to nurture the satisfaction I found in that [devotion to Śiva], in those days I served in the houses of [many] teachers.

In these evocative verse, the study of grammar and logic is mentioned in tandem with the refined pleasure of relishing literary art, which can be read collectively as comprising an expanded ideal portfolio for the office of the Kaula guru according to Abhinavagupta’s representation of his own education. Here a scholastic bedrock and the enjoyment of aestheticized emotion together prepared the way for a sudden irruption of intoxicating devotion to Śiva. Abhinavagupta then informs us that he was compelled to further nurture this devotion through tutelage with a range of teachers, fifteen of whom he goes on to list.765

A similar comprehensive portfolio of training, calling attention to Abhinavagupta’s scholastic and literary proficiency as an author, is broached at the beginning of his longer commentary (vivrtivimarśinī) on the

Īśvarapratyabhijñākārīka:766

765 Tantrāloka 37.60-62: *āmardasaṃtātimaḥāṃravakārṇadhāraḥ | saddaśīkaikaraśvarātīmajavāmānāthaḥ (āmarda em.: ānanda Ed.) | śrīnaṅthasaṃtātimaḥāṃravagharhkāntiḥ śrīvītāṯīrātanāyaḥ svapitrprasādaḥ || | trayambiṣkraparāśāraṣayīsāmānāndāṃtīmajavālakṣmanaguptanāthaḥ | turyākhyasaṃtātimaḥadadhāpiṇaracandraḥ ‘śrīsāmunataḥ (em.: śrīsoma Ed.) sakalavīrtikīla | | sāṃbhūnātha | Vāmanātha, son of the excellent Guru Eraka, [my] helmsman over the ocean of the [Saiddhāntika] Āmardaka [alias Ānanda] lineage, (2) the son of Bhūtirāja, initiated by his father, [my] sun in the vast sky of the Śrīnātha lineage, (3) Lakṣmanaguptanātha, disciple of Utpala, the disciple of Somānanda, [my Viṣṇu] lying on the ocean of the lineage of Tryambaka, (4) [the Kaula lineage] Sāṃbhūnātha who was known to be omniscient, descended from Sumati[nātha], [my] full moon over the ocean of the Kaula lineage (5) Candrasaṃrana, (6) Bhavabhaktivilāsa, (7) Yogāṇanda, (8) Abhinanda, (9) Śivaśakti, (10) Vicītrāṇātha, and other great [scholars] such as (11) Dharmaśīva, (12) Vāmanaka, (13) Udbhataśrī, (14) Bhūteśa, and (15) Bhāskara.” Emendations and translation of SANDERSON. See SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 327-328, footnote 316. For further detail on the second rather consequential emendation, see SANDERSON (2005), pp. 132-133, footnote 106.

766 Opening verse 5 of Abhinavagupta’s viwrītīmarśinī ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārīka: pārṇyavayakarāṇāṃgāhānasūciḥ sattamakāṃsitaṃśatprajñākālpalātivekakusumār abhyarcya hyddevatām | pṛyjaśyasavasārasundaramahāsāhityasauhityabhāg viśrāmyāmy ahāṃ īśvarādvayakahāntāsakhāḥ sāṃpratam.
Purified from a total immersion in grammar, having worshipped the deity that is the Heart with blossoms of discernment on the wish-fulfilling creepers of insight that have blossomed forth from the roots of the best logic, enjoying the loveliness of magnanimous poetry, beautiful as the essence of nectarean liquor, now in the company of the beloved—discourse on the nonduality of God—I will repose.

Both of these verses have been subjected to a literalist reading in an attempt to mine concrete biographical data on Abhinavagupta’s education, and in the process, their literary style and potential rhetorical function have been ignored. There is no question that Abhinavagupta was a serious student of classical Sanskrit poetry, and thus his representation of himself as such is not devoid of value as a historical reference. On display throughout the Dhvanyālokalocana and the Abhinavabhāratī is incontrovertible evidence of incisive literary analysis and constructive theoretical reflection. Abhinavagupta’s skill as a literary critic, furthermore, is predicated on an impressive command of the conceptual systems and antecedent literature of Sanskrit poetics (alaṅkāraśāstra) and dramaturgy (nāṭyaśāstra) demonstrated in those works. This also includes familiarity with a

767 This is how both PANDEY (1963) and RASTOGI (1987) read Tantrāloka 37.58-59. Even SANDERSON reads Tantrāloka 37.58, together with some of Abhinavagupta’s other self-references, as documenting the order of Abhinavagupta’s education while commenting on the influence Abhinavagupta’s father, who is referent of “he” in the citation that follows. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 124, footnote 86: “But it appears that he was Abhinavagupta’s teacher only in the science of grammar (vyākaraṇam), with which he began his scholarly career before he moved on to Logic (pramāṇaśāstram, tarkaśāstram), Hermeneutics (vākyāśāstram), Poetics (sāhityaśāstram), and finally the study of the Śaiva scriptures.” To support this sequence of learning, SANDERSON refers to four concluding verses of the Iśvarapratyabhijñākārīkā-vivrtivimarśini (vv. 2-5), Tantrāloka 37.58a, and Māliniślokavārttika 1.5. A close look at these sources does not confirm a clear order to unambiguously reconstruct Abhinavagupta’s education, although grammar is a naturally starting point and is often referred to first, and mentions of enjoying literature come after the trivium of Sanskrit grammar, hermeneutics, and logic, and before Śaivism. One thing that problematizes such efforts is that the compound padāvākyaṁaṇa (in Iśvarapratyabhijñākārīkāvivrtivimarśīni v. 2) is a formula whose order is flexible. The second closing verse of the Dhvanyālokalocana, for example, gives vākyapramāṇānapada when referring to Abhinavagupta’s study of these traditions, and therefore we should proceed with caution when it comes to determining the order of his study, particularly in these fields.

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tremendous range of dramas and poems in both Sanskrit and Prakrit which he cites as examples. Nevertheless, given that Abhinavagupta is portraying his own education of literary arts in these two Śaiva texts, where that expertise is a component in his authorization of himself as a trustworthy Śaiva guru, it is compelling to ask what role this training plays in his greater soteriological project.

Continuing on this thread, given that the *Tantrāloka* is a primarily a prescriptive text, envisioning an ideal world designed to transform the reader rather than transparently reflect or document the world as it is, it is important to attempt to delve beyond the literal sense of these verses. Why does Abhinavagupta describe himself as a connoisseur of poetry in the *Tantrāloka*? First of all, there is evidence that these self-representations conform to a literary trope of the ideal trajectory of a student first exalting in the joys of exercising philosophical prowess and aesthetic sensitivity, discovering the non-ultimate of said joys, and finally coming to rest in the unparalleled bliss of devotion to or repose in God.768 Another interpretive strategy is to consider the didactic

