



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

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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’s 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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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

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 poetics; 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 a 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,

² HANNEDER (1998), p. 128.

“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.³ 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

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 predates Abhinavagupta, such as Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* and Daṇḍin’s *Avantisundarī*. These exceptions will be returned to below.

transformative efficacy of his own texts given the apparent⁴ 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.⁸

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*”⁹ in Sanskrit discourse, which enabled the language to serve as a powerful vehicle for articulating political power and projecting a transregional “social-moral order.”¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ This cosmopolitan character of the language was achieved in part by shunning the parochialism of the “local,” viz., persons and

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.”

⁹ POLLOCK (2006), p. 256.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 113.

events situated in a particular time and place.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.

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,¹³ 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 selfhood¹⁴ and tradition,

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 *śāstras* [include]... the fact that ‘ahistoricity’—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.²⁰ 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 texts²¹ 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,²² 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñāṅkārikā*.

²¹ *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa*, *Tantrāloka*, and his *vivṛtivismarśinī* on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāṅkārikā*.

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 *Tantrāloka*] 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 predominately *performative*. Although these literary works are traditionally characterized, on occasion, as morally edifying,²³ 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 *Kāvyaaprakāśa* 1.2: *kāvyaṃ yaśase 'rthakṛte vyavahāravide śivetarakṣataye | sadyaḥ paranirvṛtaye kāntāsaṃmitatayopadeśayuje* 'Courtly poetry is for the purpose of fame, wealth, expertise in worldly affairs, removing inauspiciousness, 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, Mammaṭa says, ad *Kāvyaaprakāśa* 1.2: *yat kāvyaṃ lokottaravarṇanānīpuṇakavikarma tat kānteva sarasatāpādanenābhīmukhīkṛtya rāmādivad vartitavyaṃ na rāvaṇādivad ity upadeśaṃ ca yathāyogaṃ kaveḥ sahrdayasya ca karotīti* '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 Rāvaṇa.'" Bhāmaha gives the following list of outcomes that are produced from good poetry, *Kāvyaśālikāra* 1.2: *dharmārthakāmamokṣeṣu vaicakṣaṇyaṃ kalāsu ca | prītiṃ karoti kīrtiṃ ca sādhu-kāvyaṇibandhanam*

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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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 (*vyutpatti*) but rather nothing but aesthetic pleasure. See *Daśarūpaka* 1.6: *ānandanisyaṇḍiṣu rūpakeṣu vyutpattimātram phalam alpabuddhiḥ | yo ‘pītiḥāsādivad āha sādhus tasmai namaḥ svāduparāṇmukhāya* ‘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 DEZSÖ (2007), which includes an excellent discussion of the relationship between *śāstra* and *kāvya*.

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 INDEN’s concept of texts’ “articulative” nature. See INDEN, 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.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.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

engage in (or refrain from) textual activity but to engage, to some degree, in other acts as well.”

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.”

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: *ambābhīdhānā kila sā guruṃ taṃ svaṃ bhrātāraṃ śambhudṛśābhyapaśyat | bhāvīprabhāvojjvalabhavyabuddhiḥ sato '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 (Kāmākhyā); 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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

²⁸ PANDEY (1963) & RASTOGI (1987).

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.³¹ 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."³² 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.

³² KAVIRAJ (2005), p. 119.

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 GYATSO³³ and Phyllis GRANOFF.³⁴ 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.”³⁵ 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).³⁶

GRANOFF elucidates the didactic nature of a tenth-century Jain autobiography, the *Upamitibhavaprapaṇcāsthā* of Siddharṣi, which is a voluminous narrative account of his past births. Siddharṣi’s narrative, GRANOFF

³³ GYATSO (1998).

³⁴ GRANOFF (1994).

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

³⁶ GYATSO (1998), pp. 116-118.

demonstrates, thematically draws on the Jain ritual of confession and is designed to bring to life perennial Jain teachings, such as retributational 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.”³⁷ 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.”³⁸

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.”³⁹ 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 date⁴⁰ have wanted to harvest this bio data by separating the

³⁷ GRANOFF (1994), p. 38.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 48

³⁹ ARNOLD & BLACKBURN (2004), p. 3.

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.”⁴¹ 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.⁴² 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 Bilhaṇa’s *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, about which he muses: “if this narrative is divested of its envelope of poetical bombast, the main facts, which Bilhaṇa 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 developed⁴³ 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

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, Sāṅkhyans, 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 *Guruparaṃparāsāra*.⁴⁴ 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,⁴⁵ 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 indispensable 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).

⁴⁵ CLOONEY (2011), p. 214ff.

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

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, Kālikula, Kaula, Yāmala, Dakṣiṇa, 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 *Mālinīvijayottaratānta*." 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

Tantras’ or ‘Light on the Tantras’).⁴⁷ 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*)⁴⁸ is a second-order Śaiva theology:⁴⁹ a philosophically grounded, hierarchically organized, and synthetically integrated picture of almost half a millennium⁵⁰ 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, “Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī.” 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.

⁴⁷ Both of these meanings of the title of the text are suggested by Abhinavagupta’s commentator, Jayaratha. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 103, footnote 40.

⁴⁸ *Tantrāloka* 1.14-15: *santi paddhatayaś citrāḥ srotobhedeṣu bhūyasā | anuttaraṣaḍdardhārthakrame tv ekāpi nekṣyate | | ity ahaṃ bahuśaḥ sadbhīḥ śiṣyasabrahmācāribhīḥ | arthito racaye spaṣṭāṃ pūrṇārthāṃ prakriyāṃ imāṃ* ‘Ritual manuals are exceedingly manifold in different streams [of Śaiva revelation], but even one [*paddhati*] is not seen in the ritual system of the supreme Trika. Therefore, continually petitioned by my true disciples and their fellow students, I compose this work on the proper procedures [of the Trika] that is clear and full of meaning.’

⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ GOODALL, ISAACSON & SANDERSON (2016), p. 35, date the earliest portion of the *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā*, 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—extrapolated⁵¹ 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 & BAUMER (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 Purāṇic 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,

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 Kāpālika 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 Purāṇic literature. One additional source that features narratives of Vedic sages, which would also need to be consulted in such a study, is the *Bṛhaddevatā*. 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 Vidyāpīṭha, 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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* also presents an interesting revelation narrative that is somewhat exceptional.

⁵⁵ If the sūtras of the *Niśvāsātattoṣaṃhitā* 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 *Vīṇāśikhātantra*, 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 *Vīṇāśikhātantra* (an early Mantramārga source) and thoughts on the early pedigree of the *devadevīsamvāda* model, I am grateful to Shaman Hatley. For an edition and translation of the *Vīṇāśikhātantra*, 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 MĪMĀṂSĀ

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 *Mīmāṃsā* philosopher, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, on the inherent deficiency of human speech when it comes to communicating *dharma*.⁵⁸ Without scripture,

⁵⁶ *Tantrāloka* 37.10-11ab: *śrīmadānandaśāstrādaṁ proktaṁ ca paramaśinā | ṛṣivākyam bahukleśam adhruvālpaphalam mitam || naiva pramāṇayed vidvān śaivam evāgamam śrayet* ‘Moreover, Śiva teaches this in the auspicious *Ānandatāntra* 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.”’

⁵⁷ KATAOKA (2007b), “Kumārila’s Notion of Pauruṣeyavacana.”

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 *dharma*s 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.”⁵⁹ Thus verbal testimony, or the “word” (*śabda*), in the *Mīmāṃsā* sense of authorless revelation,⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹

Given that verbal testimony (*śabda*) is defined in the *Nyāyasūtra* as the teaching of a trustworthy (*āpta*) speaker,⁶² 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.

understood.” See Ibid., p. 160. In this same discussion, CLOONEY also notes the changes in the definition of *dharma* in the hands of later Mīmāṃsakas, beginning with Śabara, that place greater emphasis on what is of benefit to human beings. On this later definition, see Kumārila’s *Ślokavārttika* vv. 190-200, summarized in KATAOKA (2011), part II, p. 156: “According to Kumārila, here Śabara intentionally substitutes *śreyaskara* for *dharma* so that he can make it explicit that dharma is the cause of *śreyas* or the supreme end (190), i.e. the happiness of man by means of the materials, qualities and actions known through Vedic injunctions. Therefore they alone can be regarded as dharma (191).”

⁵⁹ KATAOKA (2007b), p. 43, citing the *Śābarabhāṣya* ad *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.2: *aśakyam hi tat puruṣeṇa jñātum ṛte vacanāt*.

⁶⁰ The presumption of the Vedas being authorless motivates Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, in *Mīmāṃsāślokavārttika* vv. 47-53, to argue that the verbal testimony of the Vedas possesses “intrinsic validity” (*svataḥ prāmāṇyam*), 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: *āptopadeśaḥ 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.

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 Śābarabhāṣya ad Mīmāṃsāsūtra 1.1.2: *api ca pauruṣeyād vacanād evam ayaṃ puruṣo vedeti bhavati pratyayo naivam ayaṃ artheti | viplavate khalv api kaścīt puruṣakṛtād vacanāt pratyayaḥ | na tu vedavacanasya mithyātve kiṃcana pramāṇam asti*. Cited in KATAOKA (2007b), p. 44.

⁶⁵ KATAOKA (2007b), p. 45.

⁶⁶ Interestingly, KATAOKA believes that this view originally set forth by Śabara presages, even more than Dignāga's theory of *apoha*, Dharmakīrti's argument that speech "conveys only a speaker's intention (*vaktrabhiprāyasūcaka*)."⁶⁶ 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.”⁶⁷ 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 *Mīmāṃsāślokavārttika*.⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ 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 (*munis*). 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

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁸ *Mīmāṃsāślokavārttika* 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.⁷⁰ 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.”⁷¹ 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.⁷²

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

⁷⁰ CLOONEY (1990), p. 167: “Śabara gives as examples... the names Kāṭhaka (connected with Kaṭhaka) and Kālāpaka (connected with Kalāpaka), etc. Kāṭhaka and Kalāpaka were great seers (*rṣis*) 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.”

⁷¹ *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.30: *ākhyā pravacanāt*. Translation of CLOONEY (1990), p. 166.

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 to 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.⁷³ Nevertheless, in the end even eminent sages of the Vedas, in Kumāṛila's eyes, are "human, all too human,"⁷⁴ 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, Kumāṛila maintains, by claims that it is a human product, even in cases when a human being is considered to be divinely inspired.

The *Mīmāṃsā* 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."⁷⁵ Sheldon POLLOCK has argued,⁷⁶ convincingly, that the Mīmāṃsaka's

⁷³ *Mīmāṃsāslokaavārttika* 149-151: *anekapuruṣasthatvād ekatraiva ca janmani | grahaṇasmarāṇād veda svātantryaṃ vihanate | | anyathākarāṇe cāsyā bahubhyaḥ syān nivāraṇam | ekasya pratibhānam tu kṛtakān na viśiṣyate | | ataś ca sampradāye 'pi naikaḥ puruṣa iṣyate | bahavaḥ paratantrāḥ syuḥ sarve hy adyatvavan narāḥ* '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: "Kumāṛila'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'."

⁷⁵ CLOONEY (1990), p. 168.

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 PURĀṆAS

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

⁷⁸ *Mīmāṃsāslokaṣṭakavārttika*, Saṃbandhākṣepaparihāra vv. 45-65. Kumārila's main arguments in this section of the *Mīmāṃsāslokaṣṭakavārttika* are condensed by Lawrence MCCREA in "Desecularization in Indian Intellectual Culture." See MCCREA (forthcoming), p. 4.

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, Vācaspatimiśra, and Bhāsarvajña. 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 Pāśupata 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 Purāṇic 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 Purāṇic 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,⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵ 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*⁸⁶—of being a veritable “fifth Veda.”⁸⁷ The second is at play when the Purāṇas claim to be enlarging the Veda,⁸⁸ bringing it to completion⁸⁹ 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: *Nāradyāpurāṇa* 1.125.26, *Agnipurāṇa* 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.”

⁸⁷ BONAZZOLI (1981), p. 45; SMITH (1994), p. 102; and ROCHER (1986), p. 16. See *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 3.12.39: *itihāsapurāṇāni pañcamāṇi vedam īśvaraḥ | sarvebhya eva vaktrebhyaḥ sarje sarvadarśanaḥ*.

⁸⁸ *Kūrmapurāṇa* 2.44.146: *mumukṣūṇām idaṃ śāstram adhyetavyaṃ viśeṣataḥ | śrotavyaṃ cātha mantavyaṃ vedārthaparibr̥ṇhaṇam* ‘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: *itihāsapurāṇābhyāṃ vedam samupabr̥ṇhayet | bibhety alpaśrutād vedo mām ayaṃ prahariṣyati* ‘The Veda is completed by the Epic and Purāṇa, [since] the Veda

secrets (*guhya*).⁹⁰ These novel and hidden teachings, we will see, are prompted by the curiosities of the premier interlocutors of the Purāṇic canon, the Vedic seers.

This brings us to the models of revelation exhibited in the Purāṇas.⁹¹ 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: genealogies⁹² 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, Atri, 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 (*saptaṛṣi*), and minor deities like Dharma and Dakṣa. This diverse cast of legendary beings receive the Purāṇas *en masse* from Brahmā and then hand them

fears one who has limited scriptural knowledge [thinking] “this person will ruin me”.’ This stanza is repeated in many other Purāṇas, with slight variation. Cf. *Vāyupurāṇa* Revākhaṇḍa 1.21, *Nāradyāpurāṇa* 2.24.18, and *Śivapurāṇa* VII 1.1.40. Cited in BONAZZOLI (1980), p. 45.

⁹⁰ BONAZZOLI (1983), p. 93, footnote 57.

⁹¹ The following summary is based largely on themes and citations found in BONAZZOLI (1980), “Purāṇic 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.⁹³ Also included in this third stage of revelation is the recitation or narration of the Purāṇa by Vyāsa's disciples, most famously Sūta,⁹⁴ 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,⁹⁵ which are reconstructed on the basis of patterns found in a large sample of genealogies of Purāṇic 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

⁹³ ROCHER (1986), p. 48: "[In *Mahābhārata* 1.57.73cd-74] the tradition that it was Vyāsa who composed the Purāṇasaṁhitā 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 *vyasta* 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 Purāṇic 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 Purāṇic 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 (*śatakoṭi*).⁹⁶ In order to have any beneficial effect on humanity this repository of Purāṇic wisdom must undergo substantial abridgement.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ BONAZZOLI (1983), p. 99.

⁹⁷ See *Agnipurāṇa* 382.64-68, which also provides interesting injunctions for patronage and performance of the Purāṇas: *idaṃ pañcadaśasahasraṃ śatakoṭipravistaraṃ | devaloke daivatais ca purāṇaṃ paṭhyate sadā | | lokānāṃ hitakāmena saṃkṣīpyodgītā agnīnā | sarvaṃ brahmeti jñātidhvaṃ munayaḥ śaunakādayaḥ | | śṛṇuyāc chrāvayed vāpi yaḥ paṭhet pāṭhayed api | likhel lekhāpayed vāpi pūjayet kīrtayed api | | purāṇapāṭhakaṃ caiva pūjayet prayato nṛpaḥ | gobhūhiraṇyadānādyair vastrālaṅkāratarpaṇaiḥ | | taṃ saṃpūjya labhec caiva purāṇaśravaṇāt phalaṃ | purāṇānte ca vai kuryād avaśyaṃ dvijabhojanaṃ* '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 Purāṇas 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 Purāṇic recitation, he should invariably feed all the twice-born.

Successively reduced in each epoch⁹⁸ as it is disseminated to seers, sages, and Vyāsa, it finally reaches a human audience, whose lack of strength and vigor,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

⁹⁸ *Padmapurāṇa* 2.125.38-45. This passage is condensed in BONAZZOLI (1981), pp. 50-51: "The *Padmapurāṇa*, it is said in this passage, had one hundred thousand *śloka*-s in *Kṛta yuga*, fifty-two thousand in *Tretā*, twenty-two thousand in *Dvāpara*, twelve thousand in *Kali yuga*. And even these last twelve thousand *śloka*-s will disappear at the end of *Kali yuga* and the first number, one hundred thousand, will appear again." A similar process is also described in *Līṅgapurāṇa* 1.2.1-5.

⁹⁹ *Viṣṇupurāṇa* 3.3.6: *vīryaṃ tejo balaṃ cālpaṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ avekṣya ca | hitāya sarvabhūtānāṃ vedabhedān 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.¹⁰⁰

But the allegorical significance of the Vedic sages in the Purāṇic 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.¹⁰¹ The ever expanding scope for new revelatory material ushered in by the Purāṇas is rhetorically linked to the insatiable curiosity¹⁰² 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 *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.3: *vibhānti yatrānaghadairghyasauhrdād ahaṃyubhir yūpaparigrahair diśaḥ | kaleḥ praveśānavakāśasiddhaye svayaṃ mukheṣv aṅkuritārgalā iva* ‘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 *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.71: *yasyāsti khonamukha ity upakaṇṭhasīmni grāmaḥ samagraguṇasaṃpadavāptakīrtiḥ | ālānarūpabahuyūpavati praviṣṭaṃ no yatra bandhanabhiyeva kalidvipena* ‘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. Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita*, ucchvāsa 4: *yasmiṃś ca rājani nirantarair yūpanikarair aṅkuritam iva kṛtayugena dīnmukhavīsarpibhir adhvaradhūmaiḥ palāyitam iva kalinā* ‘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.

¹⁰² BONAZZOLI (1983), pp. 95-97.

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 BONAZOLLI interprets this Purāṇic strategy in the following manner:¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 3.14.4: *ṛṣe na tṛpyati manah param kautūhalaṃ hi me.*

¹⁰⁴ *Matsyapurāṇa* 108.7cd-108.8: *imaṃ me saṃśayaṃ chinddhi param kautūhalaṃ hi me.*

¹⁰⁵ *Vāyupurāṇa, Revākhaṇḍa* 38.3: *etad vistarataḥ sarvaṃ kathayasva mamānagha | śrotum icchāmy ahaṃ sarvaparāṃ kautūhalaṃ hi me.*

¹⁰⁶ *Vāyupurāṇa, Revākhaṇḍa* 4.5abc: *etac chrutvā tu me tāta param kautūhalaṃ hr̥di | jātāṃ 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 śrotuṃ param kautūhalaṃ hi me | maharṣe tvaṃ samartho 'si jñātum evaṃvidhaṃ 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 *Śivapurāṇa* 1.10: *tattvaṃ śrutaṃ sma naḥ sarvaṃ pūrvam eva śubhāśubham |*

na tṛptim adhigacchāmaḥ 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 *Śivapurāṇa* 1.11: *idānīm ekam evāsti śrotavyaṃ 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.’

¹¹⁰ BONAZZOLI (1983), p. 96.

The push towards such a revelation, indeed, is found in the radical unsatisfied yearning of the *ṛṣis*, *munis*, *prajāpatīs* 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 Purāṇic 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 seal¹¹¹ 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 Paurāṇikas.¹¹²

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

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

¹¹² SMITH (1994), p. 123.

single element in this grand matrix of human history and purpose, placed in the service of higher organizing principles. The consciously ahistorical Pūrvamīmāṃsā, 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 Purāṇic 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 *paramparā* 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

¹¹³ POLLOCK (1989), pp. 609-610.

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;¹¹⁵ 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,¹¹⁶ 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 *Kiraṇatantra*, 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 *Kiraṇavṛtti*, 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.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸ 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.¹¹⁹

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

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: *adikṣitānām purato noccarec chāstrapaddhatim* 'One should never utter the procedures of the [Śaiva] scriptures in the presence of the uninitiated.' Cf. *Tantrāloka* 1.44: *adikṣitānām purato noccarec chivasamhitām* 'One should not utter a scripture of Śiva in the presence of the uninitiated.' See also the *Mṛgendravṛtti* of Nārāyanakaṇṭha ad *Mṛgendratāntṛa* 1.1.2: *adikṣitānām tantrādiśravaṇānadhikārāt* 'The reason is that the uninitiated are not eligible to hear the [Śaiva] tantras, etc.'

¹¹⁹ HANNEDER (1998), pp. 11-13.

through different divine and semi-divine beings, it is also clear that the mythology of deities plays no important role in Tantric Śaivism.¹²⁰ 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,¹²¹ 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.¹²²

¹²⁰ An exception to this point may be found in Kubjikā corpus of the Śaiva tantras, including but not limited to the *Kubjikāmata*, *Ṣaṭsāhasrasaṃhitā*, and *Manthānabhairavatantra*, 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 Purāṇic 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: *śivo vai mantramūrtimān | mantratantrapraṇetā ca mantratantraprakāśakaḥ* ‘Śiva, the embodiment of the mantra, is the author of the *mantras* and Tantras and He illuminates them.’ See also *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.28: *sarve mantrātmakā devāḥ sarve mantrāḥ śivātmakāḥ | śivātmakam idaṃ jñātvā śivam evānucintayet* ‘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 complex¹²³ of religious practice and thought will help orient our textual analysis. There have been a number of scholarly assessments¹²⁴ 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.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 Vaiṣṇava, 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 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.”

¹²⁴ See WALLIS (2014), pp. 94-97; HATLEY (2013), pp. 21-22; FLOOD (2006), pp. 9-13; PADOUX (2002).

¹²⁵ 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.¹²⁶

Although the variable lists of constituent features listed in “polythetic”¹²⁷ definitions of Śaiva tantra include multiple items found in non-tantric contexts, three characteristics have great pervasion in the “demonstrably early”¹²⁸ Śaiva Tantras under consideration: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: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

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 *Mānavadharmasāstra* 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.”

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).

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-xli.

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

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 (*abhiṣekaḥ*) of officiants, the same ceremonies for the installations of images and other substrates of worship (*pratiṣṭhā*), and the same rituals of obligatory regular worship (*nityakarma*) 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 Liṅga, 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 Brahmanical 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 DYCKOWSKI (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 congruent¹³³ 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."

¹³³ See the *Mokṣakārika* of Sadyojyotiś 145c-147d, translated in SANDERSON (2012), handout 7, p. 11: *na ca svagocare tāsāṃ bādhate tat pramāṇatām | | tāsū varṇāśramācārān abhyanujñātavac ca tat | na cānyena pramāṇena saṃruddhas tasya gocaraḥ | | śrotriyair apy ato grāhyaṃ tat*

them.¹³⁴ This is evident not only in the Saiddhāntikas' 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 SIDDHĀNTA

Thanks largely to the scholarship of Dominic GOODALL, the extant Siddhānta scriptures that predated the twelfth-century Saiddhāntika commentator Aghoraśiva have been identified¹³⁵ and also arranged into a relative

phalādhikasāadhanam '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 (*śrotriyaiḥ*) [, which is to say, by those whose brahmanical observances include the Śrauta], as the means of achieving a greater benefit [than can be achieved through the Veda alone].'

¹³⁴ See the *Mohacūḍottara* 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, Purāṇa, 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 Purāṇas, and the [Śaiva] scriptures take precedence over the teaching of the Vedas. There is the common [brahmanical authority of Śruti, Smṛti, and Purāṇa] (*sāmānyam*), and then there is the special (*viśeṣam*). The Śaiva [scriptures] (*śaivam*) are the latter (*viśeṣikaṃ vacaḥ*). [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 [, where they fail,] learned exegesis, by applying such modes of reasoning as presumption.'

¹³⁵ See GOODALL (1998), pp. xxxix-xlvi: "Three criteria provide certain proof of the relative antiquity of a Siddhāntatantra: (a) its being transmitted not just in South India but also in early Nepalese and Kashmirian manuscripts (b) the existence of substantial attributed

chronology.¹³⁶ The latter task is based on number of criteria¹³⁷ 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 exegetes 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.¹³⁸

quotations by demonstrably early authors (i.e. up to and including Aghoraśiva) 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 Aghoraśiva). By applying these criteria we are left with a very short list of demonstrably early Saiddhāntika scriptures... the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha*, *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha*, the *Kiraṇa*, the *Parākhya* (or *Saurabheya*), and the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* (under which head might be included also the *Niśvāsakārikā* and the *Dīkṣottara*. The *Pārameśvara* 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 *Mrgendratāntra*, the *Mataṅgapārameśvaratantra*, and various recensions of the *Kālottara*."

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. xlvii-lxxiv.

¹³⁷ For a list of these criteria, see Ibid., pp. xlvii-xlviii: "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."