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768 This idea of studying philosophy and literature intensely, only to find the ultimate bliss of devotion to God, is found in *Dhvanyālōka* 3.43b: *yā vyāpāra-vatī rasāni rasayitum kācit kaviṇām navā drṣṭīr yā parinīṣṭhitārthaviśayonmesa ca vaipaścītī | te dve apy avalambya viśvam anīśa nirvarṇayanto vayaṁ śrāntā naiva ca labhām abdhiśayan tvadbhaktitulyāṁ sukham ‘After devoting myself to that wondrous (kācit) fresh insight of poets that is engaged in relishing the aesthetic sentiments and the insight of intellectuals that correctly reveals the domain of objects, and ceaselessly contemplating the world, I have become weary. [Indeed,] a joy that is equal to devotion to you, O [Viṣṇu] lying upon the ocean, was certainly not found [in these endeavors].’ Abhinavagupta’s commentary on this verse expatiates on the hierarchy of enjoyments that the verse alludes to. See Abhinavagupta’s *locana* ad *Dhvanyālōka* 3.43b: *evam prathamam eva paraṁśavahbhaktibhājāḥ kutāhalaṁvatrāvapaṁbhitakavipramāṇikobhayavyātīrte punar api paraṁśavahbhaktivirśāntīr eva yuktē | sakalapramāṇapariniścitadṛśadṛśavisayavisayavādājāṁ yat sukham yad api lokottaraṁ rasacaravaṁyānaniṁ tata ubhayato ‘pi paraṁśavahvācivirśāntī(!) vandanaḥ prakṛṣṭye tadāhaviprāṇyaṁtārāvadabhiḥ hi rasāśvāda ity uktam prāg asmābhīḥ | laukikan tu sukham tato ‘pi nṅkṛtāprāyanāḥ bahuttaraduhkhānusāngād ‘It follows that [this stanza applies] to a
function of Abhinavagupta’s mention of relishing literature as a propaedeutic to being seized by devotion to Maheśa or reposing with his beloved, discourse on the nonduality of God. One possible reading along these lines is that a truly well-rounded education is one that engages not only scholastic Sanskrit disciplines, but also trains one to read poetry. This latter skill is certainly apropos to Abhinavagupta’s Kashmirian milieu, where scholars “came to dominate the discourse on poetics throughout the Sanskrit world for at least four centuries.”

Understanding Abhinavagupta not merely as a unique individual, but also an model Śaiva teacher, these passages suggest that one should not only aspire to become a fully-illuminated Kaula Siddha, but also a scholastically trained, literary savant. Here Abhinavagupta is completely distancing himself, and by extension, the consummate Śaiva guru he is meant to embody, from the romantic notion of the illiterate mystic.

We find further evidence that multiple streams of knowledge are meant to coincide in the education of a Śaiva guru in Abhinavagupta’s representation of himself as an exemplar of studying with multiple masters, and in his injunction for Śaiva initiates to do the same. Not only does Abhinavagupta enumerate

person who was first engaged in devotion to Parameśvara, who then out of curiosity dedicated himself to the occupation of both poet and philosopher, [only to] once again [realize] that coming to rest in devotion to the Parameśvara is the best. The bliss of reposing in God is superior to both the joy that arises from accurately determining different objects, both seen and unseen, by means of every instrument of valid knowledge as well as the otherworldly joy that consists in relishing aestheticized emotion, for the relishing of rasa is [but] a reflection of a drop of that [bliss of reposing in God]. We have set this forth earlier. However, worldly joy is generally even lower than this [relishing of rasa], because it is enmeshed in countless [forms of] suffering.’

fifteen of the teachers that he served, he specifies the tangible effects of this eclectic education on his own consciousness, which culminated in his becoming enamored with Śaiva philosophy:

[Abhinavagupta,] in whom [the Goddess] Śrī has come to reside due to the blossoming of the lotus of his awareness which has occurred from falling at the feet (pāda) of numerous excellent masters [/ from the falling of the rays of light (pāda) from the numerous excellent masters (who are like suns)], has become infatuated with the [philosophical] discourse on the nonduality of Śiva that was produced by the author of that illustrious knowledge system [Utpaladeva] and revealed as the truth by the venerable Lakṣmanagupta.

It is in virtue of studying with many of the best gurus (nānagurupravara) that Abhinavagupta’s awareness-lotus has expanded, making him an attractive place for the Goddess Śrī to take her seat. However, this is not just a unique feature of his own life story, but also an important component of a liberal vision of religious education that he prescribes for others. In support of the view that his own conduct in this respect is not without scriptural support, Abhinavagupta cites a verse, with slight adaptions, from a scripture called the Śrīmata, another name for the Śaṭaḥasrasamhitā of the Kubjikā corpus of Kaula scriptures:

Just as a bee, in search of fragrances, travels from one blossom to the next, so to a disciple, in search of wisdom, should go from one Guru to the next.

This verse is first cited by Abhinavagupta at the conclusion of chapter thirteen of the Tantrāloka, in an ancillary discussion dedicated to Śiva’s power of occlusion.

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770 See Tantrāloka 37.60-62, cited and translated above.

771 Third closing verse of Abhinavagupta’s vivotvimarṣini ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā: nānagurupravarapādāni pājspānasamvitsaroruhavikāsaniveśitaśrīḥ śrīśastraṅḍhaṭita-lakṣmanaguptapādasatypadarśitaśivāvdvayavādadrtaḥ.

772 Tantrāloka 13.335: āmodārtthi yathā bhṛṅgaḥ puspāt puṣpāntaranāḥ vrajet śiṣyo guru gurvantaranāḥ vrajet. For the scriptural source of this quote, Śaṭaḥasrasamhitā 20.16cd-19ab, see DYCZKOWSKI (2009), vol. 3, p. 21. Abhinavagupta’s transformation of the content and meaning of this verse is notable.
(tirobhāvaśakti).\footnote{773} Unlike the influence of Śiva’s grace (anugraha), this power explains why some aspirants wind up in the lower echelons of the universal dispersion of scriptural wisdom (ekāgama), such as the Vaiṣṇava or Buddhist fragments. To graduate to the more lofty spheres of revelation, Abhinavagupta recommends abandoning “lower” teachers, and move gradually, or if possible, rapidly\footnote{774} up the ladder, receiving initiations in progressively higher teaching traditions,\footnote{775} in order to ultimately unveil the greatest vista of revelatory truth stored exclusively in the Kaula Trika. The context of this verse, therefore, suggests that the injunction to study with many gurus may not champion an

\footnote{773}Tantrāloka 13.311-13.361, where the chapter ends. The following chapter, Tantrāloka 14, is wholly dedicated to an analysis of the nature of obscuration (tirobhāvasvarūpa).

\footnote{774}Tantrāloka 13.300cd-301: kramikāḥ śaktipātaṃ ca siddhānte vāmake tataḥ | dakṣe mate kule kauḷe sādardhe hṛdaye tataḥ | ullaṅghanavaśād vāpi ihaṭīty akramam eva vā ‘A gradual descent of Power [is one where] a person in the Siddhānta school then enters the Vāma school, [then] the Dakṣinā, the Mata, Kula, and Kaula, then the Trika, the heart [of Śaivism]. Or, by skipping over, [one may reach the Trika] without following [all steps in] this order or even immediately.’ This is the translation of Christopher WALLIS (2014), p. 348.

\footnote{775}On the hierarchy of initiations that a Śaiva aspirant moves through, highlighting major tiers in the upper reaches of revelation, see SANDERSON (2014), p. 61, footnote 231: “For explicit stating of this hierarchy in the literature of the Trika see Tantrāloka 22.40c–42b: siddhānte dīkṣātaṃ tantrā daśāstādaśāḥhedini || bhairaviye catuḥṣaṣṭau tān paśuṃ dīkṣaṭaṃ trike || siddhāvīrāvaliśāre bhairaviye kule ‘pi ca || paścadikṣākramopāta dīkṣānxitaṃ vṛttanjanijñīta ‘He may initiate into the [system of the] sixty-four [scriptures] of Bhairava such bound souls as have already been initiated into the [Śiddhānta] with its ten and eighteen constituent [Śiva]tantras and Rudratantras, and those in turn into the Trika [= Malinīvijayottara], and the Bhairavakula, whose essence is the Śiddhāvīrāvali. The initiation that we call ultimate is attained by passing successively through these five initiations’. Jayaratha on Tantrāloka 13.302 quotes a passage that distinguishes the five initiations as being centred on five different transformative processes: haurī dīkṣā tu siddhānte tantré yojanikā śmrtoy | trike samāveśavatī kule stobhātmikā matā || sāmarasamayayā kule dīkṣā paścadvīdhoti ‘Initiation is taught to be of five kinds. In the Śiddhānta it is [principally] through offerings into the fire. In the Tantras [of Bhairava] it is the fusion [of the soul of the candidate with the deity at the end of the fire-ritual that is crucial]. In the Trikā [= Malinīvijayottara,] initiation requires [one of the modes of penetration by Rudraśakti known as] Samāveśa. In the Kula [= Bhairavakula] it is a state of automatism (stobhālī) [in which it is the possessing deity that moves one’s limbs]. In the Kaula [= Vīrāvalī/Śiddhāvīrāvalī] it is a state of spontaneous fusion [with the consciousness of the initiator].”
eclectic education for its own sake, and likewise, that Abhinavagupta regards the knowledge of non-Śaiva traditions as utterly dispensable. Studying with multiple gurus initially appears as a natural requirement only for those who, impelled by Śiva’s grace, are destined to become Śaiva gurus in their own right, and thus adopt gurus as necessary in an upward climb through hierarchically ordered tiers of revelation.\footnote{\textit{Tantrāloka} 22.43-22.44: \textit{yo ātihsthamahesānacodanātakah suvistrtaḥ | śāstra-jñānam samanvichet so ‘pi yāyād bahūn gurūn | taddikṣās cāpi grhṇīyād abhiśecanapaścimāḥ | jñānapodbalikās ta hi tattajñānavatā kṛtāḥ ‘Whoever seeks out the knowledge of the śāstras which is exceptionally vast, because of prompting of Śiva who abides in their heart, that person should avail themselves of many gurus and also receive initiations [from them] which culminate in consecration [as a guru]. For those [initiations] performed by various [gurus] possessed of insight corroborate their knowledge.’} 

As Abhinavagupta’s discussion in chapter thirteen proceeds, however, he reveals another reason for studying with multiple gurus. Śaivas should not be satisfied with being initiated into the esoteric teachings of the Kaula, and thus grow lackadaisical about their ongoing study on account of being parochially fixated upon a single stream of revelation, even if it is the ultimate one. On the contrary, as the compendious nature of the \textit{Tantrāloka} itself testifies, and Abhinavagupta advocates, one should synthesize the knowledge of all scriptural traditions.\footnote{\textit{Tantrāloka} 13.343: \textit{nāna-gurūgamasrotahpratibhāmātramāśritam | kṛtvā jñānārṇavaṃ svābhīr vipruddhīḥ plāvayen na kim.}}

Upon merging only the intuitive insights of many gurus and streams of revelation, shouldn’t one plunge into the ocean of knowledge by means of their respective drops [of water / facets of knowledge]?

This verse suggests that studying with multiple gurus is not just about ascending from lower to higher strata of revelation; it is about merging the essential part of
all of these streams into one ocean, and then taking a dip. The optative form of the verb conveys an injunctive sense, prescribing the reader to take knowledge from various streams and gurus, to become like a bee collecting pollen from many flowers, regardless of whether they are higher or lower. Each form of knowledge should then be synthesized, like rivers merging into a great ocean of learning. Notice that Abhinavagupta also offers a principle for intelligently navigating the religious diversity of these various streams and guru lineages: he instructs us to adopt only the *pratibhā*—the most intuitive or insightful elements—of any given lineage, implying that all lineages and text traditions have intrinsic value, even if they don’t get everything right.

To further establish an important precedent to studying with multiple gurus in this spirit, Abhinavagupta looks to claim of a revered post-scriptural Kashmirian guru, Kallāṭabhaṭṭa, author of the *Spandakārikās*, which inspires his own approach:778

This is the verdict of the blessed guru Kallāṭa [Bhaṭṭa]: “I who have had [many] teachers from Tapanā to Moṭaka, and have been the disciple of everyone, am not poor in the teachings.” [Abhinavagupta goes on to say:] For this reason, I too, out of this curious interest in the viewpoints of lower knowledge systems, served those expositors of logic (Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika), Vedic ritual, as well as Buddhist, Jain, and Vaiṣṇava teachers... Therefore, one should never entertain doubt about having multiple Gurus.

Here Abhinavagupta cites one of Kallāṭabhaṭṭa’s few self-referential statements in his ninth-century *Spandakārikāvṛtti*.779 Kallāṭa boasts that he was a disciple of

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778 *Tantrāloka* 13.344-13.346 & 13.349ab: ā tapanān moṭakāntamaṇi yasya me ‘sti gurukramah | tasya me sarvaśīṣyasya nopadesadaridrata | śrīmatā kalaṭenetthāṃ gurunā tu nyarāpyata | aham aṣṭa evādhaḥśāstradyāṣṭikutiśāḥ | tārīkāśṛautābuddhāḥdvaśnavaṅḍīṃ asevisi ... tasmān na gurubhūyastve viśāṅketa kādācana.

779 *Spandakārikāvṛtti* third concluding verse.
everyone (sarvaśisya), and this statement of Kallaṭa helps us account for the ecumenical flavor of his text, which actively distances itself from sectarian affiliations within the Śaiva religion. And Abhinavagupta follows this citation with the words “aham api” [“(I too) studied with multiple gurus]. Abhinavagupta is able to locate a tradition for an interdisciplinary training in guru Kallaṭa’s brief statement, but immediately elaborates it by telling us that he “served” (aseviṣi) teachers in traditions well beyond the ambit of Śaiva revelatory streams.

Why did Abhinavagupta study not only with experts of logic, but also Jain, Buddhist, and Vaiśṇava masters? He provides a compelling reason: “out of curiosity” (kutūhala). This is the same Sanskrit term that describes the insatiable curiosity of seers and sages in the frame stories of the Purāṇas, a literary convention that justifies the Purāṇas open and dynamic character, because the sages’ curiosity motivates new and repurposed revelatory content (as we discussed in chapter two). Abhinavagupta, possibly drawing on the well-worn theme780 of curiosity in relation to an expanding textual horizon, is gesturing towards a cosmopolitan mode of learning across religious boundaries and text traditions. Abhinavagupta also uses the same term when commenting on Ānandavardhana’s poetic example of a person who is compelled by the bliss of philosophical mastery, and the more refined aesthetic pleasures of literary art,

780 In chapter two, we also noted how the redactors of the Niśvāsamukha capitalize on kutūhala or the sentiment of curiosity to explain why the mass conversion of Vedic seers to initiatory Śaivism in its frame-story.
only to return to the ultimate bliss in which all other amusements appear as mere shadows of delight.\textsuperscript{781}

Not unrelated to curiosity, another rationale for why Abhinavagupta makes a record of his great breadth of study—from scholastic disciplines and refined poetry to the metaphysical systems of competing religious traditions—is that the Kaula ideal guru, whose training he is modeling, should be utterly enamored with all forms of learning. For Abhinavagupta, in fact, the impulse to study texts and further refine one’s intelligence is a sure sign that Śiva’s grace is working:\textsuperscript{782}

If [one objects]: ‘The will of the Lord, which is absolute (avikāla), cannot be subjected to critical examination (vicāra), [so] enough of vain efforts such as concentrating on books, discussing, explaining or critically examining [them]! This heavy burden must necessarily be abandoned: [people] should remain silent, only the Lord’s will may save [whoever] is to be saved!’, [we answer that] it is precisely the [Lord’s] will, i.e. grace, which thus makes [us] endeavour critical examination: [people] should certainly not remain at ease while just stretching their legs and enjoying [existence] without realizing [what] they themselves [are] or while avoiding to cultivate a refined intelligence [so as to obtain] the subtlest realization (vimarśa)—[a realization] which gets ever more subtle as one receives the grace of the Highest Lord, which [in turn] is more [or less] intense according to oneself (svāpekṣa).