¹³⁸ SANDERSON (1992), pp. 282-285. Cited in GOODALL (2004), pp. xxxiii-xiv.

(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 (*vyāpārah*) 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 exceptions¹³⁹ 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,

¹³⁹ Noted in SANDERSON (1991), p. 291 & GOODALL (1998), p. lvi.

¹⁴⁰ On the primacy of ritual in the Siddhānta tantras, see BRUNNER (1992), p. 25ff.

and marginalize the ritual propitiation of female divinities.¹⁴¹ 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 Nīśvāsa corpus.¹⁴² The first four texts in this corpus refer to themselves as the *Mūlasūtra*, *Uttarasūtra*, *Nayasūtra*, and *Guhyasūtra*, respectively. They present themselves as interconnected and chronologically ordered components of a scriptural compendium known as the *Nīśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*. 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,¹⁴³ 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.¹⁴⁴ Unlike the Purāṇas, which mostly background the original teaching of God and forefront the dialogical mediation of Vedic seers and figures like Vyāsa

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 *Nīśvāsamukha*, which is composed later as an introduction to the original *sūtras*. This frame-story will be considered below. See Ibid., p. 233.

¹⁴⁴ *Nīśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, mūlasūtra, 1.1-13.

and Sūta in the main frame-story, the early *sūtras* of the Nīśvāsa do the opposite. Once we are transported to that original stage of scriptural teaching we remain there, listening in on the goddess's 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 (*devadevīsaṃvāda*).

At the outset of the second book of the *Nīśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, the *Uttarasūtra* which comments upon and elaborates¹⁴⁵ 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.¹⁴⁶ 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.¹⁴⁷ 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

¹⁴⁵ GOODALL, SANDERSON & ISAACSON (2015), p. 20.

¹⁴⁶ *Nīśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.18: *devy uvāca | akṣarāṇām kutotpattiḥ sarvavarṇṇa ... | {tantrāṇām kiyatī 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.

¹⁴⁷ *Nīśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.23: *adrṣṭavigrahe śānte śive paramakāraṇe | nādarūpaṃ viniṣkrāntaṃ śāstraṃ paramadurllabham* '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 wisdom¹⁴⁸—is described as “without a visible form” (*adr̥ṣṭavīgraha*).¹⁴⁹ 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, Īśvara¹⁵⁰ (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 onwards¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵² Much like the lists of eighteen canonical Purāṇas this grand transmission is then codified into

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 *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, uttarasūtra, 1.23.

¹⁵⁰ *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, uttarasūtra, 1.24: *sadāśivas tu vettā vai sa ca mām prati bodhakaḥ | nādarūpasya śāstrasya ahaṃ gr{athanibandhakaḥ} | | anuṣṭupchandabandhena devebhyaḥ pratipāditam | riṣibhiḥ ca punaḥ prāptaṃ tebhyo martyeṣu santatiḥ* ‘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 *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, uttarasūtra, 1.25-40.

¹⁵² *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, uttarasūtra, 1.25: *anuṣṭupchandabandhena devebhyaḥ pratipāditam | riṣibhiḥ ca punaḥ prāptaṃ tebhyo martyeṣu santatiḥ* ‘It was expounded for the gods in the form of metrical composition in *anuṣṭubh*. [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.¹⁵³ 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.”¹⁵⁴ Who are these sages? The *Uttarasūtra* of the *Niśvāsattattovasaṃhitā* gives an inventory of Vedic seers,¹⁵⁵ 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 *Uttarasūtra* and the *Nayasūtra* 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,¹⁵⁶ the *Niśvāsamukha*. The text has been the subject of a recent study, critical edition, and annotated

¹⁵³ *Niśvāsattattovasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.26-30. For other versions of lists of the twenty-eight Siddhānta scriptures, see GOODALL (1998), Appendix III, pp. 402-417.

¹⁵⁴ *Niśvāsattattovasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.40: *alpāyusāḥ smṛtā martyā alpavīryālpabuddhayaḥ | ato ‘rthasaṅgrahoktaṃ tu martyebhyaś ca {prakā}śitam* ‘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.

¹⁵⁵ *Niśvāsattattovasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.37-39 lists Śukra, Dadhīci, Durvāsas, Ruru, Kaca, Vasiṣṭha, [conj: Sanaka], Sanandana, Rciṅka, Ūrva, Aṅgrias, Anta, Śveta, Rāma, Vāhlika, Marīci, Upamanyu, Mārkaṇḍa, Agasti, and Kāśyapa.

¹⁵⁶ On the relationship between the *Niśvāsamukha* and the four *sūtras* of the *Niśvāsattattovasaṃhitā*, see KAFLE (2015), pp. 8-9. See also SANDERSON (2006), pp. 152-153.

translation in the doctoral thesis of Nirajan KAFLE.¹⁵⁷ In this independent “entrance” (*mukha*) to the earliest texts of the Nīśvāsa 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 *Nīśvāsamukha* begins with the burgeoning curiosity of the Vedic sage Ricīka (or Ṛcīka). He is wonderstruck upon witnessing a marvel in Naimiṣa 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 Purāṇic revelation narratives. He asks the sage Mataṅga to explain why eighty thousand sages suddenly departed the Naimiṣa woodlands for another forest, Devadāruvana.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

¹⁵⁷ KAFLE (2015).

¹⁵⁸ On the significance of this forest, which has fascinating links to early Śaiva traditions, see KAFLE (2015), pp. 18-19.

curiosity (*kautūhala*).¹⁵⁹ The Vedic sages immediately give verbal form to that curiosity.¹⁶⁰

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 *ṛṣis*, 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."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 *Niśvāsamukha* 1.6-7: --- *naumi naimiṣāraṇyavāsibhiḥ* || *tatraiva dīkṣito brahmā keśavaś ca ricīkaka* | *kautūhalānvitās sarvve vismayaṃ paramaṅgatāḥ* ' [...] by those [sages] residing in the Naimiṣa forest in the very place Brahmā and Keśava were initiated. O Ricīka! [Thus,] they were all full of curiosity [and] were extremely astonished.' Translation of KAFLE

¹⁶⁰ *Niśvāsamukha* 1.8-10: *parasparaṃ vadanty evaṃ sarvaśāstraviśāradaḥ* | *kathamdīkṣāṃ prapadyeta muktva vedoktam āgamam* || *na hi vedāt parāṇ cānyadyoga* --- | --- *padhyate* || *sāṅkhyayogasya vettāsau katham viṣṇuś ca dīkṣitaḥ*. Translation of KAFLE.

¹⁶¹ *Niśvāsamukha* 1.16cd-17ab: *'asmākaṃ kathaya sarvaṃ brahmāviṣṇū tu dīkṣitau* || *yathā te sarvaśāstrāṇāṃ dīkṣājñānasya vedakau*. 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 tantras¹⁶² and commentators, including Abhinavagupta. The five streams¹⁶³ are given in the *Niśvāsamukha* as the Laukika (lay religion related to Purāṇas¹⁶⁴), Vaidika ("practice of the celibate life-stages"¹⁶⁵ related to the legal and socially prescriptive literature of brahminical traditions [*dharmaśāstra*]), Ādhyātmika (the teachings of Yoga and Sāṅkhya), Atimārga (teachings of the early ascetic tradition of Pāśupata Śaivism¹⁶⁶), and finally the Mantramārga (initiatory tantric Śaivism).

¹⁶² SANDERSON (2006a), p. 157: "The same classification is seen elsewhere in Āgamic literature: in the *Mṛgendra*, the *Pauṣkarapārameśvara*, the *Svacchanda*, and the *Jayadrathayāmala*."

¹⁶³ KAFLE (2015), pp. 19-28; SANDERSON (2006a), pp. 156-157.

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."

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁶⁶ This Pāśupata system is taught as twofold (*Niśvāsamukha* 4.131), the Atyāśrāmas and the Lokātītas (*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

¹⁶⁷ KAFLE (2015), p. 14.

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 program¹⁶⁹ of the *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 *Niśvāsamukha* flashes back and forth between both frame-stories, the sages and Nandi,¹⁷⁰ and the original teaching Nandi is recapitulating, that of God and Goddess.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 Sāṅkhyas 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 *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 Sāṅkhya 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 *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 Sāṅkhya. This is particularly true for the Śaiva side of Tantrism." Regarding the Atimārga, the second division of that system, the Lokātita 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 Pāñcārthika [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 Pāñcārthika... The Lākula system added to this proto-*dīkṣā* an early version of the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* and in so doing departed from the Pāñcārthikas... For whereas the Pāñcārthika rite was essential a rite of passage, here it has become, as in Āgamic Śaivism, an *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 *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 Pāñcārthika and Lākula systems stand together against the Āgamic."

¹⁶⁹ KAFLE notes that the *Niśvāsamukha* is the only extant Mantramārgic scripture that extensively treats non-tantric religious systems.

¹⁷⁰ This dialogical frame predominates in chapters one and two.

¹⁷¹ The *devadevīsaṃvāda* (God-goddess-dialogue) predominates in chapters three and four.

Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā 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 *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, 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

¹⁷² BRUNNER (1992), p. 5.

the Nīśvāsa corpus make reappearances. In the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* ('Ruru's Compendium of Pithy Scriptural Teachings')¹⁷³ we meet the luminous seer Ruru, the exceedingly wise namesake of the scripture, who is invited by a group of sages—Bhārgava, Āṅgīrasa, Ātreya, Paulastya, and Marīci—to share his knowledge about the quiescent cause of Śaiva scriptural wisdom.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.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, Ūrva, Ṛcika, and finally Rāma,¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* is one of the earliest extant Siddhānta scriptures independent of the Nīśvāsa corpus. The text is the basis for many of the texts of the earliest Saiddhāntika exegete, Sadyojyotiṣa, including his *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, *Mantravārttika*, *Bhogakārikā*, *Mokṣakārikā*, and *Paramokṣanirāsakārikā*. The text is named after the Vedic sage Ruru who features as the teacher of this redaction of the scripture.

¹⁷⁴ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* introductory verses 2-3: *tejorāśiṃ mahāprājñāṃ ruruṃ munivarottamam | prasannamanasaṃ śāntaṃ śivajñānaikakāraṇam | | bhārgavāṅgīrasātreyā-paulastyāḥ samarīcayāḥ | papracchur vinayānamrā ṛṣayo hr̥ṣītānanāḥ* 'The seers Bhārgava, Āṅgīrasa, Ātreya, Paulastya, together with Marīci, bent over in modesty, their faces filled with astonishment, queried 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 *Nīśvāsattvasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.37-39, cited above.

¹⁷⁵ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.3: *kenāvatāritaṃ hy etat tantraṃ tantravidāṃ vara | guravaḥ katidhā tantre tantrasaṃkhyā 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?'

¹⁷⁶ Rāma here is most likely not the son of Daśaratha of Rāmāyaṇa fame, but rather Paraśurāma who is often described as a descendent 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: *koṭyā nibaddhaṃ parameśvareṇa śaivaṃ padaṃ māṭṛgaṇair upetaṃ | tad eva sarvaṃ kṛtavān mahātmā bhṛgūttamo dvādaśabhiḥ sahasraiḥ | | tad eva buddhvā nikhilaṃ hi bhārgavāt parāparajñānam anukrameṇa |*

the teacher of Ruru himself.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, the *Raurava* includes intertextual allusions to other accounts of scriptural transmission found in another Siddhānta āgama, the *Svāyaṃbhuvā*.¹⁷⁸

The necessity of this mediation of gods, the goddess, and sages, a story of progressive condensation of scriptural wisdom,¹⁷⁹ is represented in the *Raurava*, in consonance with the Purāṇas and the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, 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.”¹⁸⁰

sahasram ekam dviśatam ca so 'vadaḥ rurur mahātmā 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 (*bhṛgunandana*) in *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.2, which admittedly complicates matters when it comes to clear identification of Bhārgava and Rāma.

¹⁷⁷ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.6-3.9: *śivānalaviniṣkrāntam adhūmajyotirūpiṇam | jagataḥ kāraṇam devam ananteśam paraṃ gurum | | tenoktam parameśānaśrīkaṇṭhāya mahātmāne | surāsurāṇām gurunā devyai sarvaṃ udāhṛtam | | devī ca prāha nandīśaskandayor guhyam uttamam | nandīśād brahmaṇāvāptam śakreṇa ca mahātmānā | | tasmād avāptam ūrveṇa ṛcīkena tataḥ punaḥ | tasmād avāptam rāmeṇa rāmāc cāham adhītavān*. N.R. Bhatt, the editor of this text, opts for *śakreṇa* in 3.8, but notes manuscript witnesses that give *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 *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.37-39; and in that list we also find Śukra.

¹⁷⁸ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.14ab: *ye ca te guravaḥ proktās tantre svāyaṃbhuvā purā*.

¹⁷⁹ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 10.104-106 describes the contraction of scripture from ten million verses to twelve-hundred, the final redaction being Ruru's teaching.

¹⁸⁰ *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.27: *na mīmāṃsyā vicāryā vā mantrāḥ svalpadhiyā naraiḥ | pramāṇam āgamaṃ kṛtvā śraddhātavyā hitaiḥibhiḥ* '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 *Svāyaṃbhuvāsūtrasaṅgraha* ('Svayambhū's Redaction of Pithy Scriptural Teachings'), before enumerating¹⁸¹ 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 (*śabdarāśi*).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]).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.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

¹⁸¹ *Svāyaṃbhuvāsūtrasaṅgraha* 5.6-12. See Appendix III of GOODALL (1998) for a critically edited version of these verses.

¹⁸² *Svāyaṃbhuvāsūtrasaṅgraha* 5.1-3: *athādā abhavaḥ chabdaḥ kāraṇād akṣaram tataḥ | kāraṇam mokṣadam brahman brahma brahmavido viduḥ | | tasmāt sarvaprado devaḥ śabdarāśir iti śrutam | navaparvaśatārdhātma yonibījātmakaḥ paraḥ | | akārādivisargāntam bījam tat ṣoḍaśākṣaram |*

śeṣa yonīś catuṣtriṃśat avyayā hy akṣarātmikā '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 'h', totals sixteen letters. The remaining members [of the syllabary], the "womb," consists of thirty-four letters.'

¹⁸³ See the immediately preceding footnote.

¹⁸⁴ *Svāyaṃbhuvāsūtrasaṅgraha* 5.4: *sā śaktir devadevasya tayā vyāptam idaṃ jagat | jñānam śaivam param sūkṣmam yat tat tāraṇam uttamam* '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.¹⁸⁵ The *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* here follows the *Niśvāsattatvasaṃhita* in characterizing the supreme reality as a formless causal deity, which Saiddhāntika scriptures often designate as the source of revelatory sound (*nāda*)¹⁸⁶ that needs to be decoded and transcribed into scriptural teachings. The main teacher in the *Svāyambhuva* is the eponymous deity Svayambhū or Brahmā who mediates the revelatory descent of scripture between the Rudra Nidhaneśa¹⁸⁷ and a group of Vedic sages known as the Vālakhilyas.¹⁸⁸ In contrast with the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha*, which presents itself as the condensed

¹⁸⁵ *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* 5.5: *vedādiññānabhedena śivajñānavibhedataḥ | cintāmanir ivātrāsau sthitaḥ 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 *Niśvāsattatvasaṃhitā*, *uttarasūtra*, 1.23, which is cited above: *adr̥ṣṭavigrahe śānte śive paramakāraṇe | nādarūpaṃ viniṣkrāntaṃ śāstraṃ paramadurllabham*. This understanding of supreme reality likely harkens back to the designation of Śiva as *kāraṇam* in Pāsupata literature.

¹⁸⁷ The identity of the teacher of the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* as the Rudra Nidhaneśa or Nidhana matches the description of the transmission of this text, one of the Rudrabhedas, given in *Kiraṇatantra* 10.16c: *nidhanasya svayambhūtaṃ*.

¹⁸⁸ *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* 1.1: *śivaṃ praṇamya paramaṃ nidhaneśam ataḥ param | jñānadikṣe pravakṣyāmi te śṛṇudhvaṃ samāhitāḥ* ‘I will teach both knowledge and initiation having first bowed to supreme Śiva and Nidhaneśa. 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 *ṭīkā* ad *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* 1.1: *svaguruṃ nidhaneśaṃ praṇamya ... evaṃ devagurunamaskriy[āṃ] pratijñāṃ ca {kṛtvā} svaśiṣyān bālakhilyān samādhāyāvasthāpya tadavabodhāya sakalatantrārthasaṃgrāhakaṃ gauravasūtraṃ paṭhati* ‘First bowing to Nidhaneśa, 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, [Svayambhū] 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 *r̥ṣis*, having the size of the thumb, shining like the sun and numbering 60,000. According to *Taittirīyāranyaka* (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 brahmācārins born from the Prajāpati Kratu and his wife Santati. See also *Mahābhārata*, *ādi*; *Padmapurāṇa*, *sṛṣṭikhaṇḍa* ad 47.” There are actually some inconsistencies in the interlocutors throughout the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha*, which require further examination.

teaching of the Vedic sage Ruru, the dialogical structure of the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* 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 *Kiraṇatantra*, together with the other extant Siddhānta scripture identifiable from the canonical list of twenty-eight, the *Parākhya*, shows evidence¹⁸⁹ 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 *Kiraṇa* is the same peak as the *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā*, the iconic Kailāsa, where the praise

¹⁸⁹ GOODALL (1998), p. lxxiv.

¹⁹⁰ WATSON (2006), pp. 74-75: “Although there is little śāstric discussion in the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha*, the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha*, the *Niśvāsa*, the *Pauṣkarapārameśvara*, the *Sārdhatriśatikālottara* or the *Sarvajñānottara*, when we move to the *Kiraṇa*, 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 *Parākhya*, the *Mataṅga* 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, Sāṅkhya, 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 *Kiraṇa*. 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 *Parākhya*, by contrast, the theology is supplemented by lengthy śāstric digressions.”

poem of Garuḍa (Tārksya) reveals Śiva (Hara or Śrīkaṇṭha¹⁹¹) seated with the Goddess Umā. In response to Garuḍa's humble request, Śiva imparts the *Kiraṇatantra*; indeed, their dialogue goes on to structure the entire text.¹⁹²

In the tenth chapter of the *Kiraṇatantra* Garuḍa requests¹⁹³ an explanation of the descent of tantras. Śiva commences his account by describing how the unitary scriptural wisdom first differentiated into twenty-eight Siddhānta scriptures, which were transmitted from Śiva to ten Śivas and eighteen Rudras¹⁹⁴ that he specifically created as recipients and teachers of each tantra. This

¹⁹¹ On the identity of Śiva, the teacher of the Kiraṇa that Rāmakaṇṭha distinguishes as Śrīkaṇṭha, see GOODALL (1998), pp. 163-164, footnote 10. Śrīkaṇṭha's prominence across narratives of scriptural descent in Siddhānta scriptures, Siddhānta, Mantrapīṭha, and Vidyāpīṭha, is notable. It will also become evident in the course of this chapter that Śrīkaṇṭha'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 Siddhānta, see GOODALL (1998), pp. li-lv. Śrīkaṇṭha 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: *dvāv āptau tatra ca śrīmacchrīkaṇṭhalakuleśvarau | | dvipravāham idaṃ śāstram samyañ niḥśreyasapradam | prācyasya tu yathābhīṣṭabhogadatvam api sthitam* 'In that [Śaiva scriptural system] there are two qualified teachers: the auspicious Śrīkaṇṭha 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 *Kiraṇatantra*, vv. 1.1-13.

¹⁹³ *Kiraṇatantra* 10.1: *kimarthaṃ tāni vaktīśaḥ kasmin kāle kiyanti vā | ke te keśāṃ bravīty evaṃ sarvaṃ etad bravīhi 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 *Kiraṇatantra* 10.3: *sṛṣṭyanantaram eveśaḥ śivān sṛṣṭvā daśātmajan | jñānam ekaṃ vibhajyāśu teṣāṃ tatsaṃkhyayāvadat* '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 *evam ete samākhyātāḥ śivabhedā daśādyā te | daśāṣṭasaṃkhyayā rudrān pūrvam utpādyā buddhimān | | śivas tatsaṃkhyayaiveha punas tāt 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.'

description of the descent of scripture and the dialogical structure of the *Kiraṇatantra* 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 *Kiraṇa* 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 *Kiraṇatantra* 10.28cd-29ab: *eṣu bhedeṣu yo bheda upabhedaḥ sa ucyate* | | *atisaṃkṣiptavistīrṇa ṛṣidevagaṇātmakaḥ* '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 *Kiraṇatantra* 10.29cd-10.30ab: *kasmāt khyāto 'tra bhedaś ca bhedo 'yam cittabhedaḥ* | | *pum̐pravṛtter ayam bhedaḥ śrotṛṇāṃ tu vibhedaḥ*.

¹⁹⁷ *Kiraṇatantra* 10.30cd-10.31ab: *bhedo 'yam upacāreṇa kalpitaḥ sa yatas tataḥ* | *phalabhedo 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 *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* 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 *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* and other Siddhānta scriptural sources, is treated in chapter eleven of the *Kiraṇatantra*.

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 *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 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 latest²⁰⁰ of the early extant revealed sources of this tradition (in its pre-twelfth century stage), provide comparatively elaborate frame-stories: the *Mr̥gendratāntra* and the *Mataṅgapārameśvara*. The *Mr̥gendra* 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 *Mīmāṃsā* critique, reminiscent of Kumārila's position explored above, which reduces God to

²⁰⁰ GOODALL (1998), p. lviii: "Both the *Mr̥gendra* 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 pādas of *jñāna*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *caryā*, suggest that they are later compositions than the other early works listed above."

²⁰¹ *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.2: *nārāyaṇāśrame puṇye bharadvājādayo dvijāḥ | tepuḥ śivaṃ 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 *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.3-1.1.4: *atha tān bhāvitān matvā kadācit tridaśādhipaḥ | tadāśramapadaṃ bheje svayaṃ tāpasaveśabhṛt | | sa taiḥ saṃpūjitaḥ prṣṭvā tāṃs ca sarvān anāmayaṃ | provāca codanādharmāḥ kimarthaṃ nānuvartyate* 'Now one time Indra, thinking about their good disposition, himself assuming the garb of an ascetic, went to their hermitage. Worshipped by them, having confirmed they were all in good health, that [Indra in disguise] said: what is the reason that the *dharma* that is commanded [in the Vedas] is not practiced [here]?'

²⁰³ *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.5-1.1.6: *ta ūcur nanv ayaṃ dharmāś codanāvihito mune | devatārāadhanopāyas tapasābhīṣṭasiddhaye | | vede 'sti saṃhitā raudrī vācyā rudraś ca devatā | sāṃnidhyakarāṇe 'py asmin vihitāḥ kālpike vidhiḥ* '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.²⁰⁴ The Saiddhāntika commentator of this text, the Kashmirian Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa, confirms this connection with the *Mīmāṃsā* argument against the existence of God by citing²⁰⁵ the *Ślokavārttika* of Kumārila to elucidate the force of Indra’s critique of the sages.

At this point in the debate, the *Mr̥gendra* gives us a lovely poetic image of the sages response:²⁰⁶

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

²⁰⁴ *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.7-1.1.9: *ity ukte 'pi paraṃ bhāvaṃ jijñāsuḥ prahasan prabhuḥ | tān āha mithyā jñānaṃ vaḥ śabdamaṭraṃ hi devatā | | śabdetaratve yugapadbhinnadeśeṣu yaṣṭṛṣu | na sā prayāti sāmīdhyāṃ mūrtatvād asmadādivat | | na ca tatsādhakaṃ kiṃcit pramāṇaṃ bhāty abādhitam | vākyaṃ tad anyathāsiddhaṃ lokavādāḥ kva sādhaṃ vaḥ* ‘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 *Mr̥gendratāntravṛtti* ad 1.1.9ab: *anekāntaś ca hetus te taccharīrādinā bhavet*. The source of the citation is Kumārila’s *Mīmāṃsāślokavārttika*, *Sambandhākṣepaparihāra*, v. 77ab. In fact, one quarter verse of the *Mr̥gendratāntra* itself appears to echo Kumārila (or they may share a similar source). Compare *Mr̥gendratāntra*: 1.1.8cd: *mūrtatvād asmadādivat* with two pādas that directly follow Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa’s citation in *Mīmāṃsāślokavārttika*, *Sambandhākṣepaparihāra*, v. 77cd: *dehatvād asmadādivat*.

²⁰⁶ *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.10: *ity anīśavacovāriverlānunno 'bdhineva saḥ | śakreṇa na cacālaiṣāṃ dhīśailaḥ sārāgauravāt*.

each component of Indra's critique, utilizing technical tools of justification from the canons of classical Indian epistemology (Nyāya) to do so.²⁰⁷ Indeed, the highly dialectical nature of this tantra combined with its highly polished Sanskrit, distinguish it from earlier Siddhānta scriptures treated thus far.²⁰⁸ 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."²⁰⁹ 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.²¹⁰ Indra

²⁰⁷ *Mr̥gendratantra* 1.1.11: *na jātu devatāmūrtir asmadādiśarīravat | viśiṣṭaiśvāryasampannā sāto naitan nidarśanam* '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: *Mr̥gendratantra* 1.1.12-1.1.13: *athāstv evaṃ ghaṭe nyāyah śabdatvād indraśabdavat | nādatte ghaṭaśabdo 'mbhaś candraśabdo na rājate | | athānyaviśayaṃ vākyaṃ astu śakrādivācakaṃ | karmarūpādiśabdānāṃ sārthakatvaṃ katham 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 *arthavāda*, 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 *Parākhya*, the *Mataṅga* and the *Mr̥gendra* 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, Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, Nyāya, Lokāyata and Mīmāṃsā."

²⁰⁹ *Mr̥gendratantra* 1.1.17-1.1.18: *iti vādānuṣaṅgeṇa haraśaṃsāpraharṣitān | sāsruḡadgadavācas tān vīkṣya prīto 'bhavadd hariḥ | | svaṃ rūpaṃ darśayāmāsa vajrī devaḥ śatakratuḥ | taruṇāditya-saṃkāśaṃ stūyamānaṃ marudgaṇaiḥ* 'Seeing those [sages] enraptured 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 *Mr̥gendratantra* 1.1.22: *katham maheśvarād etad āgataṃ jñānam uttamam | kiṃ ca cetasi saṃsthāpya nirmame bhagavān 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 Purāṇic 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.²¹¹ 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.²¹² 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 Purāṇic 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 Purāṇic devotions to Śiva-

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

²¹¹ *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.23: *sṛṣṭikāle maheśānaḥ puruṣārthaprasiddhaye | vidhatte vimalaṃ 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 *Mr̥gendratāntra* 1.1.27-1.1.28: *śivodgīrṇam idaṃ jñānaṃ mantramantreśvareśvaraiḥ | kāmādatvāt kāmiketi praḡītaṃ bahuvistaram | | tebhyo ’vagatya dr̥gyotirjvālālīḍhasmaradrumaḥ | dadāu umāpatir mahyaṃ sahasrair bhavaśaṃmitaiḥ* ‘This scriptural wisdom that issued forth from Śiva was taught as vastly manifold by Īśvaras (Mantramahēśvaras), Mantras, and Mantreśas; [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 *Mahābhārata*²¹³ 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 Ṛcika 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 (*vr̥ṣala*) 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 Lakṣmaṇa are sent by Kabandha to the "grove of Mataṅga" (*mataṅgavana*) by the river Pampā to meet Śabarī en route to R̥ṣyamūka mountain where Sugrīva 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 siddhacāraṇasevite | nānāścaryaguṇopetaṃ śikharaṃ cāru nirmalam || siddhīnām udbhavo yatra yatra nāpy apamṛtyavaḥ | yatrānyonyaviruddhānāṃ prītir bhavati tatksaṇāt || yatra saṃnihito nityaṃ bhagavān parameśvaraḥ | tatrāsau munīśārdūlas tapasotkrṣṭamūrtimān || jñānāgnidagdhakaluṣo vṛttāmbhaḥkṣālitātmaṇān | śivādhyānaikacittātmā samādhāv āsthitah 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 Parameśvara 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 ṣaṭpadāvāsavivareṇa śanaiḥ śanaiḥ || tāvan muner mataṅgasya sahasā kṣubhitaṃ manaḥ | bhūyo bhūyo ninādena śrotrāmṛtavapuṣmatā || karīṇyāranyamātaṅgaḥ sa vaśīkrtya nīyate | vanāt parāṇmukhas tadvac cittaṃ lakṣyāc chivātmakāt || tataś cāsau munīḥ śrīmāñ jñātvā bhraṣṭaṃ manaḥ śivāt | ādāya tarasā veṇuṃ susamam rjum avraṇam || ślakṣṇatvacam suniṣṇātaṃ kṛtvā chidrair alaṃkṛtam | tadotpāditavāṃl leśād dhvaniṃ saptaśvarāṇvitam* '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 (*mātaṅga*) 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 pārvatya sahito haraḥ |*

Mataṅga offers a paean²¹⁹ to the Lord and is favored with the boon of his choice. He asks for scriptural wisdom.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.²²¹ Here, as we have observed before, Lord Śiva appears as the husband of Pārvatī, sometimes identified with Śrīkaṇṭha 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 Parameśvara) 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

svaṃ vapur darśayāmāsa mataṅgāya tapasvine ‘On account of that [performance], the blessed Lord Hara, accompanied by Pārvatī, revealed his own form to the ascetic Mataṅga.’

²¹⁸ *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.14: *tadbhaktimanyor āveśān nayanāmalavārīṇā | pādau prakṣālya tam ataḥ stotum ārabdhavān munīḥ* ‘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.’

²¹⁹ *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.15-1.21ab.

²²⁰ *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.26: *jñānam ajñānaḥ tārāṃ sukhābodhyam anākulam | vipulārtham asaṃdigdhaṃ samāśoktyā bravīhi 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.

²²¹ *Mataṅgapārameśvara* 1.32-1.33ab: *anuṣṭupchandasā pūrvaṃ nibaddhaṃ koṭisaṃkhyayā |*

sadāśivena devena tato ‘nantena dhīmatā | | bhāṣitaṃ lakṣamātreṇa tad evāhaṃ tavādhunā | upasaṃhr̥tya saṃkṣepād vakṣye vai pārameśvaram | | sahasrāṇāṃ trayeṇātha pañcabhiś 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 Vidyeśas, 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 ṛṣis 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 *Mṛgendratantra*.

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 *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, 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.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.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

²²³ In addition to the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha*, *Svāyaṃbhuvāsūtrasaṅgraha* (according to the *ṭīkā* of Sadyojyotis), *Mrgendratantra*, and the *Mataṅgapārameśvaratantra*, a Vedic sage is also present in the dialogical structure of the *Parākhya-* or *Saurabheya-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.

²²⁴ WATSON (2006), pp. 74-75.

to pivotal interlocutors of Purāṇic 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 *Mataṅgapārameśvara*, Mataṅga'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 Mataṅga as the legendary author of one of the earliest treatises on music theory, the *Bṛhaddeśī*, 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 *Mataṅgapārameśvara* choose to accentuate his

²²⁵ This connection is noted in FILLIOZAT (1994), p. xv: "This account [in the *Mataṅgapārameśvara*] has to be compared with another tradition about a sage also called Mataṅga, 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 *Bṛhaddeśī*, 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 Pukār during the festivities in honour of Indra. It evokes the artists displaying their talent and among them "kaṇṇuḷāḷar" (5.184). In the list of artists we expect mention of dancers. The word *kaṇṇuḷ* means 'dance', and the word for 'dancers' is *kaṇṇuḷar* (5.49). The commentator Aṭṭiyārkkunallār (12th-13th century) interprets *kaṇṇuḷ-āḷar* as a designation of the musician Mataṅga: *kaṇṇuḷāḷar*—mataṅkar; āvār perumpāṇar; kuḷalarum eṇṇa," i.e. "kaṇṇuḷāḷar means Mataṅga 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."

role.²²⁶ 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 MANTRAPĪṬHA

The next major threshold of the Śaiva Tantras to review is the Mantrapīṭha or Bhairava tantras. The Mantrapīṭha 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 *Svacchandabhairavatantra* ('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: *daśāṭṭādaśavasvaṣṭabhinnāṃ yacchāsanāṃ vibhoḥ | tatsāraṃ trikaśāstrāṃ hi tatsāraṃ 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 ARRAJ (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 factitious 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 yoginyāḥ associated with Bhairavaḥ."

inventories of the “Right Stream”²²⁸ (*dakṣiṇasrotas*) of Śaiva tantras or the independent collection²²⁹ (*pīṭha*) of scriptures dedicated to masculine mantras and mantra-deities (Mantrapīṭha). 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 (Vidyāpīṭha) 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

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 (*dakṣiṇasrotas*), and the scriptures of the Vidyāpīṭha and the Yāmala tantras are described as also emerging from this stream. See *Brahmayāmala* 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 *Kālotara* that enumerates thirty two Dakṣiṇa Tantras and a list of sixty-four Bhairava tantras given in the *Śrīkaṇṭhī*, which is cited in the *Tantrāloka* of Jayaratha.

²²⁹ For a definition of *pīṭha* as “collection” (*saṃūha*), see *Tantrāloka* 37.18c: *saṃūhaḥ pīṭham etac ca*. *Tantrāloka* 37.18-19ab lists the four collections, the Mantra-, Vidyā-, Mudrā-, and Maṇḍalapīṭhas. *Tantrāloka* 37.19cd-37.24ab describes each *pīṭha* 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 *Sarvavīrtatantra*: *mudrā maṇḍalapīṭhaṃ tu mantrapīṭhaṃ tathaiḥ ca | vidyāpīṭhaṃ tathaiḥ ca tuṣṭipīṭhā tu saṃhitā | | svacchandabhairavaś caṇḍaḥ krodha unmattabhairavaḥ | granthāntarāṇi catvāri mantrapīṭhaṃ varānane* ‘A scriptural compilation has four “seats” (*pīṭha*), (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 *Caṇḍa*[*bhairava*], the *Krodha*[*bhairava*], and the *Unmattabhairava*.’ There is some ambiguity in this citation and in the general use of *pīṭha* 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 Mantrapīṭha, 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 (Mantrapīṭha) in distinction to Śakti tantras (Vidyāpīṭha). 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, Svachchandabhairava 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* / *kapālinī*) 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

²³⁰ SANDERSON (1988), pp. 669-670.

deity of Siddhānta tantric liturgies.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 Svachchandabhairava in the Mantrapīṭha, but "her feminine presence is not reinforced by secondary goddesses in the circuit (*āvaraṇa*) that surrounds the couple. Furthermore, Svachchandabhairava is worshipped alone after he has been worshipped with his consort. His appearance with Aghoreśvarī is his lower form."²³² Nevertheless, the Goddess's promotion to co-deity at the center of the *maṇḍala* (deity-enthroning diagram) is a notable development of the Mantrapīṭha.

One other component of worship in the *Svacchandabhairava* is worth mention before we consider the scripture's model of revelation. Unlike the Siddhānta's ritual substances, which are lacto-vegetarian, the *Svacchandabhairava* 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

²³¹ Ibid., p. 669.

²³² Ibid., p. 670.

beneficent—as well as liberation.²³³ 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.²³⁴ 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 tantras²³⁵ has been appended in a later phase of the of the *Svacchandabhairava*’s redaction.²³⁶ The “properly Bhairava” model of revelation, the *devīdevasaṃvāda*

²³³ ARRAJ (1988), pp. 48-49.

²³⁴ *Svacchandabhairava* 8.36cd-8.38: *mayāpi tava deveśi sādhanikāraṃ samarpitam | | tvam api skandarudrebhyo dadasva vidhipūrvakam | brahmaviṣṇvindradevānāṃ vasumātrdivākṛtām | | loke saṃgrhya nāgānāṃ yakṣānāṃ parameśvari | kathayasva ṛṣīnāṃ ca ṛṣibhyo manuṣeṣv 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.’

²³⁵ *Svacchandabhairava* 8.26cd-8.39.

²³⁶ 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 Bhairavī's questions, is introduced at the outset of the scripture.²³⁷ 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 dialogical 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: *kailāsaśikharāsīnaṃ bhairavaṃ vigatāmayam | caṇḍanandimahākālagāṇeśavṛṣabhṛṅgibhiḥ | | kumārendrayamādityabrahmaviṣṇupuraḥsaraiḥ | stūyamānaṃ maheśānaṃ gaṇamātrīṇiṣevitam | | sṛṣṭisaṃhārakartāraṃ vilayasthitikāraṃ | anugrahakaraṃ devaṃ prañatārtivināśanam | | muditaṃ bhairavaṃ drṣṭvā devī vacanam abravīt |*

yat tvayā kathitaṃ mahyaṃ svacchandaṃ parameśvara | | śatakoṭipravistīrṇaṃ bhedānantyavisarpitam | catuṣpīṭhaṃ mahātantraṃ catuṣṭayaphalodayam | | na śaknuvanti manujā alpavīryaparākramāḥ | alpāyuso 'lpavittāś ca alpasattvāś ca śaṃkara | | tadarthaṃ saṃgrahaṃ tasya svalpaśāstrārthavistaram | bhuktimuktipradātāraṃ kathayasva prasādataḥ | | kīdrśaṃ vai guruṃ vidyāt sādhaṃ ca maheśvara | bhayābhayaṃpradātāraṃ śiṣyaṃ bhūmiṃ ca kīdrśīm | | mantrāṃś caiva samāsenā kālaṃ caiva samāsataḥ | yajanaṃ havanaṃ caiva adhivāsaṃ rajāṃsi ca | | pañcagavyaṃ caruṃ caiva dantakāṣṭhaṃ ca maṇḍalam | dīkṣā cādhvābhiṣekau ca samayān sādhanāni ca | | kalim āsādyā siddhyanti tathā brūhi maheśvara | sādhu sādhu mahābhāge yat tvayā paricoditam | | anugrahāya martyānāṃ sāmprataṃ kathayāmi te 'Bhairava, seated on the peak of Kailasa in perfect well-being, was being praised by Caṇḍa, Nandin, Mahākāla, Gaṇeśa, [his] Bull, Bhṛṅgin as well as Kumāra, Indra, Yama, Āditya, 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 obscurity 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 Svacchanda 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 what you have requested in order to bestow grace upon mortal beings.'

“confirms... the perception that the dialogue frame [between Bhairava and Bhairavī] forms the primary and even indispensable structure of the text.”²³⁸

The *Svacchandabhairava* opens a door into a world of transgressive post-initiatory rites²³⁹ and expedients for tantric adepts seeking mastery of cosmic powers as well as liberation. Although the *Svacchandabhairava* includes a standard account of the descent of the tantra, it only makes a gesture to generic Vedic seers.²⁴⁰ 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-Saiddhāntika Śaiva tantras. In addition to this general shift,²⁴¹ in the Yāmala cult, to which we now turn, we find an alternate collection of scriptural

²³⁸ ARRAJ (1988), pp. 20-21.

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

²⁴⁰ Umāpati first narrates (*Svacchandabhairava* 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 Śrīkaṇṭha. 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 *Svacchandabhairava* 8.36cd-8.38, cited and translated above.

²⁴¹ However, we should remember that the *Nīśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, which is given as one of the canonical twenty-eight Siddhānta scriptures in many lists, did also utilize a *devadevīsaṃvāda* structure. In other Siddhānta scriptures where Vedic seers do not act as primary interlocutors we also find a *devadevasaṃvāda* (god-god dialogue) model. Certain commentators elaborate on these various configurations under the rubric of various “relationships” (*saṃbandha*).

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.

²⁴² *Brahmayāmalatantra* 39.22-26: *sārdhakoṭītrayan devī mantrāṇāṃ parisaṃkhyayā | madhyamasrotasambhūto evaṃ vai bhairavo 'bravīt | | navāṣṭakam tathāvāpya sarvasiddhāntajātakam | kriyāmantraprabhedena saṃsthitam varavarṇṇini | | aṣṭāvīmśatibhedena bheditaṃ ca tathā punaḥ | śākhopasākhahhedena prabhinnam vistareṇa tu | | kathitāni kathīṣyanti śrīkaṇṭhād yā gurus tathā | śivabhedasthitāni syuḥ kāmikādvavaravarṇṇini | | rudrabhedena cānyāni saṃsthitāni tathaiva ca | yatra bhede śivo yājyaḥ śivabhedas tu saḥ smṛtaḥ.*

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 hierarchicization of initiatory tantric cults. *Brahmayāmalatantra* 39.75 lists the following scriptures, the *Sam̐moha*, *Naya*, and *Nayottara*, as emerging from the leftward stream: *saṃmohaṃ ca tathā proktaṃ nayo caiva nayottaram | śaukraṃ caiva tathā proktaṃ vāmasrotād vinirgatam | eteṣāṃ bahavo bhedaḥ saṃśritā {nirgame} sthitāḥ.* One scripture of this stream does survive, the *Vīṇāśikhatantra*, 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 Kāpālīnī ('Wrathful Goddess of the Skull'),²⁴⁵ but unlike the predominantly male retinue of deities that encircled Svachchanda 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."²⁴⁶ 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.²⁴⁷ 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 Yoginī? 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 Yoginīs 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 Śrīkaṇṭha in a condensed form.²⁵⁰ The narrator, a form of Bhairava and the putative teacher of the *Brahmayāmala*, in turn received this text from Śrīkaṇṭha,²⁵¹ and his dialogue with the Goddess frames the scripture,

(2007), p.18, which makes the following important distinction: “Yoginīs, 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 Mahādevī.” Translation of HATLEY (2007), p. 365.

²⁴⁹ *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.34-35: *acintyasya parā śaktiḥ śivasya paramātmānaḥ | icchā nāmena saṃjātā tayā binduḥ prabodhitaḥ | | prabuddhasya tato bindor jñānaughaṃ niṣkalaṃ tataḥ | abhividyakto mahādevi akasmān mantravigrahaḥ | jñānasamṇāpūrṇadehas tu sadāśivapade sthitaḥ.*

²⁵⁰ *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.38-39: *anuṣṭhupchandabandhena sapādena mahātmane | lakṣasaṃkhyena saṃkṣepān mantrajñānakriyātmakam | | nirācārapade bhūtvā punaś cobhayadarśanāt | parāpareṇa devena śrīkaṇṭhāya prabhāṣitam. Cf. Brahmayāmalatantra 39.91: ādimo jñānasandohas tribhiḥ strotair vinirgataḥ | sadāśivena devena śrīkaṇṭhāya prabhāṣitam.*

²⁵¹ As we saw the Siddhānta scriptures, Śrīkaṇṭha 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 *Svacchandabhairavatantra*.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.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.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

supreme Śiva. See *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.40-41: *asmāṅ jñānān mahādevi śrīkaṇṭhena hitāya vai | koṭikoṭipravastāir lokānāṅ hitakāmyayā | | prcchakāśrayabhedena kriyābhedavibhāgaśaḥ | śuddhāśuddhena mārgena asattvena ca suvrate | vīstāritāni tantrāṅ jñātvā sadāśivāt padāt* 'From this scripture, O Mahādevī, seeking the good, Śrīkaṇṭha made manifold the *tantras*, learnt from the state of Sadāśiva, 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.' Translation of HATLEY (2007), p. 350.

²⁵² *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.42-43: *ayaṅ tu jñānasandohaṅ svarūpāvasthitaṅ priye | sapādalakṣasaṅkhyātaṅ mayā jñātaṅ yathārthataḥ | | tavāpi jñānabhraṣṭāyāḥ saṃpravakṣyāmi sāmpratam | sapādalakṣabhedena ślokanāṅ saṁsthitam tu yat.*

²⁵³ *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.20-21: *tatas tvayā hitārthāya ādeśena vinā priye | parijanasya samākhyātuṅ prārabdhaṅ bhaktihrṣṭayā | | viplāpyamānaṅ taṅ dṛṣṭvā mahātantraṅ mayā punaḥ | krodhāviṣṭena śaptāsi jñānaṅ te nāśitaṅ yajā.*

²⁵⁴ *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.22-30.

future.²⁵⁵ Bhairava's description²⁵⁶ 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 *Brahmayāmala* mentions Kapālabhairava (previously Śrīdhara) of Kurukṣetra, Padmabhairava (previously Devadatta) of Oḍra, Raktabhairava, Jvālābhairava, and Helābhairava of Madhyadeśa, and Caṇḍabhairava of Sindhu.²⁵⁷ 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, Svachandabhairava (previously

²⁵⁵ *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.45: *divyādivyasvabhāvena sthitayā śaktyanujñayā* | *krodhabhairavadevasya siddhasyaiva śivecchayā* | *sapāḍalakṣasaṃkhyātam 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 *Brahmayāmalatantra* 1.45-119.

²⁵⁷ *Brahmayāmalatantra* 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— Naimiṣa forest, Devadāruvana, Himavat, and Nārāyaṇāśrama—were, like the presence of the Vedic seers, of greater symbolic than topographical significance. The *Brahmayāmala* 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 *Brahmayāmala*'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, Svachchandabhairava 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 *Brahmayāmala*'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

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 (*BraYā*) 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 Svachchandabhairava²⁶⁰ 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 Bṛhodarī of Sindh and Kaṇavīra, near Prayāga,” the mention of which would serve no symbolic purpose²⁶¹ in “the absence of a genuine connection to the text.”²⁶²

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

²⁶⁰ HATLEY provides an excellent synopsis of Svachchandabhairava’s story. HATLEY (2007), pp. 229-231: “In the final quarter of the Kaliyuga, the initiate Svachchandabhairava 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 Svachchandabhairava, he learns the ‘Tantra of Twelve-thousand Verses’ from Kroḍhabhairava, 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 yoginīs hide away the teachings altogether. Concealed throughout the Kṛta, 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) Svachchandabhairava. 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 Svachchandabhairava 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.

²⁶² HATLEY (2007), p. 233.

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. Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, 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 integrated²⁶⁵ (e.g. in texts like the *Devyāyāmalatantra*) the central Goddess of the Kālī-centered tradition, Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, 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 Yoginīs permeates all levels.”²⁶⁶ 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 (Yoginīs) are pivotal in the transmission of *siddhi* or supernatural powers, the preeminent goal of the earliest Vidyāpīṭha scriptures. Moreover, Yoginī encounters are facilitated through “impure” ritual technologies and offerings that effectively entice these protean female spirits. TÖRZSÖK describes a ritual convocation with Yoginīs as it is prescribed in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*: “The Sādhaka must be naked, smeared with ashes, and he should lure female spirits by offerings of impure substances such as meat or the ‘perfect nectar’

²⁶⁵ SANDERSON, p. 678.

²⁶⁶ 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 *yoginīs*, *ḍākinīs* 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 Yoginīs, 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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, 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 Yoginīs.²⁶⁸ She proposes that the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*’s triadic Goddess cult...²⁶⁹

evolved from an exorcistic base... in which the pure goddess, Parā, was also a leader of the eight impure Yoginīs. 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

²⁶⁷ TÖRZSÖK (1999), p. xix.

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 brahmins 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 avāptaṃ rāmeṇa tena loke prakāśitam | śṛṇute vā paṭhati vā kurute vā ca bhāvanām | | yogeśvaro 'sau bhavati rudratejopabrhm̐hitas | bhūtendriyaguṇādihāraḥ sarvajñaḥ phalabhāginah | | tasmāt tantram na dātaṇyam anyāyam anuvartine | ājñā hy eṣā bhagavato bhairavasya mahātmanah | | dravyaṃ prāṇaṃ parityajya na ca guhyaprakāśanam | rudraśaktisamābhaktir gurus tasya pradāpayet | | nirataṃ tu ayodhyāyās vaktrāt vaktraṃ gurukramāt | guptaṃ pūrvam kṛtaṃ deve devyā guptataraṃ kṛtam | | svacchandam ṛṣayas guptaṃ rāmaguptaṃ sadā kṛtam | yogeśinām gurūṇām ca guptāt guptataraṃ gatam | yadi guptaṃ bhavet siddhis yasmāt guptataraṃ kṛtam.*

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 *sādhana*s.

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 *Tantrāloka*,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

²⁷¹ *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 32.6-8: *nānena sadṛśaṃ jñānaṃ nānena sadṛśaṃ phalam | bhairavāt bhairavīprāptaṃ tantraṃ svacchandabhairavam | | tasmāt ca garuḍaprāptaṃ tasmāt śukraṃ avāpnuyāt | tasmāt kacena cūrṇena ... nāvāptavān | | tasmāt avāptaṃ rāmeṇa tena loke prakāśitam | śṛṇute vā paṭhati vā kurute vā ca bhāvanām.*

²⁷² TÖRZSÖK (1999), pp. 184-185, footnote 8.