This sentiment, that one should never lean on grace as an excuse for not pursuing intense study and critical examination of texts to continually refine

\textsuperscript{781} See Abhinavagupta’s locana ad Dhvanyāloka 3.43b: evam prathamam eva parameśvarabhaktibhājah kutūhalamātrāhollamibhavatikāvīrayatvam bhagavasya evam prakāsitaḥ parameśvarabhaktiśrīnītvā eva yukteti. This commentary, and the original verse, are both translated above.

one’s realization (vimarṣa), is echoed in Abhinavagupta’s description of his own inspired condition.\textsuperscript{783}

Her [Ambā’s] brother was Abhinava, not only in name, but also due to his excellent deeds, [for] no sooner had he drunk the elixir of knowledge than his thirst for more of that [elixir] increased exponentially.

Abhinavagupta represents himself as someone whose thirst for more knowledge is ever expanding. He is not only Abhinava in name; this appellation also refers to a key feature of his excellent deeds or way of life (saccarita), his impulse to continually savor “new” and “fresh” (abhinava) vistas of knowledge, to never become complacent in the endeavor of learning. For Abhinava, knowledge is ever-new. In a similar vein, he also alludes to the fact that a group of his disciples, who approached him to compose the Tantrāloka, are inspired by a similar kind of divinely inspired intellectual awakening, which comes to fruition only in relishing texts.\textsuperscript{784}

The argument to study with multiple gurus, therefore, can be understood as proceeding in two directions. One must abandon gurus, as needed, upon realizing that they are situated on lower scriptural tiers, which is a part of grand ascendant arc culminating in the acquisition of a Trika Kaula guru

\textsuperscript{783} Tantrāloka 37.80: bhrātā tadyo `bhinavaś ca nāmnā na kevalaṁ saccaritair api svālī | pītena vijñānarasena yasya tattraiva tyṣṭā vavṛdhe nīkāmam.

\textsuperscript{784} Tantrāloka 37.70: ācāryam abhyarthayate sma gādham sampūrṇatantrādhiṣṭamāya samyak | jāyeta daivānugṛhitabuddheḥ sampat prabandhatkarasaiva sampat `[Another group of people] intensely petitioned [me as their] teacher [to write the Tantrāloka] to give rise to an all-encompassing comprehension of the tantras. [Indeed,] the success that manifests for a person whose intellect is favored by destiny is a success comprised of nothing but the unique relish of texts.’ The subject of this verse, anyajana, is supplied by the previous verse, Tantrāloka 37.69. The word “success” (sampat) is a technical term, referring to the incomparable realization that is liberation in the non-dual Saiva system. For more on this concept, see Abhinavagupta’s vimarśinī ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā, in particular his gloss of samastasampat.
of perfect knowledge. However, Abhinavagupta is also speaking to another group of people who have already “arrived”. Following his example, the project of the Tantrāloka, and his direct command, one should also move down the hierarchy of revelation, studying with, and even waiting upon, teachers of lower śāstras. The goal here is to synthesize all of that knowledge into a great ocean, and then become immersed in its expansiveness. A Kaula initiate should never be complacent when it comes to learning. They should not only swim in the limited area marked off by the embankments of their own esoteric wisdom stream. Motivated by a divinely infused curiosity for more knowledge, they should study with experts on grammar, epistemology, and exegesis; they should experience the wondrous delight of relishing literature; they should assume the role of devoted pupil to Jain and Buddhist teachers. In short, they should exhaust all immanent educational opportunities at their disposal.

In detailing his own scholastic, literary, and interreligious training, Abhinavagupta’s self-representation points to an ideal curriculum of a Śaiva guru as he envisioned and embodied it. The passages analyzed above are meant to represent Abhinavagupta’s own process of study that led to his accession to the office of guru—a Kaula guru refined by the study of an incredible span of textual traditions, in other words, a cosmopolitan Siddha. The comprehensiveness of multiple intelligences and forms of expertise that is so rare to find in a single Guru, but which must be collected by a true aspirant of Śaiva wisdom in the post-scriptural context by studying with multiple teachers as needed, forms an even broader framework for the exemplary tutelage of a Kaula master in the making.
§ 5.5 AWAKENING: THE FULL FLOWERING OF REALIZATION

One of the reasons Abhinavagupta chose not to let the aura of an authorless and timeless model of authority eclipse his own individual role and regional context in the production and transmission of knowledge is that he considered himself a source of authority. This was not only due to his outstanding intellectual achievements, but more importantly, because he was a fully enlightened Śaiva guru, a fact which he refers to unambiguously. Immediately following the list of fifteen gurus Abhinavagupta served in his career as a student, the epilogue of chapter thirty seven narrates his transition from disciple to guru:

Given the fact that these [teachers], whose favor was procured because of relishing [Abhinavagupta’s] service, transmitted to him their very own authority through which good fortune becomes manifest, and that their teachings are replete with the essence of the scriptures, and [also] that he did not look towards people who were unworthy vessels [for the teaching], therefore, satisfied in his own Self, he rejoiced in constantly investigating reality. Then, as soon as he resolved his mind to bestow grace upon [/ initiate] his own brother called Manoratha, who was endowed with devotion to Śiva, perfected from his direct grasp of all the śāstras, at that time a certain group of people approached him [as disciples].

Abhinavagupta here narrates his inception as a Śaiva teacher: upon receiving the authority of “these” (fifteen) gurus, who favored him due to his devoted service, he first acted as a guru in initiating his own brother, Manoratha, a decision that he tells us led to other disciples gathering to learn from him.

Although this verse suggests that Abhinavagupta is a living receptacle of the transmissions of multiple gurus, which in turn invests him with unique

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785 Tantrāloka 37.63-64: ete sevārasaviracitānugrahāḥ śāstrasārapraudhādeśaprakāṭasubhagāṁ svādhikārāṁ kilāsnai | yat samprādur yad api ca janāṁ aiśkatākṣetrabhūtān svātmārāmas tad ayam anīśam tattvasevārāso 'bhuṭ | so 'nugrahītum atha śāṃbhavabhaktībhājanīṁ svāṁ bhrataṁ akhilaśāstravimarśapūṛṇam | yāvan manah prāṇidadhāti manorathākhyāṁ tāvaj janaḥ katipayas tam upāsāda.

786 Listed in Tantrāloka 37.60-62.
authority sourced from a wide spectrum of traditions, he also reserves special
honor for one guru in particular, Śambhunātha. Among fifteen teachers listed,
Śambhunātha is revered as his source of the Kaula (ardhatraiyambaka) lineage,
and Abhinavagupta frequently cites him as the authoritative source of major
doctrines throughout the Tantrāloka.787

Even more importantly, in the following selection of verses, Śambhunātha
is credited as the catalyst of his full awakening in the Mālinīślokavārttika...788

Glory to the master the rays of whose enlightenment shining forth in all directions
have opened wide the lotus of my heart. May Śambhunātha be favourable to me,
gratified by [this offering] of flowers in the form of words; for purified by the
venerable Sumati and ever generous to the devotees of Śiva he has transmitted to me
a multitude of teachings directed to the destruction of [my] unliberated existence,
teachings that shine [with the radiance of] the Trika and the five streams [of the
lower Tantras], full of awareness [that animates those scriptures].
as well as the Tantrāloka:789

Abhinavagupta composes this [Tantrāloka] blazing with enlightened awareness
arising from [his] adoration of the lineage of teachers that removes the poison of the
bonds that impede enlightenment. That lineage of teachers [has been received]
from the two lotus feet of the auspicious Bhāṭṭānātha [Śambhunātha] and the feet of his
divine consort (bhaṭṭārikā).