²⁷³ *Tantrāloka* chapter 36.

²⁷⁴ *Tantrāloka* 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 *maṇḍala* 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 (Parvatī’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.

²⁷⁶ BONAZZOLI (1983), p. 96.

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 *Brahmayāmalatantra* 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, Svachchandabhairava and Caṇḍabhairava, are the focus of sustained narratives describing how they became empowered to transmit the scripture. Although the Vidyāpīṭha scripture, the

Siddhayogeśvarīmata, 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.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.

²⁷⁷ The early Nīśvāsa 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.

CHAPTER THREE

Siddhas and Revelation

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 (*sāṃsiddhika*) 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 KULAMĀRGA: A RÉSUMÉ

Around the eighth century²⁷⁸ 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" (*kulaśāśana*). The Kulamārga has its origins in the milieu of the Yoginī cults²⁷⁹ that featured prominently in the early scriptures of the Śakti Tantras, specifically the scriptural witnesses with a Kāpālīka²⁸⁰ aura

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 Vākpati, a contemporary of Bhavabhūti in eighth-century Kānyakubja, modern-day Kannauj. See SANDERSON (2006a), p. 149. This reference is cited in WALLIS (2014), p. 156.

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."

²⁸⁰ Although SANDERSON has recently argued that the Kaula system has a direct connection with the pre-Mantramārgic "Kāpālīka" 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 Kāpālīka 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 Mahābhairava/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 (*āveśah*)."

centered on female mantra-deities (Vidyāpīṭha).²⁸¹ This genealogical relationship to the cult of the Yoginī, which was treated briefly in chapter two, is discernable in the meaning of the appellation “Kaula.” SANDERSON explains:²⁸²

The rites of the Yoginī 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 Yoginīs 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 Yoginī 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 Yoginīs—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.²⁸³

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 *yoginīs* 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,

²⁸¹ E.g. the *Brahmayāmalatantra*, *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, *Tantrasadbhāva*, and the *Jayadrathayāmala*. These are mentioned in HATLEY (2007), p. 153.

²⁸² SANDERSON (1988), p. 679.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 679-680.

based on yogic practices and meditation.”²⁸⁴ With the galaxies of tantric powers now internalized,²⁸⁵ the practitioner became “the temple of his deities.”

SANDERSON elaborates this point:²⁸⁶

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, Kuleśvarī), 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 *maṇḍala* 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.²⁸⁷

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

²⁸⁴ TÖRZSÖK (forthcoming), p. 1.

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: *siddhānte līṅgapūjoktā viśvādhvamayatāvide | kulādiṣu niśiddhāsau dehe viśvātmatāvide* ‘In the Siddhānta one is required to worship the *līṅga*, with the intention that one should come to see it as embodying the whole universe; but such [systems] as the Kaula forbid the *līṅga* 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: “*Mālinīvijayottaratantra* 18.2c-3b: *mṛcchailadhāturatnādibhavaṃ līṅgaṃ na pūjayet | yajed ādhyātmikaṃ līṅgaṃ; Timirodghāṭana* 12.5ab: **līṅgaṃ* (corr. Vasudeva : *līṅga* Cod.) **svadehe* (corr. Vasudeva : *svedeheṣu* Cod.) *sampūjyam*.”

²⁸⁶ SANDERSON (1988), p. 680.

²⁸⁷ However, there is evidence of a nondual doctrine in earlier Siddhānta scriptures, notably the *Sarvajñānottara*, and in certain teachings of the *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā*.

(Kuleśvarī).²⁸⁸ Kuleśvarī was optionally accompanied by Bhairava (Kuleśvara), and they were propitiated in concert with eight encircling Mother Goddesses, the attendants Gaṇeśa and Vaṭuka (or Baṭuka), and four Siddhas, each associated with one of the four ages (*yuganāthas*). Matsyendranātha (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.²⁸⁹

The proliferation of the Kaula system, “differentiated most obviously by the identity of the central deity,”²⁹⁰ was organized in the currently extant Kaula scripture, the *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya*,²⁹¹ 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 proposes²⁹²

²⁸⁸ SANDERSON (2014), p. 58.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. (1988), p. 61.

²⁹⁰ Ibid. (2014), p. 58.

²⁹¹ *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 7.38-39: *caturṇām gharam āmnāye avatāraḥ prthak prthak | devyāḥ svayaṁ prabhāvaṁ ca pūrvapaścimadakṣiṇam | | uttaraṁ ca tathā devī māyayā rūpam āśritam | pravakṣyāmi samāsenā vallabhatvād varānane*. On the relevant sections of the *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* where each Transmission is treated, see SANDERSON (2014), pp. 58-59, footnote 224. The *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 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 (*dakṣiṇāmnāya*: 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 *Ciñciṇīmata* 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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* as their source-text, but clearly move beyond its ritual and doctrinal ambit, in part because the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, 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 *Devīyāmala*, *Trikahr̥daya*, *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

Tantrāloka to provide the scriptural authority that remains unstated in Abhinavagupta's presentation.

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.

²⁹⁴ SANDERSON (1988), p. 682.

comparatively massive.²⁹⁵ The Western Transmission (*paścimāmnāya*),²⁹⁶ deeply indebted to the Trika,²⁹⁷ has extensive scriptural and commentarial literature dedicated to the Kaula Goddess Kubjikā, “The Hunchbacked One.” Finally, the Southern Transmission (*dakṣiṇāmnāya*), originally described by the *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 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.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 *Tantrasadbhāva* and *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, the Kaula system operates somewhat like a “meta-tradition,”²⁹⁹ introducing specialized teachings and ritual procedures (*kulaprakriyā* / *kulavidhi*) that accommodated and

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

²⁹⁶ SANDERSON (1988), pp. 686-688.

²⁹⁷ DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 3, p. 282: “The KMT [*Kubjikāmatatantra*] draws as much as three chapters from the TS [*Tantrasadbhāva*]. Subsequently, our own text [*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.”

²⁹⁸ SANDERSON (1988), pp. 688-690.

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 Śaivite despite the very large Śākta input that Kula doctrine and practice brought into them.”

coexisted³⁰⁰ with more properly tantric methods of yoga, initiation, and ritual observance (*tantraprakriyā*). Here Kaula methods and doctrine appear as advanced and optional phases of the tradition, often appended to the end of a scripture.³⁰¹ Abhinavagupta adapts this integrative approach, treating the Kaula form of ritual in his *Tantrāloka* and *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.³⁰² This attitude of independence is reinforced not only by a pervasive disregard for tantric methods, especially in later scriptures of the Kubjikā corpus.³⁰³ These later Kubjikā scriptures even

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 metaphoric 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.”

³⁰¹ The final section (chapters 19-23) of the *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 (*caryāpāda*). The *Svacchandabhairava* also concludes with Kaula materials in its fifteenth chapter, dealing with code words, secret gestures (*chummaka*), and empowering encounters (*melaka*) with Yoginīs. ARRAJ considers this Kaula layer to be evidence of a final phase of redaction, subsequently appended to earlier strata of the tantra. See ARRAJ (1988), p. 52. For his full argument and a summary of the chapter, see *Ibid.*, pp. 367-372.

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 Yoginīkulas, 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 (*bhairavasrotas*) was severed.”

³⁰³ DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 257: “Thus, the KuKh [*kumārikākhaṇḍa* of the *Manthānabhairavatantra*] distinguishes between the practice of Tantra (*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.³⁰⁴ 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.³⁰⁵

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

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 257: "[The *Manthānabhairavatantra*] warns that its teaching should not be given to Tantrics, or those devoid of the Kula practice (*kulācāravilupta*). 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 *Manthānabhairavatantra*] 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 *Akulavṛatantra* 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.³⁰⁶ 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.³⁰⁷ The Kaula scriptures extend this

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 Śāmbhava state. Thus, ‘beyond the belly of Māyā’ and so free of the ‘sphere of *rajas*’ (*rajomaṇḍala*) and the *jātis*, it is the western Śāmbhava 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 Yoginī”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 Yoginī 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 *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 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.

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 *ūrdhvordhva*, 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 Yoginī, 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.”

³¹⁰ HANNEDER (1998), pp. 20-21.

³¹¹ DYCZKOWSKI (1988), p. 64.

³¹² *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 1.29cd-1.30: *divyaughaparamānandam picuvaktran tu kaulikam | tanmadhyoditacidvṛkṣaṃ mūlaśākhāsuvistaram || adṛṣṭavigrahārūḍhaṃ siddhaughaphalam uttamam*. Cited and translated in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume three, p. 15.

Abhinavagupta himself identifies this source of the Kaula current with the lower face (*adhovaktra*), arguing that its doctrines transcend all other traditions from within, because they alone introduce the awareness of nonduality.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:³¹⁴

In the domain of ritual, the Kaula tradition attenuated the mortuary or *kāpālika* dimensions of the Vidyāpīṭha, 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

³¹³ *Tantrāloka* 6.193cd-194ab: *adhovaktraṃ tv idaṃ dvaitakalanikaikāntaśātanam* || *kṣīyate tadupāsāyāṃ yenordhvādharāḍambaraḥ*. Translation of HANNEDER (1998), p. 20.

³¹⁴ HATLEY (2007), pp. 156-157.

agencies, disavowal of the outer trappings of the *kāpālīka* 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 Kāpālīka 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 Kāpālīka components of early Vidyāpīṭha Yoginī cults. This domestication was related to new social horizons for Śaiva

³¹⁵ For a vivid account of this process, see SANDERSON (1988), p. 680: "The Kāpālīka of the Vidyāpīṭha sought the convergence of the Yoginīs and his fusion with them (*yoginīmelaka*, -*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 (*karaṇeśvarīs*), 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 *kapālavrata* 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 *kapālavrata* 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 Kāpālīkas 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."

external observances” often underwent a transformation “into yogic practice.”³²¹

The elaborate and all-important rite of tantric initiation, moreover, was highly condensed: what was often a multi-day affair³²² 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”³²³ and initiation requires “a putatively enlightened Guru, who... [can] circumvent laborious ritual processes and even bestow initiation merely through a touch or penetrating gaze.”³²⁴ 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.³²⁵ This characterization of the Kaula system often glosses over the diversity of sexual rites scattered across the pre-Kaula scriptures of the

³²¹ TÖRZSÖK (2007), p. 505.

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.”

³²³ SANDERSON (1988), p. 682.

³²⁴ WALLIS (2014), p. 159.

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 erotico-mystical practices that became the bedrock of later Kaulism.”; Cf. WHITE (2003), pp. 8-9.

Mantramārga,³²⁶ from marginal appearances in the Siddhānta scriptural literature³²⁷ 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.”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,”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.”³³⁰ This transformation is congruent with a general process in the Kulamārga, particularly in the Krama cult, often designated as “aestheticization”³³¹ in the secondary literature. This term refers to a process whereby wheels of female goddesses are reimagined as the sequential

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” (*asidhārāvrata*), see HATLEY (2016).

³²⁷ HATLEY (2016), pp. 335-337, notes the treatment of the “razor’s edge” coital ritual in the Nīśvāsa’s *Guhyasūtra* and the *Mataṅgapārameśvara*, both Saiddhāntika scriptures.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

³²⁹ SANDERSON (1988), p. 680.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Although the term “aestheticization” is potentially misleading, because it potentially evokes an association with theories of aesthetics, which in Sanskrit 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. SANDERSON³³² 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 propose³³³ that important sectarian Kaula texts, namely those of the Trika (*Trikasāra* and *Triśirobhairava*) and Krama (*Kālīkrama*, *Devīpañcaśatikā*, *Kramasadbhāva*, and *Jayadrathayāmala*), actually propound the "nondualism of dynamic consciousness."³³⁴ On the basis of these Kaula scriptural precedents, SANDERSON concludes, Abhinavagupta read a nondual ontology into "the entire non-Saiddhāntika corpus."³³⁵ TÖRZSÖK has recently extended³³⁶ SANDERSON's insights. Through close textual analysis she charts the subtle transitions in Śaiva

³³² SANDERSON (1992), "The Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra."

³³³ Ibid., p. 307, footnote 89.

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.

³³⁵ SANDERSON (1992), p. 307.

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 TÖRZSÖK 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 TÖRZSÖK (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.”³⁴⁰ 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.³⁴¹

§ 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 distinctive³⁴² “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 (*citsvarūpa*) 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 Kālī), 3.77 (Anākhyā).” On the world as the embodiment of that same consciousness, see Ibid., footnote 109: “*Devīpāñcaśatikā* 6.24 (*sarvarūpā*); 2.68, 3.48, 5.42 (*viśvarūpā*); *Kramasadbhāva* 1.13, 1.27, 2.73 (*viśvarūpā*); 5.42, 6.65 (*sarvarūpā*).”

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, Sāṅkhya, Bhartṛhari’s *Vākyapadīya*, 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 *Kubjikāmatatantra* of the Western Transmission, the

Kubjikāmatatantra, is illustrative:³⁴³

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.³⁴⁴

In an account that closely resembles the earliest or "uninflected" template of Kaula worship,³⁴⁵ preserved in the twenty-ninth chapter of the *Tantrāloka*, the

hope to turn my attention to the role of agents of revelation in these traditions, in particular their tantric iterations, to consider their relationship to the Mantramārga and Kulamārga scriptural systems of Śaivism.

³⁴³ *Kubjikāmatatantra* 1.44-46: *sādhu sādhu mahābhāge mahānandavidhāyini | prcchitam yat tvayā vākyam atyadbhutam anāmayam | | gopitam sarvarudrāṇām vīrāṇām bhairaveṣu ca | siddhakramam nirācāram tathāpi kathayāmi te | | siddhamārgakramāyātam siddhapañktiavyavasthitam*. Cited in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, pp. 282-283. This translation is based on DYCZKOWSKI's.

³⁴⁴ *Ūrmikaulārṇavatāntra* 1.5ab: *śrutam mayā kulāmnāyam siddhapāramparāgatam* 'I have learned that Kula Transmission, which is located in the tradition of Siddhas.'; *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 1.24ab: *siddhānvayam param kaulam bhuktimuktiphalapradam* 'The lineage of Siddhas, the supreme Kaula (tradition), bestows the results of supernatural enjoyments and liberation.' The latter quote is cited in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 405, footnote 4; *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.10: *pañcaśrotātmakam caiva gopitam siddhagocare | tvadbhaktiā codyate nāthe anyathā na kadācana* 'That (scriptural knowledge) consisting of five streams is hidden among the Siddhas (*siddhagocare*). On account of your devotion it is revealed now, O Queen, otherwise not at all.' In the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta describes the Kaula scripture cited above, the *Ūrmikaulārṇava*, as "the embodiment of the lineage of Siddhas." See *Tantrāloka* 2.48ab: *śrīmadūrmimahāśāstre siddhasaṃtānarūpake*.

³⁴⁵ SANDERSON (2014), p. 59: The Pūrvāmnāya as outlined in this text [*Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya*] 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).³⁴⁶ 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.³⁴⁷ 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).³⁴⁸

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 *ṣaṭka* of the *Jayadrathayāmala*, especially chapter 23. Another is the *Kularatnamālā*, which, like the *Jayadrathayāmala*, was an important Kālī Tantra. Abhinava integrates these Kālī 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 *Devayāyāmala*.

³⁴⁶ DYCZKOWSKI (1988), p. 62: “The *Tantrāloka* records one of the basic patterns of classification of these Kaula 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: *yugakrameṇa kūrmaḍyā mīnāntā siddhasantatiḥ*.

³⁴⁷ Jayaratha introduces the list of four Yuganāthas with instructions on their worship. See Jayaratha’s *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 29.29ab: *kṛtādiyugakramāvatīrṇaṁ siddhacatuṣkam abhyarcayet vakṣyamāṇakrameṇa pūjayet* ‘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 sahavijjāmbā illāri ambayā saha || vaktasṭir vimalo ’nantamekhalāmbāyutaḥ purā | śaktyā maṅgalayā kūrma illāri ambayā saha || jaitro yāmye hy avijitas tathā sānandamekhalāḥ | kāmamaṅgalayā meṣaḥ kullāri ambayā saha || vindhyo ’jito ’py ajarayā saha mekhalayā pare | macchandaḥ kuṅkuṇāmbā ca ṣaḍyugmaṁ sādḥikāarakam*. 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” (*sādḥikāarakam*) sons. *Tantrāloka* 29.32cd-34 enumerates these six sons of Matsyendranātha who were not celibates (*adhoretas*), which explains why they are qualified to transmit the tradition. *Tantrāloka* 29.41 lists another set of six sons of Matsyendranātha who were celibate (*ūrdhvaretas*), and thus devoid of this

§ 3.3 MATSYENDRANĀTHA

Matsyendranātha³⁴⁹ 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 signals³⁵⁰ the primacy of the Kulamārga 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.³⁵¹

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 Saṃpradāya. 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 Kulamārga. On the Nāth Saṃpradāya, and Matsyendranātha's place within it, see MALLINSON (2011), especially pp. 4-5.

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

³⁵¹ *Tantrāloka* 1.7: *rāgāruṇaṃ granthibilāvīkīrṇaṃ yo jālam ātānavitānavṛtti | kalombhitam bāhyapathe cakāra stān me sa macchandavibhuḥ 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* 1.7: *mama prasannaḥ stāt svātmadarśanasamvibhāgapātratām āviṣkuryāt ity arthaḥ* '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 predominates³⁵³ 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 (Macchandana) 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 *Tantrāloka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 1.7: *avaśyam eva śāstrakāraiḥ svagurvādeḥ kīrtanaṃ kāryam ataś ca vakṣyamāṇaśāstrasya kulatantraprakriyātmakatvena dvaividhye'pi... kulaprakriyāyāḥ prakriyāntarebhyaḥ prādhānyāt... tadavatārakaṃ turyanātham eva tāvat prathamam kīrtayati.*

³⁵³ On the Kaula system's paramountcy, Jayaratha gives the following citation. *Tantrāloka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 1.7: *nabhaḥsthitā yathā tārā na bhrajanṭe ravau sthite | evaṃ siddhāntatantrāṇi na vibhānti kulāgame | | tasmāt kulād rṣe nānyat saṃsāroddharaṇam 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 *Tantrāloka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 1.7: *saḥ sakalakulaśāstrāvatārakatayā prasiddhaḥ.*

³⁵⁵ *Tantrāloka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 1.7: *bhairavyā bhairavāt prāptaṃ yogaṃ *prāpya* (em. : *vyāpya* Ed.) *tataḥ priye | tatsakāśāt tu siddhena mīnākhyena varānane | | kāmārūpe mahāpīṭhe*

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 (*avatārīta*) by Matsyendranātha. SANDERSON cites five Kaula scriptures, the *Kulapañcāśikā*, *Guhyasiddhi*, *Ūrmikaulārṇava*, *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, and *Kulānanda*, whose colophons make this attribution.³⁵⁷ Of

macchandena mahātmanā. Translation and emendation of SANDERSON (2007a), p. 264, footnote 95.

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) *Kulapañcāśikā*, f.6v5 (end): *iti kulapañcāśikāyāṃ śrīmats{y}end{r}apādāvatāre*; (2) *Guhyasiddhi*, f. 20r6-7: *śrīmacchagnapādāvatārīte śrīkāmākhyāvinirgataḥ guhyasiddhiṣaṣṭhamah paṭala{h}*; (3) *Ūrmikaulārṇava* A, f. 27r7-9: *iti *śrīnīlatantre (nīla em. : nīra A) śrīmadūrmikaulārṇave mahāśāstre lakṣapādoddhṛte pramarahasye śrībhogahastakramāmnāye śrīkaulagīripīṭhavirṇigate śrīmīnanāthāvatārīte ṣaṭṣatādhikaṣate kulakaulanirṇaye karmakośavicāro nāma tṛtīya{h} paṭalalaḥ*; (4)

these five scriptures, the *Ūrmikaulārṇava* eulogizes Matsyendranātha at the beginning of the text³⁵⁸ and frequently refers to him in the capacity of scriptural revelation.³⁵⁹ Noting that Matsyendranātha is also mentioned as the “oldest, most revered teacher”³⁶⁰ in three early Kaula scriptures of the Krama,³⁶¹ the *Yonigahvaratantra*, *Devīpañcaśatikā*, and *Kramasadbhāva*, DYCZKOWSKI goes on to say: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

Kaulajñānanirṇaya, p. 80: *iti jñānanirṇaye mahāyoginikaule śrīmatsyendrapādāvatārite candradvīpavīrṅgate trayaviṃśatitamah paṭalaḥ*; and (5) *Kulānanda*, p. 113: *matsyendrapādāvatāritam kulānandam*.”

³⁵⁸ *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* 1.1-4.

³⁵⁹ *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* 1.52: *idaṃ paraṃparāyātaṃ saptadhā khecarārcitam | mīnakhecaranāthena yuge 'smin cāvatāritam*; *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* 1.75: *siddhaḥ kaliyuge yo 'sau mahābhairavavigrahaḥ | mīnakhecaranāmeti bhogahastaṃ tu taṃ viduḥ*; *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* 2.25: *tat krameṇa pravakṣyāmi saptadhā khecarārcitam | pāraparyakramāyātaṃ śrīnāthena prakāśitam*; *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* 3.65 *yoginikaulasadbhāvaḥ kathito mīnaśāsane | piṇḍādīpañcakajñānaṃ siddhāmnāyakramāgatam*.

³⁶⁰ DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 273. It should be noted that these texts do not all explicitly claim to be “revealed” (*avatārita*) by Matsyendranātha; the *Devīpañcaśatikā* 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.

³⁶¹ Matsyendranātha is listed in the second Krama text mentioned here in an account that parallels the one found in the *Tantrāloka*. *Devīpañcaśatikā* 3.5-8: *ādye yuge yathāyātaṃ tretāyāṃ dvāpare tathā | caturthe tu mahāghore samāsāc chr̥ṇu bhairava | | khagendranātho vijñāmbāsamāyātaḥ kṛte yuge | dvitīye kūrmanāthas tu maṅgalāmbāsamanvitaḥ | | tṛtīye meṣanāthas tu kāmamaṅgalayā saha | caturthe mīnanāthas tu koṅkaṇāmbāsamāyutaḥ | | tasya ca kṛḍamānasya saṃjātā dvādaśātmaḥ | teṣāṃ nāmāni vakṣyāmi yathāmnāyaṃ 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. *kali yuga*]. Listen to that in brief, O Bhairava. In the Kṛta Yuga, Khagendranātha was accompanied by [his consort] Vijñāmbā. In the second age, Kūrmanātha was accompanied by Maṅgalāmbā. In the third age was Meṣanātha together with Kāmamaṅgalā. In the fourth, Mīnanātha is accompanied by Koṅkaṇāmbā. Born of that [Mīnanātha] who was amorously sporting [with Koṅkaṇāmbā], were twelve sons. I will teach you their names as has been scripturally documented, O God of the Kula.’

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 Vidyāpīṭha Yoginī cults. Nevertheless, it is the tradition's pervasive *representation* of Matsyendra as a catalyst in the process of revelation, and by extension the Kulamārga's rhetorical emphasis on an individual enlightened figure as decisive to the emergence of its revelatory canon, that primarily concerns us here.³⁶³

Chapter sixteen of the early Kaula scripture, the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, narrativizes Matsyendranātha's role in the scriptural dissemination of the Kaula scriptural tradition (*kaulāgama*).³⁶⁴ Earlier in this chapter Bhairava, in his dialogue

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 *Brahmayāmala-Picumata*, *Jayadrathayāmalatantra*, *Tantrasadbhāva*, *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, 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 (*vyaktalingatā*), 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 Bhairavī, identifies himself with a list of Siddhas³⁶⁵ forefronted by his identification with the Siddha Matsyendranātha.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.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*).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.³⁶⁹ After cursing his son to assume this murine form, Bhairava scanned the ocean surrounding that Moon Island for the stolen scriptural

³⁶⁵ This list begins at *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.15, and many of the Siddha names (Viśvapāda, Vicitra, Śvetapāda, Bhṛṅgapāda, 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.

³⁶⁶ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.12: *ahaṃ so bhaṭṭasaṃjñas tu matsaghnaś caiva kevaṭaḥ* |

ahaṃ so dhīvaro devī ahaṃ vīreśvaraḥ 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.’

³⁶⁷ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.21cd-22ab: *yadāvatāritam jñānam kāmarūpe tvayā mayā* | | *tadāvatāritam tubhyaṃ tatvan tu śaḍmukhasya ca* ‘When I revealed that scriptural wisdom in Kāmarūpa with you, at that time the essence was revealed to You and Kārttikeya.’

³⁶⁸ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.28: *ahaṃ caiva tvayā sārddham candradvīpagato yadā* | *tadā baṭukarūpeṇa kārttikeya samāgataḥ* ‘When I went to Candradvīpa with you, Kārttikeya, in the form of a young boy, came along.’

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 (*jñānadr̥ṣṭi*), ultimately retrieving it from the belly of a fish that he had pulled to shore.³⁷⁰

This recovery was short-lived, because the mouse-Kārttikeya then spitefully burrowed an underground tunnel to pilfer the Kula *śāstra* 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.³⁷¹ 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.³⁷² Meeting with success, Bhairava, having now

³⁷⁰ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.29-31: *ajñānabhāvam āsrtya tadā śāstram hi mūṣitam | śāpito 'yam mayā devi śaḍmukho mūṣakākṛtiḥ || gato 'ham sāgaram bhadre jñānadr̥ṣṭyāvalokitam | maccham ākarṣayitvā tu sphoṭitam codaram priye || grh̥tvā matsyodarasthan tu ānītan tu gr̥he punaḥ | sthāpayitvā jñānapaṭṭam mama gūḍham tu rakṣitam* ‘Upon entering an ignorant state, [Kārttikeya] stole the [Kaula] scriptural teachings. I cursed Kārttikeya, 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 *śāstra*] 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.’

³⁷¹ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.31-16.32: *punaḥ kruddham anenaiva mūṣakena sureśvari | gārttam kṛtvā suruṅgāya punaḥ kṣiptam hi sāgare || daśakoṭipramāṇena mahāmatsyena bhāṅṣitam | mama krodhasamutpannam 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.’

³⁷² *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.34-36: *ākarṣito mahāmatsa saptānām sāgaro hradā | anāgato 'sau mahāmatsyo mama tulyabalaḥ priye || jñānatejena sambhūto durjayas tridaśair api | brahmatvam hi tadā tyaktaḥ cintavīdhīvarātmakam || aham so dhīvaro devi kaivarttatvam mayā kṛtaḥ | ākr̥ṣṭas tu tato matsyaḥ śaktijālasamīkṛtaḥ* ‘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

become the Siddha Matsyendranātha to procure the scriptural teachings, cut open the fish and once more recovered the Kulāgama from its belly.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.³⁷⁴

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).

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

to surmount, even by the Gods. Then relinquishing the status of a Brahman, I became a Fisherman. I am that Fisherman, O Goddess, I took on the status of a fisherman. As a result, lining up the fish with that net of power, I caught it.’

³⁷³ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.37ab: *matsyodaran tu tat sphoṭya grhītañ ca kulāgamam* ‘Splitting open that belly of the fish, the Kulāgama was retrieved.’

³⁷⁴ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.38: *brāhmaṇo ‘si mahāpuṇyo kaivarttatvaṃ tvayā kṛtaḥ | matsyābhigātino viprā matsaghnaṃ ceti viśrutā | kaivarttatvaṃ kṛtaṃ yasmāt kaivartto vipranāyaka.*

the Kulamārga must also suffer a corresponding loss of status.³⁷⁵ “However, this degradation in terms of caste is an upgrade in terms of Kaula practice.”³⁷⁶ 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 Kāpālīka Yoginī cults vindicate the greater potency of their teaching tradition.³⁷⁷

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,³⁷⁸ and describes the scriptural corpus of the Kali Age as “Matsodara”—“[the revelation recovered by

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 Brahmins of Kashmir.”

³⁷⁸ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.48cd: *caturyugavibhāgena avatāraṃ coditam mayā* ‘In accordance with the divisions of the Four Ages, I cause that [scripture] to descend.’

Matsyendra from] the Belly of the Fish.”³⁷⁹ Thus, at least for the current world age (*kaliyuga*), the notion that an individual Siddha, Matsyendranātha, single-handedly 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.³⁸⁰

§ 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 propagation of the Kulamārga. One example is Niṣkriyānanda who is credited with revealing Kaula teachings of the cult of the Northern Transmission known as the Krama tradition. One Krama scripture, the

³⁷⁹ *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 16.49: *jñānādaḥ nirṇṇītiḥ kaulaṃ dvitīye mahatsaṃjñītam | trītiye siddhāmr̥tan nāma kalau matsodaram priye* ‘O dear one, in the first [age] scriptural wisdom is known as Nirṇṇīti. In the second [age] the Kaula is known as Mahat. In the third, there is the Nectar of the Siddhas (Siddhāmr̥ta), 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: *paścimedaṃ svabhāvena kulāmnāyaṃ kuleśvari | mīnapādāṅkaśaṃyuktaṃ pūrvāmnāyaṃ bhaviṣyati | pīṭhakramasamāyuktaṃ tatsantānasamanvitaṃ* ‘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 tacchāstrābhyāsakṛt svayam | | jñānayogena tacchāstraṃ kṣiptaṃ putreṇa sāgare | śaktijālena tanmatsyaṃ ākṛṣya tarasā priye | | udare tasya matsyasya pāṭhayiṣyati siddharat | tanmadhye pustakābhyāsaṃ kurvantam eti dīptimān | | vīkṣayiṣyati taṃ drṣṭvā apūrovaṃ codyam uttamam | apūrovedaṃ mayā drṣṭam āścaryaṃ vismayāvaham | | tasmāt tovaṃ matsya udaraj janmāntaram avāptavān | matsyendranāmabhavitaṃ tavedaṃ vibhavottamam | | tavaiṣā vipulā kīrtir bhaviṣyati mahītale | tvatsantānam idaṃ vatsa pūrvāmnāyeti saṃjñāyā | | paścimasya tu mārgasya pratibimbam iva sthitaṃ | ānandāvalibhedaiś ca śobhitaṃ siddhidāyakam*. 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 *Cīñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* and *Manthānabhairava*.

Devīpañcaśatikā, gives a list of the “guru lineage” (*gurusantati*) of Kaula Siddhas, commencing with the four Yuganāthas who herald the reception of the Kaula teachings in each of the four ages, followed by Matsyendranātha’s twelve sons.³⁸¹ Immediately after this formulaic list another set of four couples are enumerated: Niṣkriyānanda and Jñānadīpti, Vidyānanda and Raktā, Śaktyānanda and Mahānandā, and Śivānanda and Samayā.³⁸² 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 Kālī-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,³⁸³ the *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* records a narrative of the events

³⁸¹ *Devīpañcaśatikā* 3.9-15ab.

³⁸² *Devīpañcaśatikā* 3.15cd-17: *niṣkriyānandanāthaś ca jñānadīptyā sahaikataḥ | | vidyānandaś ca raktā ca dvitīyaḥ kathitas tava | śaktyānando mahānandaḥ tṛtīyaḥ siddhapūjitaḥ | | śivānando mahānandaḥ samāyātaś caturthakaḥ | khagendrādyaḍisiddhānām kathitā gurusantatiḥ* ‘The first [couple] is Niṣkriyānanda is accompanied by Jñānadīpti. The second is taught as Vidyānanda and Raktā. The third set that is venerated by the Siddhas is Śaktyānanda and Mahānandā. The fourth Śivānanda of great bliss and Samayā. The guru lineage of the Siddhas beginning with Khagendra[nātha] is thus taught.’ This passage is cited in *Tantrāloka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 29.43-46ab and mentioned in DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, p. 315, footnote 1.

³⁸³ 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.

surrounding Niṣkriyānanda's transmission of the esoteric teachings of the Krama to Vidyānanda.³⁸⁴

An excellent sage, Śīlāciti, 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 Yoginīs, 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, Niṣkriyānanda, pleased with that [Siddha] with the appearance of a tribal, transmitted the Krama [tradition] of Kālī to him through a powerful [disembodied] voice.

This report of the original transmission of the Krama teachings from Niṣkriyānanda 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 *Ciñciñīmatasārasamuccaya* 7.182-188ab: *śīlacitir munivaras tasya putra tapodhanah | yogābhyāsarato devi siddhah śābararūpadhṛk | | vidyānandeti vikhyāto mahāvīravarah priye | śmaśānavāsī nityastho niśāṭanarataḥ param | | siddhayogīndravīraś ca cakracāre ratipriyah | śivapīṭhaṁ mahādevi śrīśailaṁ devatāpriyam | | tasya uttaradigbhāge nānāśikharaparvate | tatra hemamayī divyā guhā siddhasurārcitā | | tatrārādhanakaṁ kṛtvā vidyāśeviram uttamam | karoti bhaktiṁ yogīndro niṣkriyājñānavāñchinal | | bhaktiṁ tīvratarāṁ divyāṁ kṛtvā śābararūpadhṛk | tasya tuṣṭo munivaro niṣkriyānanda uttamah | | amoghavāṇyā tasyaiva saṁkrāntaṁ kālīkāramam.* 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 *Ciñciñīmatasārasamuccaya* 7.186ab: *vidyāśeviram*. In SANDERSON (2007a), p. 269, footnote 114, this passage is cited, and the conjecture *vidyāśābaram* 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 *Ciñciñīmatasārasamuccaya* manuscripts, NAK 1-767.

³⁸⁵ For a vivid description and analysis of “circle gatherings” (*cakracāra*), also termed *cakramelaka*, *cakrakṛīḍā*, and *vīramelāpa*, 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, Niṣkriyānanda 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.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 Niṣkriyānanda to Śivānanda, should be “called to mind” with their consorts during the Kaula ritual related in chapter twenty-nine of the *Tantrāloka*.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.³⁸⁸ This Siddha

³⁸⁶ *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* 7.178cd-180ab: *hitvā bhāvaṃ na grhṇāti yadā bhāvāntaraṃ citiḥ | | tadā tat paramaṃ brahma svasvabhāvaṃ pravartate | etat kaulāmṛtaṃ siddhaṃ yoginībhir udāhṛtam | | niṣkriyānandapādaḥ 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 Yoginīs to be the perfect nectar of the Kaula [tradition], which was brought to light on earth by the venerable Niṣkriyānanda.’

³⁸⁷ *Tantrāloka* 29.43-45ab: *anyāś ca gurutatpatnayaḥ śrīmatkālīkuloditāḥ | anāttadehāḥ krīḍanti tais tair dehair aśaṅkitāḥ | | prabodhitatathecchākais taje kaulaṃ prakāśate | tathārūpatayā tatra gurutvaṃ paribhāṣitam | | te viśeṣān na sampūjyāḥ smartavyā eva kevalam* ‘Other gurus and their wives are cited in the illustrious Kālīkula. Having no bodies, they amuse themselves fearlessly with various bodies. Since they have desired [the particular amusement] (*tathā*) 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 Kālīkula scripture, the *Devīpañcaśatikā*, cited above.

³⁸⁸ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 274, footnote 132.

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 *Devīpañcaśatikā* and *Kramasadbhāva*, may also ascribe the same role to Jñānanetra, given that both their colophons claim these scriptures were revealed (*avatārīta*) 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.

³⁹⁰ *Yonigahvara* f. 1v2-3 (vv. 1-2): *śrīmaduttarapīṭhe tu śmaśāne karavīrake | sarvayoginīmēlāpe [+ + + ni]rāmāye | yonigahvaram uddhṛtya mantrasadbhāvam uttamam | śrījñānanetranāthena bhūtale saṃprakāśitam*. Cited in SANDERSON (2007a), p. 264, footnote 96.

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: *Kālīkulapañcaśataka* colophons: *śrīmaduttarapīṭhodbhūte śrīśrīnāthāvatārīte śrīkālīkākule pañcaśate*; *Kālīkulakramasadbhāva* colophons: *śrīmaduttarapīṭhavinirgate śrīnāthapādāvatārīte śrīkālīkākulasadbhāve*.

story of the *Devīpañcaśatikā*³⁹³ 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,"³⁹⁴ which may also refer to Karavīra.³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, there still remains a possibility that this so-called Śrīnātha, revealer of both the *Devīpañcaśatikā* 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.³⁹⁶

³⁹³ *Devīpañcaśatikā* 1.3-7: *śrīmaduttarapīṭhasya śmaśānaṃ karavīrakam | pūjitaṃ devadevena śiveṇa paramātmanā || mahācityagnisaṃtaptam mahāyoginīsevitam | mahābhūtasamākīrṇam mahāmātrībhīḥ sevitam || mahāyogaiś ca nicitaṃ mahāsiddhair namaskṛtam | mahāmāthakasaṃjuṣṭam mahāphetkārānāditam || mahāsiddhipradātāraṃ mahābhairavaśaṃkulam | mahāghorātighorogṛaṃ mahātejopabr̥ṇhitam || tatrasthā bhairavī bhīmā sthūlasūkṣmānuvartinī | pīṭheśvarībhīḥ saṃyuktā siddhaiś ca parivāritā* '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 Yoginīs, 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 Pīṭheśvarīs, is surrounded by Siddhas.'

³⁹⁴ *Kālikāstotra* v. 19: *yādṛṇ mahāśmaśāne dṛṣṭam devyāḥ svarūpaṃ akulastham | tāḍṛg jagattrayam idaṃ bhavatu tavāmba 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 SANDERSON (2007a), p. 272.

³⁹⁵ See SANDERSON (2007a), p. 268.

³⁹⁶ Matsyendranātha is called Śrīnātha in another Kālīkula scripture related to the Krama system, the *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra*, 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 Kaulagiri (Kolhapur) by other Siddhas. This detail is mentioned in SANDERSON (2007a), p. 306, footnote 241. The *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* opens with benedictions to Matsyendranātha, one of which refers to him as Śrīnātha. See *Ūrmikaulārṇavatantra* 1.1-1.2: *namas te kulanāthāya kaulasiddhipradāyine | jñānavijñānadehāya śrīmacchanda namo 'stu te ||*

Although spotlighting individual Siddhas—Matsyendranātha, Niṣkriyānanda, 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.³⁹⁷ In the *Devīpañcaśatikā*, for example, the Goddess Bhairavī acts as the omniscient preceptor, demoting God Bhairava to the supplicant of partial knowledge seeking the highest revelatory secret,³⁹⁸ initiating a *devīdevasaṃvāda*

anādighorasaṃsāravyādhidhvamśaikaahetave | namaḥ śrīnāthavaidyāya kulośadhivīdhāyine ‘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 Śrīnātha, 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. *Devīpañcaśatikā* 1.26cd-33ab: *caturdhā kālīkāmṇāyaṃ mukhān mukhagataṃ priye | | etat sarvaṃ aśeṣeṇa vada me ‘nugraha yadi | yad adyāpi na vijñātaṃ khecarībhiḥ kadācana | | yena vijñātamātreṇa vrajāmi padam avyayam | saṃsārabhayabhītasya trātā nānyo ‘sti bhairavi | | tvadrte saṃśayasyāsyā nānyo vimokṣaṇakṣamaḥ | śrībhairavy uvāca | kaṣṭaṃ kaṣṭaṃ mahārudra praśnaṃ praśneṣu cottamam | | atighorātighoraṃ tu praśnam uktaṃ tvayā hara | tvad rte ‘nugrahaḥ kasya buddhikausalyabhāvitaḥ | | na kenacid ahaṃ rudra prcchitā kālīkākramam | durbodhaṃ sarvasiddhānāṃ vyomeśīnāṃ mahēśvara | | tat krameṇa pravakṣyāmi mukhapāraṃparāgatam | yan na devair na gandharvair nāsurair munibhis tathā | | na khecarībhiḥ siddhaiś ca na jñātaṃ paramārthataḥ |* ‘O beloved [Goddess], teach me all about this four-fold Kālīkā 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-Saiddhāntika scriptures, is suddenly in the dark about the highest teachings. In a parallel construction found in the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* and *Svacchandabhairava*, the *Devīpāñcaśatikā* also adapts the Mantramārga idiom explored in chapter two by describing Bhairavī (instead of Sadāśiva or Bhairava) receiving this scriptural wisdom from the supreme cause (*paramakāraṇa*) without visible form (*adr̥ṣṭavigraha*).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 Siddhānta scriptures surveyed in chapter two we encountered a framework for revelation that

which even today is not completely understood by Sky-faring [Yoginīs], by merely cognizing which I will attain the eternal state. O Bhairavī, 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. Bhairavī 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 Kālikākrama [tradition], which is unfathomable to [adepts] endowed with every supernatural power and to Sky-Goddesses. I will teach [you] that [Kālikā 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 [Yoginīs], or Siddhas.'

³⁹⁹ *Devīpāñcaśatikā* 1.33cd-134: *adr̥ṣṭavigrahāc chāntāc chivāt paramakāraṇāt* || *aśarīrād idaṃ vākyaṃ śrutaṃ me kālikākramam* | *tad ahaṃ kathayiṣyāmi akathyaṃ parameśvara* 'I learned this Kālikākrama teaching [directly] from the Supreme Cause, the quiescent Śiva whose form is invisible, [and] who is [thus] bodiless. I will teach this [to you], O supreme God, which should be kept secret.' Cf. *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, uttarasūtra, 1.23: *adr̥ṣṭavigrahe śānte śive paramakāraṇe* | *nādarūpaṃ viniṣkrāntaṃ śāstraṃ paramadurllabham*; *Svacchandabhairava* 8.27cd-28ab: *adr̥ṣṭavigrahāyātāṃ śivāt paramakāraṇāt* | *dhvanirūpaṃ susūkṣmaṃ tu suśuddhaṃ suprabhāṇvitaṃ*. Note when Kṣemarāja cites this verse earlier in his commentary (*uddyota*) to *Svacchandabhairavatantra* 1.1-4b, he cites the same variant of the first two pādas as is recorded in the *Devīpāñcaśatikā*: *adr̥ṣṭavigrahāc chāntāc chivāt paramakāraṇāt*; one other parallel verse worth mention is *Ūrmikaulārṇavatāntra* 2.50: *adr̥ṣṭavigrahāyātāṃ pāraṃparyakramodayam* | *mantracakrārṇavaṃ divyaṃ svapiṇḍe bhogamokṣadam*.

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*, *Parākhya*, *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 Vidyāpīṭha scriptures.⁴⁰⁰ In the latter category of texts, the revelation narrative of the *Brahmayāmala* tantra 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 *Brahmayāmala*'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, Svachhandabhairava. As a whole, the *Brahmayāmala*'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."⁴⁰¹ 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

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

⁴⁰¹ HATLEY (2007), p. 228.

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 (*pīṭha*) 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 Vidyāpīṭha appear in the central *maṇḍala* (deity-enthroning diagram) of their respective cults of worship.⁴⁰² Therefore, the presence of the Yuganāthas (ending with Matsyendranātha and Koṅkaṇāmbā) within the original Kaula *maṇḍala* where they are propitiated alongside Kuleśvarī, Kuleśvara, the eight Mother Goddesses, Gaṇeśa, 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*)⁴⁰³ of

⁴⁰² However, in a hymn by Aghoraśivācārya, the *Pañcāvaraṇastava* (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).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), Niṣkriyānanda 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 Niṣkriyānanda and Jñānanetra in the Kaula Transmission of

that, *pace* the Kulamārga, we don't find one individual *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.

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 Pāśupata 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 inscriptional sources who is isolated as a "fountainhead" of Pāśupata Śaivism, namely Somaśarman. For a collation of references to this figure, accompanied by translations and insightful interpretations, see BAKKER (2014), pp. 140-146, 148 & 214. I am thankful to Dominic 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 saṃprakāśitam*).

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.”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

⁴⁰⁵ POLLOCK (1989), p. 610.

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,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.

⁴⁰⁶ We should mention, however, that there is no single model of personhood in Vedic-based traditions. The authors that follow Rāmānuja, the great Śrīvaiṣṇava 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-sectarian⁴⁰⁷ monographs, philosophical tracts based roughly upon Śaiva revelatory axioms, and a vast archive of learned commentaries, is frequently designated as the “post-scriptural”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:⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Non-sectarian in the sense that they obviated sectarian divisions within Śaivism.

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.

⁴⁰⁹ SANDERSON (2007), pp. 426-427

The second half of that [ninth] century saw the composition of the *Śivasūtra* and *Spandakārikā* 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 Yoginīs; and we have seen 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 *Vātūlanāthasūtra*.

This chapter will delve into what SANDERSON describes here as “the contemporary irruption into the world of the gnosis of enlightened Siddhas and Yoginīs,” 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.

§ 4.1 THE DESCENT OF SIDDHAS INTO KASHMIR

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 *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta begins by arguing for the supremacy of the Śaiva scriptures over other “lower” scriptural traditions, conspicuously the Vedas.⁴¹⁰ This discussion culminates with an assertion—scripturally supported⁴¹¹ by the *Ratnamālā*[*tantra*]⁴¹²—that the Kaula-Trika form of Śaivism, which Abhinavagupta avows is embodied implicitly and explicitly by the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*,⁴¹² is the highest essence of all streams of initiatory Śaivism. Before coming to this conclusion, Abhinavagupta makes a

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

⁴¹¹ *Tantrāloka* 37.25ab-26cd: *uktaṃ śrīratnamālāyām etac ca parameśinā | | aśeṣatantrasāraṃ tu vāmadakṣiṇamāśritam | ekatra militaṃ kaulaṃ śrīṣaḍdardhakaśāsane* ‘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 *Tantrāloka* 37.24ab-25cd: *vidyāpīṭhapradhānaṃ ca siddhayogīśvarīmatam | | tasyāpi paramaṃ sāraṃ mālinīvijayottaram* ‘And the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is the most important (scripture) of the *Vidyāpīṭha*; its ultimate distillation is *Mālinīvijayottara*.’ This citation comes after a demonstration, in *Tantrāloka* 37.18-24ab, that the *Vidyāpīṭha* is the most excellent collection of scriptures in *Mantramārga*. For another statement to this effect, see *Tantrāloka* 1.17-18: *na tad astīha yan na śrīmālinīvijayottare | devadevena nirdiṣṭaṃ svaśabdenātha liṅgataḥ | | daśāṭṭādaśavasvaṣṭabhinnam yacchāsanam vibhoḥ | tatsāraṃ trikaśāstraṃ hi tatsāraṃ mālinīmatam* ‘There is nothing in this (*Tantrāloka*) that is not taught by Śiva in the auspicious *Mālinīvijayottara*, 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*[*vijayottara-tantra*].’

revealing statement about the greater horizon of the Atimārga (pre-tantric Śaivism) and Mantramārga divisions of Śaivism:⁴¹³

Given that the lower scriptural traditions are tainted by false teachers due to their ignorance, one must necessarily adopt this scriptural tradition of Śiva 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: Śrīkaṇṭha 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 Śrīkaṇṭha, described as five-fold [since it is] diversified due to the manifold nature of (Śiva'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 Atimārga⁴¹⁴ and Śrīkaṇṭha 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 Śrīkaṇṭha" (*śrīkaṇṭhaśāśana*).

Regarding the Pāśupata-based ascetic traditions, there is evidence that Lakulīśa, identified in Kauṇḍinya's sixth-century commentary (*pañcārthabhāṣya*) on the *Pāśupatasūtras* as Śiva descending into the Śaiva sanctuary of Kāyāvatarāṇa and assuming the form of a brahmin,⁴¹⁵ came to be venerated as

⁴¹³ *Tantrāloka* 37.13cd-37.16: *ajñatvānupadeśṭṛtvasaṃdaṣṭe 'dharaśāśane || etad viparyayād grāhyam avaśyaṃ śivaśāśanam | dvāv āptau tatra ca śrīmacchrīkaṇṭhalakuleśvarau || dvipravāham idaṃ śāstraṃ samyaṃ niḥśreyasapradam | prācyasya tu yathābhīṣṭabhogadatvam api sthitam || tac ca pañcavidhaṃ proktaṃ śaktivaicitryacitritam | pañcasrota iti proktaṃ śrīmacchrīkaṇṭhaśāśanam.*

⁴¹⁴ 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."