This latter verse, located at the beginning of the Tantrāloka, is read by Jayaratha
as Abhinavagupta’s announcement of his qualification as a trustworthy guru

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787 On Abhinavagupta’s indebtedness to Śambhunātha, for both Kaula and non-Kaula forms
of the Trika, and his singling him out as the preeminent source of his complete
enlightenment, see SANDERSON (2005a), pp. 130-132.

788 Mālinīślokavārttika 1.2-4: yadīyabodhakirāṇair uallasadhīh samantataḥ | vikāśiḥrdyāṃbhojā
vayaṃ sa jayatād guruḥ || sābhimaṅraśaḍardhārthapāṇiścrosotahsamujjvalān || yah prādān mahyam
arthaughāṇa daurgyayadalananvratān || śrīmatsumatisamśuddhāḥ sadbhaktajanadaksināḥ ||
śambhunāṭhāḥ prasanno me bhūyād vākpuṣpatośitāḥ. Translation and minor emendation of

789 Tantrāloka 1.16: śrībhāṭṭānāṭhacaranaśaṅkhyayugāy tathā śrī bhaṭṭārikāṅghirṣirugalād gurusantatīr yā
bodhānyapāśaśīsanuttudupalānottabhojjvalo ’bhinavagupta idam karotī.
Furthermore, the Kaula transformation of this concept of religious authority from the Naïyāyikas (resulting in first-person claims of authorial reliability), which we explored as a critical strategy of Abhinavagupta’s model of revelation in chapter four, is directly corroborated by Jayaratha’s gloss, which includes a citation Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya:

[Abhinavagupta] is one by whom the nature of things is completely understood, who is [thus] blazing with “enlightened awareness” or direct perception [of reality] that is “arising,” that is to say, becoming focused upon those who are worthy of instruction, because of [his] “adoration” of that knowledge that has come down from the tradition of gurus, i.e. because the constant entering [of that knowledge] into his heart. Being [a person of this caliber], with the intention of communicating [the reality he has directly perceived] to others, he composes or teaches this [Tantrāloka] characterized by the doctrines and ritual procedures of the supreme Trika system, which has been comprehended from his guru’s instruction as the truth free from doubt, error, etc. By directly stating his name “Abhinavagupta,” which is famous the world over, his trustworthiness (āptatva) [as an author] is confirmed. For [the definition of an āpta] is taught by Vātsyāyana in his bhāṣya ad Nyāyasūtra 1.1.7 in this way: ‘One who directly experiences (sākṣātkāraṇa) the nature of things and is impelled by the desire to communicate that reality [to others], as it has been perceived, is a trustworthy teacher.’

Jayaratha here uses the major elements of Vātsyāyana’s definition of a trustworthy guru (āpta) in his interpretation of various words of Abhinavagupta’s verse, which are given above in quotations. In case his intentions are not obvious to those who are unfamiliar with the source of his terminology used in these glosses (sākṣātkāraṇa, avagatadharmā, cikhyāpiṣayā, and the various derivations of √upadiś consonant with upadeśṭ), he goes on to make it clear by directly citing Vātsyāyana’s definition (sākṣātkṛtadharmā)

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790 Jayaratha’s viveka ad Tantrāloka 1.16: tasya gurūparamparāgatasya jñānasya upāsanam punah punah cetasi viniveśanam tata utthito yo ’sāv upadeśtvayaviṣayō bodhah sākṣātkāraḥ tena ujjvalah samyagavagatadharmā san idam gurūpadesāt samśayaviparītāśadvidhavitvādhitvagatam anśīkṣāvapramarṣikārthāni śāstraḥ pariṇām prāti cikhyāpiṣayā karoty upadiśāti ity arthah । abhinavauguptah iti sakalalokaprasiddhadarśanāmodiraṇenāpi āptatevam eva upobalitam । uktam hi sākṣātkṛtadharmā yathādṛṣṭasyārthasya cikhyāpiṣayā prayuktā upadesāt cāptaḥ.
yathādṛśasyārthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta upadeśā cāptah). The structure of the verse, as well as the previous one from the Mālinīślokavārttika, does indeed match the basic format of a seer directly perceiving realities beyond the senses, and then taking the role of a teacher with the aspiration of sharing that vision with others, with the addition of reverential invocation of the source of his realization, his Kaula guru Śambhunātha.

However, Abhinavagupta does not perceive himself on par with the Vedic seers who are evoked by Vātsyāyana as magisterial āptaś. Remember, Abhinavagupta establishes the Kaula Trika as the pinnacle of revelation on the strength of its teachers’ unimpeded omniscience, in stark contrast to the teachers of the Vedas, Sāṅkhya, etc. whose vision extends only to the lower principles (tattva) of reality subsumed within māyā (which explains their dualistic cosmology). Further evidence that Abhinavagupta sees himself as a fully illuminated Kaula guru, who unlike the Vedic seers has internalized all of the principles and levels of reality, can be furnished from the Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa:791

What a wonder, O goddesses! You are filled with intense bliss that is flashing forth as you produce the spinning of the wheel (cakra) of my heart, [and the] upper edges of your trident spikes of knowledge are dexterous at severing millions of my bonds. Since this mind, speech, and body, inasmuch as it is thoroughly woven into You, is free of the fear of cyclical existence, therefore quickly and irresistibly take the form of grace in my heart. Upon assuming the role of guru, you have appointed me, [O Goddesses,] to the procedure of writing a commentary. Therefore, dear Goddesses whose state is lovely and beautiful in [my heart] cakra, pardon me for the meanderings of my speech and mind.

791 Concluding verses 20-21 of the Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa: haṃko hṛccacakrāpravrivaṇacanalarṣa-nirbhārāṇandapūrṇā devyo ’smatpāsakotipravighatānapatujñānaśūlordhvatāḥ | cetovākāyam etad vigatābhavabhayotpatti yuṣmāsu samyak pratāpi yat tena māhyāna vrajata kila hṛdi drākprasādiḥ prasahya | vyākhyādīkarmapariṇātipade niyukto yuṣmābhir asmi gurubhāvaṁ anupraviṣya | vācācittacāpālam idaṁ mama tena devyas taccakrācārurasthitāḥ kṣamadhvam.
Here Abhinavagupta makes explicit the ultimate inspiration of his compositions, the Goddesses of the Trika. These are not external deities, but rather Goddesses of his awareness radiantly coursing through the innermost impulses of his heart, appointing him, from within, to elucidate the essence of the Trika, and pervading his body, mind, and speech. Abhinavagupta, in thus revealing his status as a Siddha, demonstrates that the revelatory truths disclosed in his texts emanate from the highest authoritative source (adhikārin), a trustworthy Kaula teacher (āpta), who was born, raised, and educated in the perfect place (deśa) at the perfect time (kāla).

**CONCLUSION**

Much is missed if we choose to read Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages, including his proclamations about himself and his texts, in isolation, without reference to specific intertextual contexts that this study has endeavored to recover. These include the Kulamārga’s Siddha-centric model of religious authority, its further development exemplified in Kashmirian post-scriptural authors’ narratives of awakening and first-person claims of being immersed in the source of revelation (Śiva or Kālī), and the literary style of Kashmirian poets’ regional focus. Even more immediately, interpreting Abhinavagupta’s self-writing benefits significantly from grasping the thematic arc of chapter thirty-seven of the _Tantrāloka_, especially in light of his own theorization of revelation and the consummate agent of revelation, the Kaula guru. In the absence of these contexts, Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogues can appear as the idiosyncratic and highly stylized formulations of an unusually self-aware, or
perhaps—given his radical claims—narcissistic, historical individual who just so happened to know “the importance of biographical information.”