⁴¹⁵ *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ad *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.1: *tathā śiṣṭapramāṇyāt kāmīto'ad ajātato'ac ca manuṣyārūpī bhagavān brāhmaṇakāyam āsthāya kāyāvatarāṇe avatīrṇa iti | tathā padbhyaṃ ujjayinīm prāptaḥ |*

kasmāt | śiṣṭapramāṇat cihnadarśanaśravaṇāc ca | atyāśramaprasiḍdhaṃ līṅga āsthāyā pravacanam uktavān bhasmasnānaśayanānusnānanirmālyaikavāsograhaṇād adhikaraṇaprasiddhy- arthaṃ ca svaśāstrokte āyatane śiṣyasambandhārthaṃ śucau deśe bhasmavedyāmuṣitaḥ | ato rudrapracoditah kuśikabhagavān abhyāgatyācārye paripūrṇaparitrptyādyutkarṣalakṣaṇāni viparītāni cātmani dṛṣṭvā pādāv upasaṃgrhya nyāyena jātiṃ gotraṃ śrutam anrṇatoam ca nivedayitoā kṛtakṣaṇam ācāryaṃ kāle vaidyaavad avasthitam āturavad avasthitah śiṣyah prṣṭavān bhagavan kim eteṣām ādhyaṁkādhibhautikādhidaivikānām sarvaduhkhānām aikāntiko 'tyantiko vyapoho 'sty uta neti | athoktaparigrahādhikāralipsāsu parāpadeśenopadeśe sacchiṣyasādhakapāṭhaprasiddhyartham kāraṇapadārthādhigamārthaṃ cātmani parāpadeśam kṛtvā bhagavān evoktavān atheti

'Now on the authority of learned men (śiṣṭa) and on that of [passages found in the sūtras] such as "[His] possession of any form that he wishes" (PS 1.24) and "[God] is not born [from human womb]" (PS 1.40), we know that God taking human form, entered the [dead] body of a brahmin, descending on this earth at Kāyāvataṛaṇa. He then went to Ujjaiyini on foot. (Question) How [are these matters known to be true]? (Answer) On the authority of the learned, and also because we have seen traces [of these events] or have heard of them [from others]. Having assumed the marks of the transcendent stage of life he delivered his teaching. From the words "bathing and lying in ashes, supplementary bath, wearing flowers taken from an image and wearing a single cloth" (PS 1.2-5, 10), [we may infer that] he dwelt on an altar of ashes in a place pure for the reception of pupils, at a temple as in his scripture is set forth in order to make the location clear. And then, inspired by Rudra, the blessed Kuśika came to this teacher and seeing in him the marks of excellence such as perfect contentment and in himself just the opposite, he clasped the teacher's feet and declared in accordance with rule his caste, his family-name, his education and his freedom from debt. Then in time, just as a patient [might ask] his physician, he asked the teacher who stood awaiting his question "Sir, is there an absolute and definitive cure for all sufferings such as come from oneself, from the outside world and from fate, or is there not? Now to one who desires the appointed regiment (*adhikāra*) on the grounds just mentioned, the teaching should be imparted as though by a third person. Accordingly, in order to make known the correct form of recitation to good pupils and aspirants and in order to furnish an understanding of the category cause [i.e. God], the Blessed One took upon himself the character of a third person and spoke [the first sūtra, viz.], "Now therefore, etc".' Translation of Minoru HARA. See HARA (1966), pp. 156-158. It should be noted that this account lacks the name Lakuliśa, but other later parallels of this story refer to this original transmitter of the Pāsupata doctrine who entered the body of a brahmin in Kāyāvataṛaṇa as Lakuliśa. See Bisschop (2006), p. 45, footnote 125.

⁴¹⁷ *Skandapūrāṇa* 167.126cd-130 = SP_s 126cd-130: jagāmojjayanīm devaḥ śmaśānaṃ ca viveśa ha
|| sa tatra bhasmanātmānaṃ avagunṭhya vṛsadhvajāḥ | ulumkaṃ vāmahaṣṭena grhītṛā
samupāviśat || tatra prathamam ādāya śiṣyaṃ kauśikam tīvaraḥ | jambūmārge dvitīyaṃ ca
mathurāyām tato 'param || kanyakubje tataś cānyaṃ anugrhya jagatpatih | svasiddhāntaṃ dadau

recorded in the course of a series of accounts of the caliber and efficacy of Śaiva sanctuaries (*āyatana*). Lakulīśa is therein described as the incarnation of Śiva in the Kali age in the Śaiva sanctuary of Kārohaṇa (another name for Kāyāvatarāṇa of Kauṇḍinya's narrative). This passage of the *Skandapurāṇa* also lists three earlier incarnations of Śiva in this same Śaiva sanctuary corresponding to three preceding ages, Kṛta, Tretā, and Dvāpara.⁴¹⁸ This incarnational model may have been a pre-tantric source for the Kaulas' Yuganāthas from the Pāśupata ascetic tradition of the Atimārga. This is a compelling possibility considering the significant overlap in the structure of quintessential teachers in each of the four ages, ending with narratives about the Kali age's scriptural promulgator.

Although many scholars imagined Lakulīśa as a historical figure who flourished

yogam uvācedaṃ ca lāguḍiḥ || rahasyaṃ paramaṃ hīdaṃ pañcārtha iti saṃjñitam | viprān mocayitum datto yuṣṡabhyaṃ martyabandhanāt | anayā dīkṣayā viprān prāpayadhvaṃ paraṃ padam 'God went to Ujjayinī and entered a cremation ground. In that abode, [Śiva] whose banner is the bull, covered himself in ashes, grabbed a firebrand with his left hand, and took his seat. There [in Ujjayinī] the Lord accepted his first disciple Kauśika, his second in Jumbumārga, after that another one in Mathurā, and then another in Kanyakubja. Favoring [those four disciples with initiation], the universal Lord Lāguḍi transmitted his own definitive teaching and taught [them Pāśupata] yoga. [He then told his disciples:] I have transmitted this supreme secret known as the Pañcārtha to you in order to liberate brahmins from being imprisoned in mortal existence. Through that initiation, deliver brahmins to the realization of the highest reality.' The translation of this and other passages of the early *Skandapurāṇa* benefit from the synopsis of the text in BISSCHOP (2006).

⁴¹⁸ *Skandapurāṇa* 167.115-117 = SP_s 115-117.: *bhārabhūtiḥ tv asau bhūtvā tasmin deśe pinākadhṛk | bhāraṃ baddhvā dvijātīnāṃ narmadāyāṃ vicikṣiḥ | kārūṇyena mahādeva martyajanmamumukṣayā || tretāyāṃ diṇḍimuṇḍaś ca śirāṇsi vinikṛttavān | dvāpare cāṣāḍhir bhūtvā nṛttenānugrhitavān || evaṃ pratiyugaṃ vyāsa tasmin deśe śivaḥ svayam | avatīrṇaś cānugrhya brāhmaṇāṇ chuddhamānasān* 'Becoming Bhārabhūti in this [auspicious] abode, [Śiva] bearing the Pināka [bow] took on the burden of twice-born and cast it into the Narmadā. Mahādeva, out of compassion to those who long for freedom from [the rounds] of mortal birth, became Diṇḍimuṇḍa and cut off the heads in the Tretā Age. In Dvāpara he became Āṣāḍhi and favored people through dancing. In this way, O Vyāsa, Śiva descends in this abode [of Kārohaṇa] in each Age and favors brahmins whose minds are pure.' This archetype of Śiva incarnating in Kārohaṇa across the four ages is also found in the *Kāraṇamāhātmya*, although the account there differs significantly. See BISSCHOP (2006), p. 44.

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 Pāśupata Śaivism.⁴¹⁹

The association of a single divine guru, Śrīkaṇṭha, 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, Śrīkaṇṭha 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] Saṃvat 61 (380 AD), and generally considered to be one of the earliest epigraphic testimonies for the existence of Pāśupatas, 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 *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* 3.6-3.9, Śrīkaṇṭha, 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. Rāmakaṇṭha, the Saiddhāntika exegete, identifies Śiva on Kailāsa in the framestory of the *Kiraṇatantra* with Śrīkaṇṭha. He also argues, at great length, that the main teacher of the *Sārdhatrīśatikālottara*, who is simply described as Bhagavān and Lokanātha, is in fact Śrīkaṇṭha. The effusive explanation of Rāmakaṇṭha paired with the fact that the name Śrīkaṇṭha is not found in the *Sārdhatrīśatikālottara* itself, gives the impression that Rāmakaṇṭha is particularly invested in demonstrating Śrīkaṇṭha is the primary teacher of the Siddhānta scriptures, even when this is far from evident. See his *vr̥tti* ad *Sārdhatrīśatikālottara* 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 Śrīkaṇṭha with the major streams of Śaiva tantra in the *Brahmayāmalatantra*,⁴²¹ a scripture he frequently cites in the *Tantrāloka*. This choice may also relate to the fact that in revelation narratives Śrīkaṇṭha 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.⁴²² 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 Śrīkaṇṭha receiving the revelation from Īśvara and transmitting it to Umāpati. See *Svacchandabhairava* 8.27-8.36ab. Śrīkaṇṭha 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 Śrīkaṇṭha as the main teacher of the five-streams. See *Brahmayāmalatantra* 39.24-25ab: *aṣṭāvīṃśatibhedena bheditaṃ ca tathā punaḥ | śākhopaśākhabhedenā prabhinnam vistareṇa tu | | kathitāni kathyiṣyanti śrīkaṇṭhādya gurūḥ 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 Śrīkaṇṭha, shall [continue to] to teach them; *Brahmayāmalatantra* 39.28: *raudrayā coditenātha śrīkaṇṭhena mahāyaśe | dakṣiṇena tu vaktreṇa dakṣiṇāsrotasaṃbhavam* 'Through Śrīkaṇṭha, 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 Śrīkaṇṭha, who goes on to act as the primary teacher of these streams in *Brahmayāmalatantra* 39.91-92: *ādimo jñānasandohas tribhiḥ srotair vinirgataḥ | sadāśivena devena śrīkaṇṭhāya prabhāṣitam | | sapādajñānasandohaḥ śrīkaṇṭhena mahāyaśe | daśasrotavibhāgena bhāṣitaṃ sādhaśayā* 'The primordial mass of scriptural wisdom emerged via three streams. The Lord Sadāśiva expounded it to Śrīkaṇṭha. Śrīkaṇṭha, 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 *Brahmayāmalatantra* 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.⁴²³

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

⁴²³ However, the ninth- to tenth-century post-scriptural Saiddhāntika 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: *namaḥ śivāya śaktyai ca bindave śāśvatāya ca | gurave ca gaṇeśāya kṛtikeyāya dhīmate* ‘Salutations to Śiva, Śakti, and Bindu, which is eternal, and also to the Guru, Gaṇeśa, and wise Kṛtikeya.’ Aghoraśiva glosses “guru” accordingly: *sakalasaṃhitānām avatāratvena gurum ... bhagavantam śrīkaṇṭhanātham* ‘the guru is the blessed Śrīkaṇṭha since he is the agent of revelation (*avatāraka*) of all [Śaiva] scriptures.’

longer redaction of the scripture that is no longer extant.⁴²⁴ Jayaratha introduces the passage by signaling that this report of the transmission of these three Siddhas is based on an analysis of the gurus⁴²⁵ (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:⁴²⁶

When, during the intervening period, there was break in the lineage of these transmitters, [three] Siddhas, on the command of Śrīkaṇṭha, 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 Ardhatryambaka (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.

⁴²⁴ *Tantrāloka* 36.1-36.10.

⁴²⁵ A reference to the second component or phase of the transmission of the *śāstra* (*āyātir ... gurubhiḥ ca nirūpitā*) which forms the topic of this chapter and is mentioned by Abhinavagupta in *Tantrāloka* 36.1.

⁴²⁶ *Tantrāloka* 36.12-14: *teṣāṃ krameṇa tanmadhye bhraṣṭaṃ kālāntarād yadā | tadā śrīkaṇṭhanāthāñjñāvaśāt siddhā avātaran || tryambakāmardakābhikhyāśrīnāthā advaye dvaye | dvayādvaye ca nipuṇāḥ krameṇa śivaśāsane || ādyasya cānvayo jajñe dvitīyo duhitṛkramāt | sa cārdhatryambakābhikhyāḥ saṃtānaḥ supratīṣṭhitāḥ || ataś cārdhacatasro 'tra maṭhikāḥ saṃtatikramāt | śiṣyapraśiṣyair vistṛṇāḥ śataśākhaṃ vyavasthitaiḥ.*

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] Āmardaka lineage, the son of Bhūtīrāja, initiated by his father, [my] sun in the vast sky of the Śrīnātha lineage, Lakṣmaṇaguptanātha, disciple of Utpala, the disciple of Somānanda, [my Viṣṇu] lying on the ocean of the lineage of Tryambaka, Śambhunātha who was known to be omniscient, descended from Sumati[nātha], [my] full moon over the ocean of the Kaula lineage.

Adorning the first line of the three paradigmatic Siddhas, originating from Āmardaka, 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

⁴²⁷ *Tantrāloka* 36.15: *adhyuṣṭasaṃtatisrotahsārabhūtarasāhṛtim | vidhāya tantrāloko 'yaṃ syandate sakalān rasān* 'Having collected the essential flavors that are the distillation of the streams that are these three-and-a-half lineages, this *Tantrāloka* flows with all their *rasas*.'

⁴²⁸ *Tantrāloka* 37.60-61: **āmardasaṃtatimahārṇavakarnadhāraḥ saddaiśikairakavarātmajavāmanāthaḥ (āmarda em. : ānanda Ed.) | śrīnāthasaṃtatimahāmbaṛagharmakāntiḥ śrībhūtīrājatanayaḥ svapitrprasādaḥ | | traiyambakaprasarasāgaraśāyisomānandātmajotpalajalakṣmaṇaguptanāthaḥ | turyākhyasaṃtatimahodadhipūṛṇacandraḥ *śrīsaumataḥ (em. : śrīsomataḥ Ed.) sakalavit kila śambhunāthaḥ*. 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.

⁴²⁹ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 375: "Among scriptures of the Siddhānta he cites the Kacabhārgava, the Kāmika, the Kālottara, the Kiraṇa, the Dīkṣottara, the Nihśvāsa, the Parākhyā, the Pauṣkara, the Mataṅga, the Mayasaṃgraha, the Mukuṭottara, the Rauravasūtrasaṃgraha, the Sarvajñānottara, and the Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṃgraha."

instructions in non-Saiddhāntika scriptures block their application for those initiated into the practice ordained in these more restricted traditions.”⁴³⁰ For the lineage emanating from Śrīnātha, Abhinavagupta identifies his guru as the son of Bhūtīrāja.⁴³¹ He then notes that Lakṣmaṇagupta 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), especially 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 Bhūtīrāja with Maheśvara, one of Abhinavagupta’s gurus who SANDERSON claims is exalted in the opening and closing benedictions of the *Parātrīśikavivaraṇa*, *Tantrāloka* 1.9 and *Tantrāloka-viveka* ad loc., and the closing verses of Abhinavagupta’s *Bhagavadgītārthasaṃgraha*. See SANDERSON (2005), p. 123, footnote 85. It should be noted that in SANDERSON (2007a), p. 360, footnote 426, Abhinavagupta’s teacher in the *Bhagavadgītārthasaṃgraha* is identified not as Maheśvara (Bhūtīrāja’s son), but rather Bhūtīrāja himself. Indeed, SANDERSON’s change of opinion is no doubt related to the ambiguity of the Sanskrit in this passage (*Bhagavadgītārthasaṃgraha*, p. 186, concluding verses, 1-2). Moreover, I have yet to see in the secondary literature a clear reckoning of this mention of Bhūtīrāja (or his son) at the end of the *Bhagavadgītārthasaṃgraha*, 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, Lakṣmaṇagupta, and Śambhunātha—demonstrates that they contributed to the knowledge concretized in the *Tantrāloka*. SANDERSON argues that among Śambhunātha, Bhūtīrāja, Maheśvara, and Lakṣmaṇagupta, 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 accomodation 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.

Pratyabhijñāsāstra (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 *Tantrāloka*, 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 *guruśāstra*, 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 *Tantrāloka* 1.8: *traiyambakābhīhitasantatitāmraparṇīsanmauktikaparakarākāntiviśeṣabhāṣaḥ | pūrve jayanti guravo guruśāstrasindhukallolakelikalānāmālakarṇadhārāḥ.*

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 Lakṣmaṇagupta, 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 Lakṣmaṇagupta, 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-bending⁴³⁶ monograph survives, the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* ('The Outlook of Śiva'), which embodies, along with the

⁴³³ *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* opening verses 2-4: *śrītraiyambakasadvamśamadhya-muktāmayasthiteḥ | śrīsomānandanāthasya vijñānapratibimbakam | | anuttarānanyasākṣipumarthopāyam abhyadhāt | Īśvarapratyabhijñākhyam yaḥ śāstram yat sunirmalam | | tatpraśiṣyaḥ karomy etāṃ tatsūtravivṛtiṃ laghum | buddhvābhinavagupto 'haṃ śrīmallakṣmaṇaguptataḥ*

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 *-vivṛtiḥ*), the *Ajāḍapramāṭṛsiddhi*, the *Īśvarasiddhi*, the *Sambandhasiddhi*, and his commentary on Somānanda's *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*.”

⁴³⁵ On this dating of Somānanda, see NEMEC (2011), p. 12, footnote 19.

Śivasūtra and *Spandakārikā*, one of “the very first tantric post-scriptural expressions of a philosophical non-dualism.”⁴³⁷ Appended to the end of the KSTS edition of the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* is an autobiographical passage attributed to Somānanda that may be an addendum penned by one of his direct disciples,⁴³⁸ 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*.

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

⁴³⁶ Ibid., (2011), pp. 17-18: “Now, the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*, 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* from the sort of works that closely follow and meticulously gloss scripture, on the one hand, and from the rather more intentionally philosophical *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*, on the other, while simultaneously recognizing the differences between the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* and the root texts of the Spanda School that we have just mentioned... On the other hand, the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*.”

⁴³⁷ Ibid., (2011), p. 2.

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 Śaiva 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 Śrīkaṇṭha in order to grace (humanity). The Lord commanded a sage named Durvāsas, whose semen was turned upwards: “act in a manner such that the *śāstra* 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 7.107-123ab, and the partial citation of the passage found in *Tantrāloka* ad *Tantrāloka* 1.8. See Ibid., p. 22, footnote 48: *śaivādīni rahasyāni pūrvam āsan mahātmanām | ṛṣīṇām vaktrakuhare teṣv evānugrahakriyā | | kalau pravṛtte yāteṣu teṣu durgamagocaram | kalāpigrāmapramukham ucchinne śivaśāsane | | kailāsādaḥ brahman devo mūrtyā śrīkaṇṭharūpayā | anugrahāyāvātīrṇaś codayām āsa bhūtale | | munīm dūrvasasaṃ nāma bhagavān ūrdhvaretasaṃ | nocchidyate yathā śāstraṃ rahasyaṃ kuru tādṛśam | | tataḥ sa bhagavān devād ādeśaṃ prāpya yatnataḥ | sasarja mānasaṃ putraṃ tryambakādityanāmakam | | tasmin saṃkramayām āsa rahasyāni samantataḥ | so ‘pi gatvā guhāṃ samyak tryambakākhyāṃ tataḥ param | | tannāmnā cihnitaṃ tatra sasarja manasā sutam | kham utpapāta saṃsiddhas tatputro ‘pi tathā tathā | | siddhas tadvat sutotpattyā siddhā evaṃ caturdaśa | yāvat pañcadaśaḥ putraḥ sarvaśāstraviśāradaḥ | | sa kadācil lokayātrām āsīnaḥ prekṣate tataḥ | bahir mukhasya tasyātha brāhmaṇī kācid eva hi | | rūpayauvanasaubhāgyabandhurā sā gatā dṛśam | dṛṣṭvā tāṃ lakṣaṇair yuktāṃ yogyāṃ kanyāṃ athātmanāḥ | | sadharmacārīṇīm samyag gatvā tatpitaraṃ svayam | arthayitvā brāhmaṇīm tāṃ ānayām āsa yatnataḥ | | brāhmaṇena vivāhena tato jātas tathāvidhaḥ | tena yāḥ sa ca kālena kaśmīreṣv āgato brahman | | nāmnā sa saṃgamādityo varṣādityo ‘pi tatsutaḥ | | tasyāpy abhūt sa bhagavān aruṇādityasaṃjñakāḥ | | ānandasamjñakas tasmād udbabhūva tathāvidhaḥ | tasmād asmi samudbhūtaḥ somānandākhyā īdṛśaḥ | | karomi sma prakaraṇaṃ śivadr̥ṣṭyabhidhānakam | evam eṣa tryambakākhyā terambā deśabhāṣayā | sthītā śiṣyapraśiṣyādair vistīrṇā maṭhikoditā | tad evam etad vihitam mayā prakaraṇaṃ manāk | | prārthyante ‘smin prayukte ‘pi guravo grahaṇaṃ 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 Varṣāditya was his son. He [i.e., Varṣāditya] also had (a son,) the lord named Aruṇāditya. 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*. 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* to meet the light of day, a

⁴⁴¹ See Abhinavagupta's *vivṛtivismarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārikā* 4.16: *śivadr̥ṣṭi iti tadgatam ā śrīkaṇṭhanāthāt guruparvakramam sūcayati | tatra hi śrīśrīkaṇṭhanāthaḥ śāsane samutsanne śrīdurvāsomunim tadavatāraṇāya dideśa, so 'pi śrītryambakādityam traiyambakākhye lokaprasiddhyā tairimbābhidhāne gurusantāne pravartayitāram mānasam sasarja ityādi vitatya uktam | śrīkaṇṭhanāthaś ca adhigatatattoḥ śrīmadanantanāthāt so 'pi śrībhagavacchaktita ityādi āgameṣu nirūpitam iti saṃpūrṇo guruparvakramam uktam* 'The sequence of the members of the guru lineage found in that [text], the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, 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 Durvāsa in order to make them descend. That [Durvāsa], 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 Śrīkaṇṭhanātha himself comprehended the essence [of the teachings] from the auspicious Anantanātha. And that [Ananta received the teachings] from the Śakti 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 (*prakaraṇa*) 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 (*ūrdhvaretas*) Siddhas mentally generating heirs to whom they transmit secret knowledge, ostensibly in the remote region of Kalāpi, to non-celibate teachers (*adhoretas*) more focused on the broader world. Indeed, it is this fifteenth mind-born Siddha's son, Saṃgamāditya, 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,⁴⁴² are also worshipped in the Kaula *maṇḍala*, in addition to the Yuganāthas, alongside their six tantric consorts.⁴⁴³ Furthermore, like the above narrative recorded in select manuscripts of the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, these non-celibate Siddhas signal the proliferation of the teachings to new locales, comprising a Kaula network of non-urban sites⁴⁴⁴ and thus a great expansion of Kaula-based traditions.

⁴⁴² *Tantrāloka* 29.42: *adhikāro hi vīryasya prasaraḥ kulavartmani | tadaprasarayogena te proktā ūrdhvaretasaḥ* 'For qualification is the flow of the virile energy within the Kula path. Those [other unqualified sons] who practice stopping that flow are called "ūrdhvaretas" (with upward-turned semen).' Jayaratha's exposition of this verse extrapolates Abhinavagupta's otherwise terse phrase. *Tantrāloka* 29.42: *adhikāro hi nāma vīryasya mantramudrāsambandhinaḥ sphārasya caramadhātoś ca kulavartmani śaiṣye madhyānādyādau dehamārge śakte ca ādyādhāre prasaraḥ saṁkramaṇam sa eva eṣāṇi nāstīti ete ūrdhvaretasaḥ proktāḥ svātmamātraviśrāntisatattvā eva ity arthaḥ.*

⁴⁴³ The six non-celibate sons, who initiate diverse lineages with six lines of transmission (*ovallī*), are described as the objects of worship in *Tantrāloka* 29.35: *ete hi sādhanikārāḥ pūjyā yeṣāṁ iyaṁ bahuvibhedā | santatir anavacchinnā citrā śiṣyapraśiṣyamayī.*

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: *ānandāvalibodhiprabhupādāntātha yogiśabdāntā | etā ovallyaḥ syur mudrāṣaṭkaṁ kramāt tv etat |*

Even ignoring the slight chance that Somānanda did compose this transmission account of the Tryambaka lineage, the opening benediction of the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, 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:⁴⁴⁵

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.⁴⁴⁶ This first-person claim of being directly immersed in the goal that the

*dakṣāṃguṣṭhādikanīṣṭhikāntam atha sā kanṭhyasī vāmāt | dvidasāntordhvagakuṇḍalibaindava-
hrynnābhikandam iti chummāḥ | | śabarāḍabillapaṭṭillāḥ karabillāmbiśarabillāḥ |
aḍabīḍombīdakṣiṇabillāḥ kumbhārikākṣarākhyā ca | | devīkoṭṭakulāḍritripurīkāmākhyam aṭṭahāsa ca
| dakṣiṇapīṭhaṃ caitat ṣaṭkaṃ gharapallipīṭhagaṃ kramaśaḥ. Here the six sacred sites listed are
Devīkoṭṭa, Kulāḍri (Kaulagiri), Tripurī, Kāmākhyā, Aṭṭahāsa, and Dakṣiṇapīṭha.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 1.1: *asmadrūpasamāviṣṭaḥ svātmanātmanivāraṇe | śivaḥ karotu nijayā namaḥ śaktyā tatātmane*. Translation of NEMEC (2011).

⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, this is supported by Utpaladeva's immediate gloss of Somānanda's benediction in his commentary to his master's text, the *padasaṅgati* ad *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 1.1: *yo 'haṃ namaskaromi sa śivo 'smadrūpeṇaikyaṃ 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:⁴⁴⁷

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 (*vighnāḥ*) 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-vimarśinī*) 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."

⁴⁴⁷ *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 1.1.1: *katham cid āsādyā maheśvarasya dāsyam janasyāpy upakāram icchan | samastasampatsamavāptihetum tatpratyabhijñām upapādayāmi*. Utpaladeva's *vṛtti* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* 1.1: *parameśvaraprasādād eva labdhātyantadurlabhataddāsyalakṣmīr aham ekākisaṃpadā lajjamāno janam apīmam akhilaṃ svasvāminam vakṣyamāṇopāyena pratyabhijñāpayāmi yena paramārthalābhena parituṣyeyam*.

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 (*vimarśinī*) 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:⁴⁴⁸

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.⁴⁴⁹ Furthermore,

⁴⁴⁸ Abhinavagupta's *vimarśinī* introducing *Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārikā* 1.1.1: *granthakāraḥ aparokṣātmani dṛṣṭaśaktikāṃ parameśvaratanmayatāṃ paratra saṃcikramayiṣuḥ svatādātmyasamarpanapūrvam avighnena tatsampattiṃ manyamānaḥ parameśvarotkarṣaprahvatāparāmarśaśeṣatayā parameśvaratādātmyayogyatāpādanabuddhyā prayojanam āsūtrayati.*

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: *yādrñ mahāśmaśāne drṣṭaṃ devyāḥ svarūpraṃ akulastham | tādrḡ jagattrayam idaṃ bhavatu tavāmba prasādena | | itthaṃ svarūpastutir abhyadhāyi samyaksamāveśadaśāvaśena | mayā śivenāstu śivāya samyaṃ mamaiva viśvasya tu maṅgalākhye* '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 five 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, we learn about how Durvāsas,⁴⁵¹ 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 SANDERSON (2007a), p. 272.

⁴⁵¹ Durvāsas is also mentioned as wrathful and as Krodhamuni or “Angry Sage” in Vidyāpīṭha and Kaula scriptural sources. See SANDERSON (2007), p. 349, footnote 390. 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,⁴⁵² 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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 *maṭhas* descending from Durvāsas is not entirely post-scriptural. I am grateful to Dominic GOODALL 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.⁴⁵⁴ The seventy-seven aphorisms of the *Śivasūtra*, which articulate meditative techniques and a “yoga that develops as the interior reflection of outer ritual forms,”⁴⁵⁵ were revealed to the Kashmirian sage Vasugupta (c. 825-875).⁴⁵⁶ The earliest accounts of Vasugupta’s

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*]cakreśvaraḥ, 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 Kālikula, 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 saṃkrānta*) 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

⁴⁵⁷ *Spandakārikā* 52: *agādhasaṃśayāmbhodhisamuttaraṇatārīṇīm | vande vicitrārthapadām citrām tām gurubhāratīm* '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): *guroḥ vasuguptābhidhānasya sākṣāt siddhamukhasaṃkrāntasamastarahasyopaniṣadbhūtaspaṇdatattvāmṛtanīḥṣyandasya bhāratīm vācamī 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 *Spandapradīptikā*.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 Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, in order to awaken his disciples, composed this epitome [of that Śivasūtra, i.e. the *Spandakārikā*] as fifty verses in the *anuṣṭubh* 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

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

⁴⁶¹ *Spandapradīptikā* seventh & eighth opening verses: *ayam atra kilāmnāyaḥ siddhamukhenāgatam rahasyam yat | tad bhaṭṭakallaṭendur vasuguptaguror avāpya śiṣyāṇām | | avabodhārtham anuṣṭup-pañcāśikayātra saṃgrahaṃ kṛtavān | yad api tadartho vyākhyājyotsnāprakaṭikṛto 'sti teneṣat.*

⁴⁶² Śivasūtravārtika 1.9-1.10ab: *daivākarir bhāskaro 'ham antevāsigaṇeritaḥ | yasmād āgamavibhramśād bhrānter bhramitabuddhayaḥ | | sukumārā atas tāni sūtrāṇi vivṛṇomi ca* 'I am Bhāskara, the son of Divākara, who, upon receiving [that esoteric teaching] from that [Śrīkaṇṭhabhaṭṭa] respectfully composes this Vārttika 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:⁴⁶³

In earlier times, the aphorisms of Śiva appeared to the guru Vasugupta on the auspicious Mahādeva mountain⁴⁶⁴ 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 *Tattvārthacintāmaṇi*.

Kṣemarāja echoes Bhāskara's sentiments of addressing a corrupt tradition when announcing his reason⁴⁶⁵ 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:⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶³ *Śivasūtravārtika* 1.3-1.5: *śrīmanmahādevagirau vasuguptaguroḥ purā | siddhādeśāt prādurāsan śivasūtrāṇi tasya hi | | sarahasyāny atah so 'pi prādād bhaṭṭāya sūraye | śrīkallaṭāya so 'py evaṃ catuḥkhaṇḍāni tāny atha | | vyākaroṭ trikam etebhyaḥ spandasūtraiḥ svakais tataḥ | | tattvārthacintāmaṇyākhyāṭikayā khaṇḍam antimam.*

⁴⁶⁴ 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: "*Nīlamata* 1337; *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 10.258; *Śarvāvatāra* ff. 3-5 (Adhyāya 3); *Kathāsaritsāgara* 51.48; *Śivasūtravimarśinī*, p. 1; Stein, 1961, vol. 2, p. 422."

⁴⁶⁵ *Śivasūtravimarśinī* second opening verse: *āsamañjasyam ālocya vṛttinām iha tattvataḥ | śivasūtram vyākaroṃi gurvāmnāyavigānataḥ* 'Witnessing the absurdity of available commentaries based on incongruences in the teaching tradition of [various] gurus, I will now accurately expound the *Śivasūtra*.'

⁴⁶⁶ *Śivasūtravimarśinī* opening salvo: *iha kaścit śaktipātavaśonmiṣanmāheśvarabhaktyatiśayāt ananḡikṛtādharadarśanasthanāgabodhyādisiddhādeśanaḥ śivārādhanaaparāḥ pārameśvaranānāyoginī-siddhasatsaṃpradāyapavitritaḥṛdayaḥ śrīmahādevagirau mahāmāheśvaraḥ śrīmān vasuguptanāmā gurur abhavat.*

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 Yoginīs 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 Yoginīs 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

⁴⁶⁷ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 404.

⁴⁶⁸ *Śivasūtravimarśinī* opening salvo: *kadācic cāsau dvaitadarśanādhivāsita-prāye jīvaloke rahasyasampradāyo mā vicchedīty āśayato 'nujighrṃkṣāpareṇa paramaśīvena svapne 'nugrhyonmiṣita-pratibhaḥ kṛto yathātra mahābhṛti mahati śīlātale rahasyam asti tad adhigamyānugraha-yogyeṣu prakāśayeti | prabuddhaś cāsau anvīṣyan tāṃ mahatīm śīlāṃ kara-sparśanamātrā-parivartanataḥ samvādikṛtasvapnāṃ pratyakṣīkṛtyemāni śivopaniṣatsaṃgraharūpāṇi śivasūtrāṇi tataḥ samāśasāda.* Translation of SANDERSON (2007a), p. 404, footnote 574.

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.

Kṣemarāja, 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. Kṣemarāja 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 Kṣemarāja’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 Kṣemarāja. 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" (*avātaraṇ*) 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 Rāmakaṇṭha, 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: *anugrahāya lokānām bhaṭṭaśrīkallaṭādayaḥ | avantivarmaṇaḥ kāle siddhā bhuvam avātaraṇ*.

⁴⁷¹ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 427.

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 *√avatr*) 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.⁴⁷² 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

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: *teṣāṃ krameṇa tanmadhye bhraṣṭam kālāntarād yadā | tadā śrīkaṇṭhanāthājñāvaśāt siddhā avātaran; Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 7.108: *kalau pravṛtte yāteṣu teṣu durgamagocaram | kalāpigrāmapramukham ucchinne śivaśāsane; Śivasūtravārtika* 1.9-1.10ab: *daivākarir bhāskaro 'ham antevāsigaṇeritaḥ | yasmād āgamavibhramśād bhrānter bhramitabuddhayaḥ | | sukumārā atas tāni sūtrāṇi vivṛṇomi ca; Śivasūtravimarśinī* second opening verse: *āsamañjasyam ālocya vṛttinām iha tattoataḥ | śivasūtram vyākaroni gurvāmnāyavigānataḥ; Śivasūtravimarśinī* opening salvo: *kadācic cāsau dvaitadarśanādhivāsitaḥ jīvaloke rahasyasampradāyo mā vicchedīty āśayato.*

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 hierarchizing 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 Brahmins 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 brahmins 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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*, *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, and subsequent philosophical tracts of the Pratyabhijñā tradition of Utpaladeva, emanate from and are indebted to Śākta Śaiva scriptural traditions⁴⁷⁴ and, in various ways, formulate a non-dual Śaiva doctrine.⁴⁷⁵ 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 *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* and Utpaladeva's *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*, one discerns distinct authorial strategies, ends, and intended audiences for each of the two authors' works."

⁴⁷⁴ On the indebtedness of Somānanda's *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* 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, Sadāśiva and Īśvara respectively)." NEMEC (2011), p. 39ff gives an excellent summary of the role of Trika concepts and terminology in the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*. Regarding Krama influences on the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, 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-scriptural exegetical literature on the Trika and Krama traditions.⁴⁷⁶ The Trika post-scriptural 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-scriptural Kashmir. A seminal study of the Krama and its post-scriptural literature, based largely on unedited sources, is included in the monumental article of Alexis SANDERSON, "The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir."⁴⁷⁷ In chapter three we noted that Jñānanetra, alias Śivānanda, 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.

⁴⁷⁶ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 250: "Kashmirians of the Śākta 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 Paddhatis, 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 *Kramastotra*⁴⁷⁸ 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 Vīra 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 Pīṭha from the Pīṭheśvarīs. 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 Sadāśiva [to which those who seek reward ascend] Mahogarakālī 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 Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī [/ who withdraws even Sadāśiva]'. 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

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 352.

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

⁴⁸⁰ *Tantrāloka*viveka ad *Tantrāloka* 4.173ab, quoting Abhinavagupta's *Kramakeli*: *yad uktam tatraivānena yathā* ('As [Abhinavagupta] has said in that same work'): *ekaḥ śrīmān vīravaraḥ sugrhitānāmadheyo govindarājābhīdhānaḥ śrībhānukābhīdhāno dvitīyaḥ śrīmān erakasamākhyas tṛtīyaḥ samam evopadeśam pīṭheśvarībhyā uttarapīṭhe* (em. : *uttarapīṭha* Ed.) *labdhopadeśac chrīśivānandanāthāl labdhānugrahābhyāḥ śrīkeyūravatīśrīmadanikāśrīkalyāṇikābhyāḥ prāpnuvantāḥ* | *śrīman erakas tu siddhyai prāyatata yāvat siddhaḥ sann evaṃ manasā samarthayate sma* | *kim bhogair yad ayaṃ mahān kleśo mayānubhūtaḥ* | *katham ahaṃ sabrahmacārivad yāvajjīvaṃ prapannalokoddharanamātrapara eva nābhavaṃ yataḥ śrīmatsadāśivapade* 'pi mahogarakālī bhīmotkaṭabhrukutir eṣyati bhaṅgabhūmiḥ | *ity ākalayya paramāṃ sthitim etya kālasaṃkarṣiṇīm bhagavatīm haṭhato 'dhitiṣṭhet* | *tad idānīm api nijabhāvagatarahasyopadeśam stotramukhenāpi tāvāt prasārayaṃ lokān anugrhnīyām iti* | *tatrādyāḥ prāptopadeśa evaivaṃ manasy akārṣīd etāvaty adhigate kim idānīm kṛtyam astīti* | *itthaṃ ca niṣṭhitamanā yāvajjīvaṃ upanatabhogātivāhana-mātravyāpāra etadvijñānopadeśapātra***śīṣyopadeśapravaṇaḥ* (śīṣyopadeśa em. : śīṣṭopadeśa Ed.) *śārīrāntaṃ pratyaiḥṣiṣṭa* | *sa cedam rahasyaṃ śrīsomānandābhīdhānāya gurave saṃcārayām babhūva* | *dvitīyo 'py evaṃ āsta* | *tasyaiva caisā* **śrīmadujjātoḍbhaṭṭādīnānāgauruparipāṭisaṃtatir* (*ujjātoḍbhaṭṭādi* conj. : *ujjātoḍbhaṭṭādi* Ed.) *yatprasādāsāditamahimabhir asmābhir etat pradarsitam*. 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 Somānanda. 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.⁴⁸¹ This lineage was originally revealed to Śivānanda or Jñānanetra by the Yoginīs of the Northern Seat, Uḍḍiyāna, in particular their leader, the Yoginī Maṅgalā.⁴⁸² 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, Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, and to share this realization

⁴⁸¹ There is evidence that Abhinavagupta also received the Krama teachings from Bhūtirāja, 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. Bhūtirāja] 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 (*adyatanaiḥ ... yad uktam*) (*Tantrālokaviveka* vol. 3 [4], p. 193, II. 13-14): *śrībhūtirājanāmāpy ācāryaś cakrabhānuśiṣyo 'nyaḥ | abhinavaguptasya guror yasya hi kālīnaye gurutā* 'And there was another pupil of Cakrabhānu, called Bhūtirāja, who was the teacher of the teacher Abhinavagupta in the Kālī system.' There is also the evidence of a line in a verse from a lost work by Abhinavagupta quoted by Jayaratha... that acknowledges Bhūtirāja (*Tantrālokaviveka* vol. 1 [1] p. 29, 1.3 [on TĀ 1.9]): *bhaṭṭārikādibhūtyantaḥ śrīmān siddhodayakramah* '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 Jñānanetra-nātha, since in the Kashmirian literature no Śaiva tradition other than the Krama is said to have originated from a woman... From Bhūtirāja's guru Cakrabhānu the lineage goes back through Hrasvanātha (/Vāmana) and the Rājñī Keyūravatī to Jñānanetra-nātha, 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 *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, see SANDERSON (2007a), pp. 280-282.

⁴⁸² SANDERSON (2007a), p. 263, footnote 91.

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 Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī,⁴⁸³ into the very core of his theological system as its apex.⁴⁸⁴ I mention this because in the

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p. 259, which refers to the late Trika scripture, the *Devīyāmālatāntra*. On one of Abhinavagupta’s paradigmatic citations of this scripture that elevates the Krama Goddess Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī above the three Goddesses of the Trika, see *Tantrāloka* 3.70-3.71ab *devīyāmālasāstre sā kathitā kālakarṣiṇī | mahāḍāmarake yāge śrīparāmastake sthitā || śrīpūrvaśāstre sā māṭṣadbhāvatvena varṇitā* ‘In the *Devīyāmāla* scripture, that [supreme Goddess] is described as Kālakarṣiṇī. In the Mahāḍāmaraka sacrificial rite [of that scripture], [Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī] is placed on the head of the auspicious Parā [Devī]. In the *Mālinīvijayottara*[*tantra*] she is extolled as Māṭṣadbhāva.’ This reading of *śrīparāmastake sthitā* in place of the KSTS edition’s *śrīparāmastake tathā* is indebted to Raniero GNOLI, who noticed this improved variant in Jayaratha’s citation of this verse in *Tantrāloka* ad loc. See GNOLI (1999), p. 58, footnote 6. Jayaratha, in *Tantrāloka* ad loc., cites the following verse from the *Devīyāmālatāntra*: *tanmadhye tu parā devī dakṣiṇe ca parāparā | aparā vāmaśṛṅge tu madhyaśṛṅgordhvataḥ śṛṇu || yā sā saṅkarṣiṇī devī parātītā vyavasthitā* ‘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]saṅkarṣiṇī, 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, “Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī.”

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.⁴⁸⁵ 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-Kālīkula 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.⁴⁸⁶

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.

⁴⁸⁵ 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 Kālīkula 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 *Devīyāmala*." This can be seen as further evidence of a Kashmirian history of integration between the Kaula Trika and the Kālīkula/Krama, which predates Abhinavagupta.

⁴⁸⁶ 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 *Devīpañcaśataka* 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."⁴⁸⁷ In the first post-scriptural work of the Krama, a hymn of the founding post-scriptural Krama guru, Jñānanetra (c. 850-900),⁴⁸⁸ 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:⁴⁸⁹

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 Kālīkula 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."

⁴⁸⁷ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 260.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 411.

⁴⁸⁹ *Kālikāstotra*, f. 92v1-4 (v. 19-20): *yādṛṇ mahāśmaśāne dṛṣṭaṃ devyāḥ svarūpam *akulastham (Ed. : akulaṃstham Cod.) | tādṛg jagatrayam idaṃ bhavatu tavāmba prasādena | itthaṃ svarūpastutir abhyadhāyī samyaksamāveśadaśāvaśena | mayā śīvenāstu śivāya samyaṅ mamaiva viśvasya tu *maṅgalākhye (Cod. : maṅgalāya Ed.). This citation and its translation are from SANDERSON (2007a), p. 272, footnote 127.

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:⁴⁹⁰

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 Pīṭheśvarīs in the Karavīra 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

⁴⁹⁰ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 273.

irruption of the Krama revelation on earth in the person of Jñānanetra, is described by SANDERSON as “re-enactment”: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 the their “own inner reality.”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.”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

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p. 326.

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 307.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

“undifferentiated stream” of enlightened rays of awakened awareness.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 indispensable 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

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 *Kaulasūtra* 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 (*ovallih*). (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.’”

is a tradition, we must remember, whose central deity Abhinavagupta exalts as the nonpareil divine core within the Kaula Trika.⁴⁹⁵ 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.”⁴⁹⁶

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 *Cittasaṃtoṣatrimśikā* of the Krama master Nāga (c. 1025-1075).⁴⁹⁷ Nāga proclaims:⁴⁹⁸

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,

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 376: “Though the Tantrāloka is a work of the Trika based on a text untouched by the Kālīkula, Abhinavagupta reads the Kālīkula-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 *Mahārthamañjarīparimala*, 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.

⁴⁹⁸ *Cittasaṃtoṣatrimśikā*, f. 48v2-5 (v. 29): *svacchandānirmalapadoditanirniketasamvitsudhārasa-camatkṛtīnirbharo 'smi | diṣṭyādyā sadgurumukhāmbujamadhya labdhānuccāryacāra kathanodaya-vismīto 'smi*. Translation of SANDERSON. See SANDERSON (2007a), p. 296.

astonished by the fruition 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, Niṣkriyānanda,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 Niṣkriyānanda is uncertain, but his *Chummāsaṃketaparakāśa* must at least predate the career of Śivasvāmin Upādhyāya I who cites his commentary in the eighteenth century. See SANDERSON (2007a), p. 417.

⁵⁰⁰ *Chummāsaṃketaparakāśa*, f. 2r1-7: [...ta]ddṛkpātamahodayāt | bhūmau saṃpatitaḥ kṣiprāc chinnamūla iva drumah | niruttaraopamā bhūmir bāhyāntaḥkaraṇojjhitā | ap[r]ameyā nī[rā]taṅkā *kālākālakalottara (kālākāla corr. : kālākāla Cod.) | adhāmadhāmavibhavā nirniketākramākramā | asparśaparamānandacamatkāraughanirbharā | nirānandā nirāveśā sadasadbhramavarjitā | *nirvikalpāvikalpā (conj. : nirvikalpavikalpā Cod.) tu saṃvidujjhitadharminī | prāptā mayā jhagity eva vāsanā[nī]navarjitā | tattraiva bahukālāṃ tu sthito 'haṃ niścalākṛtiḥ | akasmāt tu prabuddho 'smi tatprasādavaśān manāk | apūrvasaṃvidāhlādacamatkāreṇa ghūrṇitaḥ | sthito 'haṃ vismayāviṣṭo nityānandena nanditaḥ | śāstraprapaṇcavimukho gatāhaṃ pratyayo yadā | tadā mayā siddhanāthaḥ saṃprṣṭaḥ pustakānvitaḥ | yā kāciā bhūr mayā nātha durgamā tvatprasādāt | anubhūta nirātaṅkā tām yathā sarvato 'bhitaḥ | saṃlakṣayāmi satatāṃ tathā kathaya me prabho. Emendations, corrections, conjectures, and translation of SANDERSON (2007a), p. 338, footnotes 356-357.

In response⁵⁰¹ 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 immanence (*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

⁵⁰¹ The subsequent summary and quotations, extending to the next citation of the *Chummāsaṅketaparakāśa*, 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 expanse of the *saṃketapadāni* 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]āmnāyas, 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 Niṣkriyānanda 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, Jñānanetra's enlightenment in Uḍḍiyāna, made present again through the non-conceptual and oral transmission of a Siddha guru. Moreover, the

⁵⁰² *Chummāsaṃketaparakāśa* ff. 2v8-3r6: *itthaṃ parataraṃ tattvaṃ sāksātkṛtya mayākramāt | tyaktaṃ sarvaṃ aśeṣeṇa śāstrajālaṃ samantataḥ | tyaktaśāstraprapañcena siddhanāthena dhīmatā | dr̥ṣṭas tu tatkaṣaṇāt tena [.....bhā]ṣitaḥ | yogyas tvaṃ sanmate putra durgame 'smin mahākrame | ity uktvā kṛpayāviṣṭo bodhayāṃ āsa māṃ prabhuh | kimci[c] chummopadeśaṃ tu saṃketapadavistaram | durbodhaṃ tu mahāyogipravarāṇāṃ samantataḥ | yatas tasmān mahoddāma sāhasaṃ padam acyutaṃ | samāruhya haṭhād asmi suprabuddhadaśānvitaḥ | itthaṃ apy adbhute tattve siddhanāthaprasūdataḥ | prāptaṃ *mayā (conj. : tvayā Cod.) anirdeśyaṃ vikalpaughavilāpakam | yad apūrvataraṃ kimcit tat te vakṣyāmy aśeṣataḥ | bhrānto (conj. : bhakto) 'si sarvapīṭheṣu *brahmaṇy avasthitaḥ (conj. : brahmaṇyevasthitaḥ Cod.) sadā | tvayādyāpi na viśrāntiḥ samyag *āsāditā parā | saṃdigdhāṃ matim āśṛitya kiṃ paryaṭasi putraka | yogyas tvaṃ parame jñāne yatas tasmād alaṃ bhava | pravakṣyāmi mukhāmnāyaṃ yathā prāptaṃ yathākramam | darśanāmnāyamelāpavarjitaṃ satatoditaṃ | pūjyapūjakasaṃbandhaprojjhitaṃ paratattvataḥ | ekāgramanasonmeṣavimarśeṇa mahāmate | rahasyapadavistaraṃ vijñeyaṃ vitataṃ śṛṇu.* Conjectures and translation of SANDERSON (2007a), p. 341, footnotes 361.