Situating Abhinavagupta in the horizons of the intellectual, literary, and religious traditions with which he was so extraordinarily fluent, examining the palettes with which he painted his ancestry, training, and inception as an exemplary Kaula master, two major insights can be gleaned. The first has to do with Abhinavagupta’s Kaula sources. Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passage conform to a mature Kaula idiom that encourages authors to proclaim their identification with the ultimate reality and provide clues for the reenactment of that identification within their disciples. To this end, his account traces the rarified conditions within which the *Tantrāloka*, and its utterly reliable author, originated. Abhinavagupta thus fashions himself as a Kaula guru, which in his own view refers to a being who is fully fused with Bhairava, a pure subjectivity that encompasses all of reality and for whom revelation is intrinsic, in other words, a matter of intuition. This insight also explains why a person who sincerely studies the *Tantrāloka*, the outpouring of the revelatory intuition of Abhinavagupta, will become Bhairava before our very eyes (*bhairavo sākṣat bhavet*). This transformation of the reader, Abhinavagupta indicates, can and should be recapitulated, i.e. transferred (*saṅkrānti*) to yet another disciple, which can be effected (in the right circumstances) by means of nothing more than a

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792 PANDEY (1963), p. 5: “Abhinava, it appears, knew the importance of biographical information about a writer in understanding his works. He has, therefore, not remained silent about himself, like Kālidāsa.” This statement only defers the question of why Abhinavagupta wrote so profusely about himself and his context by evoking another question, namely—why was Abhinavagupta cognizant of the importance of biographical information? Unfortunately, PANDEY leaves the latter question unanswered.
glance. Read in light of a Kaula rhetoric, Abhinavagupta’s first-person claims are not so much a boast about his own extraordinary status, which could effectively distance himself from (either a disbelieving or completely awed) audience. Rather, they ideally facilitate the transmission of the full power of the tradition by modeling the realization that the reader is meant to discover within.

Furthermore, in his philosophy of revelation, Abhinavagupta argues, in a true Kaula spirit, that any and all realizations of truth must be delineated according to a particular individual qualified for that truth who is located in a particular place and time. This is an incredibly important point for understanding why Abhinavagupta chose to write about the world outside of his text: in contrast to the Vedic exegetes (Mīmāṃsakas), it is the contextual factors of person, place, and time that determine the scope of a revelation’s validity. As a result, Abhinavagupta’s representation of his own person, including his ancestral line of Śaiva intellectual powerhouses, his divine conception, tutelage with many masters, and the blossoming of the heart-lotus of his awareness from the rays of his solar guru, Śambhunātha, all demonstrate that he is in full possession of the highest adhikāra (qualification). But the other contextual factors of time and place also provide testimony of the unique authority of his composition. To this extent

793 Tantrāloka 1.284cd-286ab: iti saptādhikāṁ enāṁ triṁśataṁ yaḥ sadā budhah | āhnikānāṁ samabhīyasetaḥ sa sākṣāda bhairavo bhavet || saptatrimśāsamāṁputranyad yad bhairavo bhavet || kimī citram anavo ’py asya drśā bhairavatāṁ iyuh ‘The wise person who constantly practices these thirty seven chapters [comprising the Tantrāloka] becomes Bhairava incarnate. Since that is Bhairava whose awareness is all-encompassing in the midst of the thirty seven [reality levels]. Would it be a surprise if even an individual soul would attain the state of Bhairava by the [mere] glance of this [person]?’ The purpose and meaning of this verse is considered at length in chapter four.
Abhinavagupta proves that he is the product of an extraordinary place, tenth- to eleventh-century Kashmir, at the high pitch of a cultural efflorescence whose intellectual achievements are memorable in the history of the subcontinent.

This brings us to our second major insight. Abhinavagupta is not content to remain within the grooves of a Kaula framework in his self-presentation as a model guru. In portraying his own education, in tandem with his argument for studying with multiple gurus, we encounter an ideal Kaula guru, now situated in the urbane environment of Śrīnagara, with new muses and novel tastes. Abhinavagupta assures his readers that, in addition to mastering the canons of Śaiva tantric literature, he was well-studied in the classical Sanskrit sciences of grammar, Vedic exegesis, and logic, and even mentions reveling in the study of the texts of these classical Sanskrit sciences. The implication of this portrayal is that these traditions comprise a vital scholastic foundation in the training of any Kaula master intent on effectively carrying forward the tradition. Abhinavagupta goes even further to suggest that refinement in these disciplines (earth)—in tandem with scriptural study (water) and Śaiva philosophy (sunlight)—constitutes a non-negotiable component of the process of realizing the Self (harvest of grains). This inclusion of a scholastic foundation for a well-rounded Śaiva religious education is especially pertinent in the wake of Somānanda’s, and

794 The second closing verse of the Dhvanyālokalocana: [...] vákyapramāṇapadavediguru-prabandhasevāraso.

795 See closing verse 12 of the viortivimarśinī and closing verse 2 of the vimarśinī ad Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā: vákyapramāṇapadatattvasadāgamārthāḥ svātmopayogam amutah kila yānti śāstraḥ | bhuumān rasāḥ jalamayāṁś ca na sasyapurṣyai muktvārkan ekam īha yojāyitum kṣamo 'nyah. This verse is translated and analyzed above.
even more so, Utpaladeva’s contributions to the Śākta Śaivism of post-scriptural Kashmir, most specifically the philosophy of recognition (set out in the Īśvarapratyabhijñākārika). This system of thought, which aims to convince its audience of the cogency of non-dual Śaivism without recourse to its scriptural literature,796 is seamlessly woven into Abhinavagupta’s Śaiva exegesis.

Abhinavagupta’s description of his tutelage also implies that Kaula gurus would do well to spend time absorbed in the joys that only good quality literature and drama can trigger. The Kaula guru should not be a stranger to the theater. The inclusion of the cultivation of aesthetic sensitivity in Abhinavagupta’s representation of his own education in verses designed to establish his unique qualification as an author, can be read as charting an ideal trajectory of learning that is meant to be replicated. Although the exact role literary connoisseurship is meant to play in the office of an initiatory Śaiva guru is never spelled out, fluency with Sanskrit literature is on display as a design feature of the autobiographical passages themselves. As we noted, the lyrical tone, complex meters, and profuse literary ornamentation of his autobiographical passage all mark a sudden departure from the less adorned style of the vast majority of the Tantrāloka. Abhinavagupta’s adoption of a refined literary register to narrate his family descent, region, studentship, and actualization as a guru, is proof of his integration of the resources of Sanskrit literature from well beyond the range of what we find in his Śaiva sources. There is further verification that Abhinavagupta saw aesthetic cultivation as essential to the training of a Kaula

796 On the purpose and scope of this text’s rational argumentation, which intentionally suspends preemptive claims regarding the primacy of Śaiva revelation, see RATIE (2013).
guru. This is found in his use of poetic suggestion (dhvani) in the *Tantrāloka*,\(^{797}\) which is evidence that his target Śaiva audience should be sensitive to the highest form of literary excellence (according to his own theory of aesthetics), and in his re-description of a literary connoisseur along Kaula lines.\(^{798}\)

Some of the underlying logic behind Abhinavagupta’s cosmopolitan update of the Śaiva guru, which brings the disciplinary domains of Sanskrit kāvya and śāstra into the orbit of a guru identified with Bhairava, can be extrapolated from his argument for studying with multiple gurus. Abhinavagupta evokes Kallaṭa who claimed to be disciple of everyone (sarvaśiṣya), a tribute that doubles as an authorization based on the precedent of the practice of an esteemed Kashmirian guru of nondual Śaivism. In the course of his works, Abhinavagupta enumerates a host of different gurus with which he

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\(^{797}\) Proof that Abhinavagupta consciously uses suggestion or poetic manifestation (dhvani) in his Śaiva exegesis is found in the *Dhvanīlokalocana*, where he cites one of his own verses from the end of the first chapter of the *Tantrāloka* as an example of the suggestion of a state of affairs (vastudhvani). See *locana ad Dhvanīloka* 1.13 = *Tantrāloka* 1.332: bhāvavṛtta hāthāj janasya hṛdayāṇyākramya yannartayaḥ bhāṅgībhīr vividhābhīr ātmānādyaṁ praccchādaṁ saṃkṛidaseṁ yaś tvam ādhān ādān sahādayaṁ manyatvaduḥśikṣito manyeḥ muṣya jādātmatā stutipadāṁ tvatsāmyasambhāvanātā ‘O things of the world, concealing your real nature by means of many disguises and forcefully taking hold of the hearts of people you play by means [of your] dancing. Those who call you insentient are themselves insentient [a fool], passing themselves off as sensitive they are not learned. I consider their stupidity to be a praise [for them] because it makes them similar to you.’ The identification of this verse in the *Tantrāloka* is mentioned in BAÜMER (1995).

\(^{798}\) In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta refers to an aesthetically sensitive person (sahādaya), the ideal audience of poetry and plays, in relationship to Śaiva practices found in texts such as the *Vijnānabhairava* (which Jayaratha cites in his commentary) that have a clear Kaula flavor. See *Tantrāloka* 3.209cd-210: tathā hi mādhure gite sparse vā candănādi keś ṣaṅkṛidaseṁ yāsau hṛdaye spandamāṇatā ānandaśaktiḥ saivoktā yataḥ sahādayo janah ‘To explain, the subtle pulsation in a heart that is free of indifference in the presence of sweet music or the [delightful] touch of sandalwood is taught [in this system] as ānandaśakti, the power of bliss. Through that (ānandaśakti) a person becomes a connoisseur (sahādaya).’
studied, i.e., logicians, Vedic ritualists, Buddhists, Vaiṣṇavas, experts on literary theory, Śaiva gurus of multiple streams, and Jain teachers, to name a few. This divulgence of the details of an eclectic education as a merit, that is to say, as a fact that helps sanction his reliability as an author, is based upon an ethos that Abhinavagupta also prescribes for others.

Abhinavagupta encourages his audience to constantly indulge their intellectual curiosity, to synthesize the essential ingredients of numerous knowledge streams, and to plunge into the expansive interdisciplinary and interreligious confluence that results from such an endeavor. With this educational ethos in place, the conceptual resources, techniques, and intelligences housed in different genres can be freed of their disciplinary restraints and begin to interface in creative ways, resulting in innovations in the way in which Kaula Śaivism is articulated. In recovering the types of training that were critical to Abhinavagupta’s curriculum for religious training we encounter a framework for cultivation that drew from the knowledge and disciplinary practices of a vast array of traditions flourishing in tenth-century Kashmir. In that sense Abhinavagupta’s integrative curriculum acts as a “miniaturization” of a complex and deeply layered cognitive and religious world.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

We began this study with a series of questions to which we now return: why did Abhinavagupta write so profusely about himself and the context of his compositions? How can we understand his first-person claims of enlightenment? And how can we explain his description of the transformative power of his own texts given the apparent lack of precedent for these textual practices in earlier and coeval Sanskrit literature? Our argument is essentially that an understanding of how revelation was envisioned in relationship to locally situated Siddhas in the scriptures of the Kulamārga, as well as in the Kashmirian post-scriptural literature inspired by the Kulamārga, goes a long way towards providing an answer to all three questions. This is spelled out, in detail, in the conclusion of chapter five.

At the end of chapter five we also considered how Abhinavagupta’s self-representation as a model Śaiva guru—particularly, when we account for its didactic power—expands that guru’s requisite competencies. Abhinavagupta’s portrayal of himself as a student and his argument for studying with multiple gurus helps facilitate this transformation by advocating, through his own example, a commitment to a comprehensive scholastic, aesthetic, and interreligious training. These various domains of learning and refinement, when brought together, contribute to the formation of a culturally sophisticated and mystically potent teacher who is authorized to initiate protégés into esoteric
streams of Śaiva thought and ritual practice. To this end, chapter five demonstrated how Abhinavagupta placed the model of religious authority in the Kaula scriptures and its elaboration in post-scriptural Śākta Śaiva literature in dialogue with specific knowledge systems and religious traditions flourishing in the intellectual zeitgeist of medieval Kashmir. The result, we argue, is a blueprint for the consummate education of a Śaiva guru.

Numerous models of revelation and scriptural transmission have been examined in this study, and we should clarify that they did not develop in a linear manner. It was not our aim to present a story of traditions moving through a natural evolution, with greater and greater importance placed on agents of revelation emerging through some historical necessity or underlying teleology. On the contrary, a sensitivity to the historical vicissitudes of these traditions actually reveals a simultaneous movement forwards and backwards in the directionality of their emphases. To elaborate, occasionally the sources for ideas that are crystallized in the Kulamārga and in Abhinavagupta’s perspective on the guru and revelation are best appreciated as a return to and extrapolation of earlier perspectives and practices in the Atimārga and the earliest corpus of the Mantramārga, the Niśvāsa. These are both points that are touched upon in the footnotes of this study, but which definitely deserve further consideration.

We are now in a position to make some global observations about the greater arc of this project and reflect on its position in relationship to more general areas of academic research; specifically, revelation and religious authority in the history of Indian religions, interdisciplinarity in the intellectual history of medieval Kashmir, and autobiography in premodern South Asia. The
issues we will raise all require further research to adequately address, and so much of this concluding chapter will necessarily be forward looking.

In order to evaluate some of this project’s broader implications in the history of Indian religions, it is will be necessary to consider how unique Abhinavagupta’s model of religious authority was, especially in relationship to traditions not explored in this study. The contrast in this study between Abhinavagupta’s understanding of revelation and the understanding advanced by the orthodox interpreters of the Veda, the Mīmāṃsakas, admittedly excludes a collection of Veda-based traditions that did place a great emphasis on the role of enlightened teachers in the dissemination of tradition, namely Uttaramīmāṃsa or Vedānta. A concurrent study of Vedānta, e.g., the complex of traditions emerging from the corpuses of Śaṅkara, Maṇḍanamiśra, Rāmānuja, etc., that takes into account their distinctive sets of attitudes towards authoritative teachers and revealed tradition, would certainly nuance our paradigmatic contrast between the Vedic and Kaula notions of revelation. This is a desideratum for future research.

Although further investigation is required to determine the degree to which Abhinavagupta’s approach to teacherly authority and revelation departs from the respective views of Vedāntic teaching traditions, there is a critical distinction presented in this thesis that makes a small step towards addressing this question. In the course of our study we have charted multiple ways in which the initiatory traditions of early Śaiva tantra and Kaula Śaivism distanced themselves from the Veda. This distancing, combined with the non-dual doctrinal orientation of Pratyabhijñā philosophy, helps us distinguish the specific
context in which Abhinavagupta formulated a radical person-centered model of revelation and transmission.

The distinctiveness of Abhinavagupta’s philosophy of revelation and his inclination to record locally situated first-person narratives about the context of his compositions (which are not found in the writings of the Vedāntic teachers mentioned) can be fruitfully related to his deep confidence in a Kaula Śaiva scriptural identity that, by his estimate, transcends the domain of the Vedas by leaps and bounds. This Kaula religious identity, we have shown, was not forged “under the sign of the Vedas,” but out of tantric streams that had successively distanced themselves from Veda-based traditions and brahminical orthodoxy through various strategies of supersession (with highly variable degrees of inclusion).

To underscore this point it is worthwhile to recapitulate some of the major methods of distancing discussed in this thesis. The early scriptures of the Mantramārga presented a new cosmic hierarchy in which Śiva was imagined as a formless mantric sound above and beyond Purānic visions of the form and mythology of the deity Śiva. The Niśvāsamukha narrated the conversion of Viṣṇu and Brahmā, as well as a large cohort of Vedic sages, to initiatory Śaivism, and presented a model of five streams of revelation that demoted Vedic traditions while justifying the supremacy of the Mantramārga. The Siddhānta stream of the Mantramārga presented itself as a uniquely powerful revelatory tradition by arguing that Śaiva initiation, unlike the Vedic variety, truly liberates the Self by acting on the ātman directly, not just the body. The Bhairavatantras of the Mantrapīṭha positioned themselves even higher than the more brahminically
congruent Śaiva Siddhānta by iconically placing Svacchandabhairava on top of the splayed corpse of Sadāśiva, and through the adaptation of Kāpālika imagery and ritual praxis that upended brahminical social conventions. This added distance was amplified in the scriptures of the Vidyāpīṭha, which exalted feminine mantras and deities as exceptionally powerful, brought to the forefront cremation ground rites for power-seeking adepts, and placed new emphasis on the charismatic guru as an empowered agent in the act of initiation. And out of the Yoginī cults of the Vidyāpīṭha emerged a new threshold of scriptural identity, the Kulamārga, which presented itself as higher than the Śaiva tantras by describing its source as a “sixth stream” of revelation, more esoteric and transformative than the revealed teachings of the Mantramārga. In the Kulamārga, this sense of superiority over tantric traditions is also marked by the role reversal of Bhairava and Bhairavī in the dialogical structure of the Krama scriptures, and in the championing of the Kaula method (kulapradīya) over and above those of the Tantras.

These successive stages of supersession or strategies of differentiation may have provided a certain freedom from the constraints of Veda-based visions of religious authority that allowed Abhinavagupta to elaborate a relationship between revelation and religious teachers that was radically agentic. Nevertheless, integrating a study of Vedānta in future iterations of this project will be vital for adequately evaluating the uniqueness of Abhinavagupta’s (and his Kaula sources’) person-centered model of religious authority within the history of Indian religions.
On a similar note, a rather glaring omission in our study, as we acknowledged in the introduction, is a comparative look at Indian Buddhist and Jain sources. In both of these traditions omniscient or enlightened teachers are deemed essential to revelation and the transmission of tradition, and their respective views on religious authority operated well outside of a Vedic paradigm. A comparative study of Indian Buddhist sources, in particular, is definitely a future priority, and critical to properly contextualizing the findings of this thesis.

Another priority for future research is looking at interdisciplinarity in the intellectual history of Kashmir, particularly in authors that predated Abhinavagupta. This will help determine the degree (or lack thereof) of novelty in Abhinavagupta’s synthesis of genres in his autobiographical passages, his modeling of a comprehensive education, and his commitment to learning across religious boundaries. A cursory consideration of this question does in fact confirm that the adoption of elements and disciplinary practices from myriad theoretical, literary, and religious sources is evident in some important works of Abhinavagupta’s Kashmirian predecessors. For example, Ratnākara composed a court epic (Haravijaya) that included hymns detailing the religious doctrines of various streams of initiatory Śaivism.\(^{799}\) Ānandavardhana, attached to the same ninth-century court as Ratnākara, challenged an entire tradition of poetics in his introduction of a new paradigm for literary criticism, penned a devotional hymn revealed by the Goddess in a dream, and wrote a (now lost) exposition on a

famous commentary on Buddhist epistemology. Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, who Abhinavagupta mentions as a model for studying with multiple Gurus, boasted that he was a disciple of everyone at the end of his (likely auto-) commentary on the Spandakārikā. Kallaṭa’s son, Mukulabhaṭṭa, ended his “Sources on the Process of Linguistic Signification” (Abhidhāvottamātṛkā) with the prescription to synthesize grammatical, exegetical, and philosophical training with the analysis of Sanskrit literature. Moreover, Mukula is praised as a foremost scholar in these fields by his student Pratihārendurāja at the conclusion of his commentary on the Kāvyālāṅkārasātrasaṅgraha of Udbhaṭa. A more thorough study of these cross-pollinations between various domains of knowledge is essential for determining the logic of Abhinavagupta’s transdisciplinary strategies as an author. This is because his thinking is woven into the rich tapestry of intellectual practices already underway in Kashmir. These precedents, along with others, need to be accounted for in order to fully diagnose Abhinavagupta’s contribution to the trend of combining scholastic expertise, poetic sensitivity, and religious knowledge.

A final consideration and imperative for future research stems from the recognition that the Kaula idiom, which helps explain Abhinavagupta’s first-person account of his qualification as a religious authority, does not fully account for the style and content of Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical passages. Abhinavagupta adopts the tropes and technical repertoire of Sanskrit courtly literature in his depiction of his ancestral line, the extraordinary features of his local intellectual and religious environment, his eclectic tutelage, and the circumstances in which he became a guru. Moreover, the themes of his depiction
of Kashmir, as demonstrated in chapter five, are well-attested in other Kashmirian literary sources, and can be profitably related to an augmented local awareness in the writings of premodern Kashmirian authors. This unique local awareness exhibited by the poets of Kashmir provides another important context for appreciating Abhinavagupta’s decision to write at length about the world outside of his texts. Although the Rājatarāṅginī has attracted plenty of attention in secondary scholarship regarding Kalhana’s rare attention to the region of Kashmir and its royal dynasties, we intend to further examine the way in which Kashmir was represented in the literary works of other Kashmirian authors, such as Ratnākara, Somadeva, Kṣemendra, Bilhaṇa, Maṅkha, and Jayadratha. Combined with a study of how local Purāṇas and Māhātmyas imagined Kashmir, this research will throw considerable light on how Abhinavagupta localized and personalized his revelatory tradition.

Given the fact that a number of broader inquiries naturally emanate from the central arguments of this dissertation, it is appropriate to conclude with an open-ended question. In reading Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical epilogues, which we have shown are geared towards doing considerable didactic work on a model audience, do we meet the historical figure himself? Although it is evident that these autobiographical passages are not devoid of valuable historical information, this is still a compelling question to ponder. Much of the research compiled above (which demonstrates that Abhinavagupta is building upon a Kaula model of revelation in his acts of self-representation) mitigates the view that he is transparently documenting the historical idiosyncrasies of the life of an individual qua individual. This is further supported by Abhinavagupta’s
definition of the guru as someone who has fully recognized their innate identity with the all-pervasive and perfectly free Consciousness that transcends and encompasses the entire manifest universe. From this standpoint of (what Abhinavagupta terms) higher nonduality (parādvaita), individuality in the form of exclusive identification with the particulars of a temporally and spatially locatable body and personality is tantamount to a state of delusion. This paradigm of selfhood, in addition to making the boundaries between deity, teacher, and disciple permeable in the process of revelation, is far removed from the forms of model selfhood that inspired autobiographical writing in the Euro-American context. Nevertheless, once we can disaggregate and account for the distinctive epistemologies and models of Self at play, what makes Abhinavagupta a figure of lasting intrigue, not to mention fruitful historical research, is the combination of a particular genius in synthesizing a vast archive of textual sources and traditions with a powerful singularity of voice that consistently shines through his words.
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