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" Niṣkriyānanda's own realization of the esoteric transmission encoded in the text. The aim is for complete assimilation of this knowledge, Niṣkriyānanda 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 *Mahārthamañjarīparimala* of Maheśvarānanda (c. 1275-1325).⁵⁰⁴ This work was written within the Krama tradition⁵⁰⁵ in its South Indian reception (viz. Cidambaram, Tamil Nadu).⁵⁰⁶ In his autocommentary, the *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.⁵⁰⁷ Also noteworthy is the way in which Maheśvarānanda describes his own composition as a revelatory source (*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 *Kālikāstotra* of Jñānanetra the author describes the essential nature of the Goddess as he directly perceived (*mayā dr̥ṣṭam*) it in the “great cremation ground” (*mahāśmaśāna*) in Uḍḍiyāna, while praying that the same reality may be realized by the entire world. In virtue of his complete immersion (*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

⁵⁰⁴ On this dating, see SANDERSON (2007), p. 416.

⁵⁰⁵ See *Mahārthamañjarīparimala* opening verse 2 (referring to the *auttaram tattvam advayam* ‘the non-dual reality of the Northern [transmission]’) and opening verse 10 (*kramasaraṇi* ‘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.

⁵⁰⁶ On this provenance of the *Mahārthamañjarīparimala*, see COX (2006), p. 260.

⁵⁰⁷ For a translation and analysis of the narrative, see COX (2006), pp. 4-6.

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 Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī 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,⁵⁰⁸ Isabelle RATIE,⁵⁰⁹ and Raffaele TORELLA.⁵¹⁰ 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā* 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, śabdāna – Bhartṛhari, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, Kumāṛila 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 Kumāṛila'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 Kaula 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 Jñānāneta'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 HANNEDER, 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 *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*? This is a serious question, given

evidence that the Trika tradition was not very well-established⁵¹¹ 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,⁵¹² and aim⁵¹³ of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*. For example, in addition to reading the doctrine of nonduality into the dualistically oriented *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

⁵¹¹ Abhinavagupta himself notes the lack of practical guides for the ritual system of the Trika, a lacuna that the *Tantrāloka* is designed to fill. See *Tantrāloka* 1.14: *santi paddhatayaś citrāḥ srotobhedeṣu bhūyasā | anuttaraṣaḍdardhārthakrame tv ekāpi nekṣyate* 'Ritual manuals are exceedingly manifold within various different [scriptural] streams, but even one [*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 *Tantrāloka* was the first attempt to write a 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.

⁵¹² On Abhinavagupta's imposition of the doctrine of nonduality upon the dualist ontology of the *Mālinīvijayottara*, see SANDERSON (1992).

⁵¹³ See VASUDEVA (2004), p. 146: "The primarily yogic orientation of the *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 *Mālinīvijayottara*, Abhinavagupta has sidelined it in his *Tantrāloka*, preferring to analyse instead the epistemological background of the *Mālinīvijayottara*'s yogic homologues. 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 *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 Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, and the accompanying superimposition of the categories of the tetradic Krama.”⁵¹⁴

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.”⁵¹⁵ 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 *Vīrāvalīkula*, with their transcendence of rites and grades, but also the religion of the lower levels.”⁵¹⁶ The Trika, as embodied in the *Mālinīvijayottara*, was thus much better suited as a platform for Abhinavagupta’s

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 Kāpālīka 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 heterodox 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 (*tantrāvatāra*) of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, *Tantrāloka* 36.10: *rāmāc ca lakṣmaṇas tasmāt siddhās tebhyo 'pi dānavāḥ | guhyakāś ca tatas tebhyo yogino nṛvarāś 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 avāptaṃ rāmeṇa tena loke prakāśitam | śṛṇute vā paṭhati vā kurute vā ca bhāvanām | | yogeśvaro 'sau bhavati rudratejopabhr̥ṃhitas | bhūtendriyaguṇādhāraḥ sarvajñaḥ phalabhāginah* '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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, 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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* (and likewise of all it transcends).⁵²¹ The *Mālinīvijayottara*

⁵²⁰ *Tantrāloka* 37.17-19ab, 37.22cd-24: *daśāṣṭādaśadhā srotahpañcakam yat tato 'py alam | utkr̥ṣṭam bhairavābhikhyam catuḥṣaṣṭivibheditam | | śrīmadānandaśāstrādaḥ proktaḥ bhagavatā kila | samūhaḥ pīṭham etac ca dvidhā dakṣiṇāvāmataḥ | | mantrō vidyēti tasmāc ca mudrāmaṇḍalagaṇa dvayam | ... pradhānatvāt tasya tasya vastuno bhinnatā punaḥ | | kathitā sādhakendrāṇām tattadvastuprasiddhaye | pratyekaṇ taccaturdhaivaṇa maṇḍalam mudrikā tathā | | mantrō vidyēti ca pīṭham utkr̥ṣṭam cottarottam | vidyāpīṭhapradhānam ca siddhayogīśvarīmatam* '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 *Anandatantra*, 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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is the most important (scripture) of the Vidyāpīṭha.

⁵²¹ *Tantrāloka* 37.24cd-25ab: *vidyāpīṭhapradhānam ca siddhayogīśvarīmatam | | tasyāpi paramaṇa saram mālinīvijayottaram* 'And the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is the most important [scripture] of the Vidyāpīṭha; its ultimate distillation is the *Mālinīvijayottara*.' The *Mālinīvijayottara* itself represents the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* as its source tradition, despite radical differences, as shown by VASUDEVA, 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: *evam uktas tadā devyā prahasyovāca viśvarāt | | śṛṇu devī pravakṣyāmi siddhayogeśvarīmatam | yan na kasya cid ākhyātaṇ mālinīvijayottaram | | mayāpy etat purā prāptam aghorāt paramātmanah* 'Addressed in this way by the Goddess, the sovereign of the universe, laughing, said: 'O Goddess, listen, for I will teach the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* [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. VASUDEVA (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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*."

amplifies the inclusivism of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* by harmoniously accomodating doctrinal materials and systems of yoga from the Siddhānta scriptures, conspicuously the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha*, 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

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 *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* is noted in VASUDEVA (2004).

⁵²³ Ibid., p. xlii.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p. 147.

⁵²⁵ *Mālinīvijayottara* 1.2-1.8ab: jagadarnavamagnānām tārakam tārakāntakam | |
sanatkumārasanakasanātanasanandanāḥ | nārādāgastyaśaṃvartavasiṣṭhādya maharṣayaḥ | |
jijñāsavaḥ param tattvaṃ śivaśaktyunmukhīkṛtāḥ | samabhyarcya vidhānena te tam ūcuḥ

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 been 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

praharṣitāḥ || *bhagavadīyogasaṃsiddhikāṅkṣiṇo vāyam āgatāḥ* | *sā ca yogam vinā yasmān na bhavet tam ato vada* || *ṛṣibhir yogam icchadbhiḥ sa tair evam udāhṛtaḥ* | *pratyuvāca prahr̥ṣṭātmā namaskṛtya maheśvaram* || *śṛṇudhvaṃ saṃpravakṣyāmi sarvasiddhiphalapradam* | *mālinīvijayaṃ tantraṃ parameśamukhodgatam* || *bhūktimuktupradātāram umeśam amarārcitam* | *svasthānastham umā devī praṇipatyedam abravīt* 'The great sages Sanatkumāra, Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, along with Nārada, Āgastya, Saṃvarta, Vaṣiṣṭha, and others, desiring to know the supreme reality, became intent upon Śiva and Śakti. Upon venerating, as is prescribed, that [Skanda], the destroyer of demon Tārka 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*.⁵²⁶

Those sages who are interrogators in the [frame story of the] *Śrīpūrvaśāstra* [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,⁵²⁷ which describes the rays of this moon-knowledge pouring forth from the face of Parameśa.⁵²⁸ 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: *śrīpūrvaśāstre praśtāro munayo nāradaḍādayaḥ | | prāḡ vaiṣṇavāḥ saugatāś ca siddhāntādividas tataḥ | kramāt trikārthavijñānacandrotsukitadrṣṭayaḥ*.

⁵²⁷ *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* 1.1: *jayanti jagadānandavīpakṣakṣapaṇakṣamāḥ | | parameśamukhodbhūtajñānacandramarīcayāḥ* '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 *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, see Abhinavagupta's *Mālinīśloka-vārttika* 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.⁵²⁹

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 (*ṣaḍardha*) 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.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁹ *Tantrāloka* 37.35cd-37.25: *uktaṃ śrīratnamālāyām etac ca parameśinā | | aśeṣatantrasāraṃ tu vāmadakṣiṇaṃ āśritaṃ | ekatra militaṃ kaulaṃ śrīṣaḍardhakaśāsane.*

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 *Tantrāloka* 1.9: *yady api yo yatra śāstre 'dhikṛtaḥ sa tatra guruḥ iti vakṣyamāṇanītyā maṭhikāntaragurūṇāṃ trikārthe gurutvābhāvāt iha namaskārāprastāva eva | tathāpi tasya me sarvaśiṣyasya nopadeśadaridratā ityādidṛśā sarvatraiva gurūpadeśasya bhāvāt ātmani bhūyovidyatvaṃ darśayatā granthakṛtā asya granthasyāpi nikhilāśāstrāntarasārasaṃgrahābhiprāyatvaṃ prakāśitam* '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 Bhūtirāja], 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 Kallaṭa] "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:⁵³¹

There is only one revelation. All [traditions] from worldly scriptures⁵³² up to Vaiṣṇava, 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 *Kālikula*(*pañcaśataka*) teaches: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,

⁵³¹ *Tantrāloka* 35.30-35ab: *eka evāgamas tasmāt tatra laukikaśāstrataḥ | prabhṛty āvaiṣṇavād bauddhāc chaivāt sarvaṃ hi niṣṭhitam || tasya yat tat paraṃ prāpyaṃ dhāma tat trikaśabditam | sarvāvibhedānucchedāt tad eva kulam ucyate || yathordhvādharatābhāksu dehāṅgeṣu vibhedeṣu | ekaṃ prāṇitam evaṃ syāt trikaṃ sarveṣu śāstrataḥ || śrīmatkālikule cokaṃ pañcasrotovivariṇam | daśāṣṭādaśabhedasya sāram etat prakīrtitam || puṣpe gandhas tile tailaṃ dehe jīvo jale' mṛtam | yathā tathaiva śāstrāṇāṃ kulam antaḥ pratiṣṭhitam || tad eka evāgamo 'yaṃ citraś citre 'dhikāriṇi.* This translation is indebted to the one found in SANDERSON (2005).

⁵³² SANDERSON (2005), p. 107 identifies *laukikaśāstra* here as the "mundane [Vedic religion]." The meaning of *laukika* shifts in various descriptions of the Five Streams. For the earliest usage, see 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."

⁵³³ See Ibid., p. 107, footnote 51 for the original citation from the *Devīpañcaśataka* (alias *Kālikulapañcaśataka*) 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, Vaiṣṇavism, and Vedānta, on the rungs of the *tattvas*.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ DYCZKOWSKI (2009), volume 2, pp. 265-267.

⁵³⁵ On one Śaiva Siddhānta source that adopts this strategy, the *Paramokṣanirāśakārikāvṛtti*, see WATSON, GOODALL, & SHARMA (2013), pp. 70-71: “In the final section of Rāmakaṇṭha'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,⁵³⁶ Abhinavagupta sees revelation (*āgama*) or divine “word” (*śabda*) as an intense self-reflective awareness (*dṛḍha-vimarśa*)⁵³⁷ or an *a priori* conviction (*prasiddhi*)⁵³⁸ 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... Rāmakaṇṭha 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 *Āgamaprāmāṇyopanyāsa*. 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-Saiddhāntika 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, ĪPVV, 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-śabdabhāvanā-pratibhā* is at the center of the Bhartṛharian sky. What Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta say of *prasiddhi* easily refers us to Bhartṛhari’s *pratibhā*.”

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

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 prediscursive in the sense that it appears before any kind of reasoning, is also essentially 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 Mīmāṃsakas), our Śaiva thinkers, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, are not willing to relegate *āgama* to the sphere of *atyantaparokṣa* or *dharma*; on the contrary, the entire *vyavahāra* is impregnated and made possible by it.”

realization⁵³⁹ (*vimarśa*) at the most subtle level of speech comprises the primary meaning of “revelation” (*āgama*) for Abhinavagupta, more fundamental than the “scriptures” consisting of collections of words⁵⁴⁰ distinctly arranged in various sequences. This premise conforms closely with Bhartṛhari’s description of revelation. In the *Vākyapadīyavṛtti*, he explains revelation as the process⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁹ RATIE (2013), pp. 379-380: “According to Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, *āgama* is first and foremost a kind of realization (*vimarśa*). 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 *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 (*vimṛś-*) itself in the form of the universe.”

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 380: “Abhinavagupta explains that *āgama* is a particularly intense kind of *vimarśa* of which scriptures are only a secondary expression... In a literal or primary (*mukhya*) sense, *āgama* 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 *āgama* in the first sense that gives its meaning and validity to *āgama* in the second sense.” Cf. Ibid., p. 422: “One should therefore understand the Pratyabhijñā’s assertions that *āgama* is the strongest means of knowledge and that all *āgama*-s are means of knowledge while keeping in mind that Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta constantly play with several meanings of the word *āgama*: not only do they distinguish between *āgama* as a realization (*vimarśa*) and *āgama* as a mass of words (*śabdarāśi*) claiming to express this realization; they also distinguish between the unique *āgama* that is Śiva’s self-realization and the multiple *āgama*-s or realizations that are more or less partial aspects of it.”

⁵⁴¹ *Vākyapadīyavṛtti* ad *Vākyapadīya* 1.5: *yām sūkṣmām nityām atīndriyām vācam ṛṣayaḥ sāṅkṣātkṛtadharmāṇo mantradr̥śaḥ paśyanti tām asāṅkṣātkṛtadharmebhyo ‘parebhyah pravedayiṣyamāṇā bilmaṃ samāmananti* ‘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” (*anukāra* / *bilma*) 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 *bilma* is practically the same as the Veda, although it would primarily refer to an undivided and unorganized collection or pile (*rāśi*) of mantras, while *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 Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa, who were extremely uncomfortable with the implications of the Bhartṛharian theory of revelation the concept of *prasiddhi* evokes.⁵⁴⁴ An important

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’ (*pratibhāna*), it is indeed the *āgama*, that is, the subliminal impulse towards language (*śabdabhāvanā*).’” For the Sanskrit, see Ibid, p. 464, footnote 23: “‘IPVV III p. 93.14-15 ‘*pratibhāsaṃjñā*’ iti *pratibhānalakṣaṇā* *īyaṃ śabdabhāvanā* *khyā 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 *śabdātattva* 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 Mīmāṃsakas' vision of the Veda as an independent authority⁵⁴⁵ on the supersensible realm of *dharma*⁵⁴⁶ inaccessible to and ultimately remote from the awareness of human beings, including the Vedic seers. For Mīmāṃsakas, 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.⁵⁴⁷ This authorless scripture is passed down through beginningless succession⁵⁴⁸ of Vedic teachers who merely serve as intermediaries, not illumined seers with higher faculties and thus worthy of special veneration.⁵⁴⁹ 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 *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5: [...] *tatpramāṇaṃ bādarāyaṇasyānapekṣatvāt*. Cf. FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 290 "Epistemological independence is needed because an instrument of knowledge, according to Mīmāṃsakas, 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 *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 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 *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5: *autpattikas tu śabdasyārthena sambandhas* 'But the relation of (Vedic) word and meaning is original.' In the *Śābarabhāṣya* ad *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5, Śābara glosses "original" (*autpattika*) as already fixed (*nitya*) and later in the same passage as not originating from human beings (*apauruṣeya*). On the meaning of *nitya* as fixed, along with other possibilities, see FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 294.

⁵⁴⁸ FRESCHI & GRAHELI (2005), p. 291.

⁵⁴⁹ *Mīmāṃsāslokaavārttika* codanāsūtra 69: *ato vaktranadhīnatvāt prāmāṇye tadupāsanam | na yuktam apramāṇatve kalpye tatprārthanā 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 Bhartṛharian 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.⁵⁵⁰ Nyāyasūtra 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.⁵⁵¹

Word is the statement of a trustworthy person (1.1.7). [Vātsyāyana’s comment:] Truly a trustworthy person is one who directly experiences (*sākṣātkaraṇa*) 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] (*upadeṣṭṛ*). 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 two-fold 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

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: *āptopadeśaḥ śabda | sa dvividho dr̥ṣṭādr̥ṣṭārthatvāt; Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya ad Nyāyasūtra 1.1.7-8: āptaḥ khalu sākṣātkṛtadharmā yathādr̥ṣṭasyārthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta upadeṣṭā | sākṣātkaraṇam arthasyāptiḥ tayā pravartata ity āptaḥ | ṛṣyāryamlecchānām samānam lakṣaṇam [...] | [...] evam ṛṣilaukikavākyānām vibhāga iti.*

others⁵⁵² 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 (*sākṣātkṛtadharman*) 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 (*adr̥ṣṭārtha*) 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 *Sāṅkhyakārikā*⁵⁵³ and

⁵⁵² This is reiterated and slightly elaborated in *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* ad *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.68: *kiṃ punar āptānāṃ prāmāṇyam | sākṣātkṛtadharmanā bhūtadayā yathābhutārthacikhyāpayiṣeti* ‘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 *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 5cd: *āptaśrutir āptavacanam* ‘Trustworthy testimony is [what is taught by] trustworthy people and revelation.’ This translation follows Gauḍapāda’s *bhāṣya* ad *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 5 (*āptā ācāryyā brahmādayaḥ | śrutir vedaḥ | āptaś ca śrutis ca āptaśrutī taduktam āptavacanam iti* [although this reading seems artificial, given that it reads *āptaśrutīḥ* as a *samāhāradvandva*, which should result in a neuter singular form, *āptaśruti*, in the base text]). Another reading for *āptaśrutīḥ* could be “what is heard from trustworthy teachers.” Many of the other commentators, like Gauḍapāda, gloss *āptaśruti* as referring to both trustworthy teachers, such as Kapila, Manu, or Brahmā, and revelation (*śruti*), 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 *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 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 (*āptaśruti*). 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

sacred scriptures in the *Kārikā* would tend to argue for a minimum of dependence. Reliable authority, therefore, is probably used primarily with respect to the tradition of Sāṅkhya teachers."

⁵⁵⁴ *Sāṅkhyakārikā* 69-71: *puruṣārthajñānam idaṃ guhyam paramarṣiṇā samākhyātam* |

sthityutpattipralayāś cintyante yatra bhūtānām | | *etat pavitram agryaṃ munir āsuraye 'nukampayā pradadau* | *āsurir api pañcaśikhāya tena bahudhākṛtaṃ tantraṃ* | | *śiṣyaparamparayāgatam īśvarakṛṣṇena caitad āryābhiḥ* | *saṃkṣiptam āryamatinā samyag vijñāya siddhāntam*.

⁵⁵⁵ Vācaspatimiśra, in his commentary, the *Tattokaumudī*, identifies this supreme seer with Kapila, who is repeatedly celebrated as the founder of Sāṅkhya in commentaries on the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*. For a highly detailed summary on the status of this legendary figure in early sources such as the *Baudhāyanadharmaśūtra*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Buddhacarita*, see BRONKHORST (2007), pp. 61-68.

⁵⁵⁶ *Yogasūtra* 1.7: *tatra pratyakṣānumānāgamāḥ pramāṇāni* 'Among those (activities of the mind), the instruments of valid knowledge are perception, inference, and received tradition.' For the further elucidation of what is meant by *āgama*, see *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* ad 1.7: *āptena drṣṭo 'numito 'rthaḥ paratra svabodhasaṃkrāntaye śabdenopadiṣyate* [...] *yasyāśraddheyārtho vaktā na*

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:⁵⁵⁷

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 (*nirvitarkā samāpatti* or *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,

drṣṭānumitārthaḥ sa āgamo viplavate | mūlavaktari tu drṣṭānumitārthe nirviplavaḥ syāt ‘A reality that is seen or inferred by a trustworthy person is expressed in language to transmit to others his own awareness [of that reality]. That verbal testimony whose speaker has not directly perceived or inferred the reality [communicated], a reality that is implausible, [only] deceives. On the other hand, if the original speaker has directly perceived or inferred a reality, [their verbal testimony] would be free of deception.’

⁵⁵⁷ *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* ad 1.42 (introducing *nirvitarkā samāpatti* of 1.43): *tat paraṃ pratyakṣam | tac ca śrutānumānayoḥ bījaṃ | tataḥ śrutānumāne prabhavataḥ | na ca śrutānumānajñānasahabhūtaṃ tad darśanam | tasmād asaṃkīrṇaṃ pramāṇāntareṇa yogino nirvitarkasamādhijaṃ darśanam iti.*

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 (*sākṣātkṛtadharman*) 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 *Nyāyasūtra* 1.7: *na brūmaḥ asmadādināṃ pratyakṣāḥ svargādaya ity api tu yasya pratyakṣāḥ tasyopadeśaḥ 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 *Yogasūtras*, Śaṅkara and Vācaspatimiśra, is “debatable.” Cf. BRYANT (2009), p. 54, describing the tenor of the commentary (*Tattvavaiśārādī*) 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, Sāṅkhyans, 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*)⁵⁶¹ and the “inmost essence of all creatures.”⁵⁶² 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:⁵⁶³

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

⁵⁶¹ *Tantrāloka* 35.11cd-12ab & 14: *pūrvapūrvopajīvitvamārgaṇe sā kvacit svayam* | |

sarvajñarūpe hy ekasmin niḥśaṅkaṃ bhāṣate purā | [...] *bhogāpavargataddhetuprasiddhiśataśobhitaḥ* | *tadvimarśasvabhāvo ’sau bhairavaḥ parameśvaraḥ* ‘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.’

⁵⁶² TORELLA (2013), p. 474.

⁵⁶³ See RATIE (2013), p. 409, footnote 75: “ĪPV II 82-83: *sarva eva hy āgamo niyatādhikārideśakālasahakāryādiniyantritam eva vimarśaṃ vidhatte vidhirūpo niṣedhātma vā*.” Translation of RATIE.

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.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: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

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: *tasmin viśayavaiviktyā vicitrāphaladāyini | citropāyopadeśo 'pi na virodhāvaho 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 *Tantrāloka* 35.25, Jayaratha elaborates what Abhinavagupta means by “particular contexts”: *deśakālādhikāryādiviśaya-bhedam āśritya* ‘with reference to different contexts such as a given place, time, or a specific person who is qualified.’

⁵⁶⁵ *Tantrāloka* 37.3 & 37.6: *tadavaśyagrahītavye śāstre svāmśopadeśini | manāk phale 'bhyupādeyatamaṁ tadviparītakam || tac ca yat sarvasarvajñadr̥ṣṭam tac cāpi kiṁ bhavet | yadaśeṣopadeśena 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 Saiddhāntikas, such as Sadyojyotiḥ (c. 675-725)⁵⁶⁶ and the Kashmirian Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha (c. 950-1000),⁵⁶⁷ 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 Sadyojyotiḥ's *Paramokṣanirāsakārikā* and Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary⁵⁶⁸ they introduce and disprove twenty theories of liberation before presenting their final settled position. The highest (Saiddhāntika) view is that a liberated soul becomes the same as God (*īśvarasamāna*), which for all intents and purposes means the manifestation (*vyakti*) of the divine powers of omniscience and omnipotence that are intrinsic to the soul.⁵⁶⁹ In Sadyojyotiḥ's critical survey of the definitions of

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 Sadyojyotiḥ understood them, and then refutes them, occasionally just by elaborating Sadyojyotiḥ'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. Sadyojyotiḥ 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 Saiddhāntika view, see Rāmakaṇṭha's *vṛtti ad Paramokṣanirāsakārikā* 1: *dīkṣākhyasya yat phalaṃ vakṣyamāṇam aśeṣabandhaniṣṭtau svaguṇasarvajñatvādyabhivyaktiḥ tadbhedena tantrāntaragītāni 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 (*vyakti*) 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 or aloneness 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 *Paramokṣanirāsaikārikā* 5c: *jñānakartṛtvayor nāśaḥ*. Rāmakaṇṭha further expounds this position in his *vṛtti* ad *Paramokṣanirāsaikārikā* 5c: *muktau buddher abhāvād icchāprayatnayor abhāve kartṛtvānāśaḥ buddhyādīnām abhāvaś ca navānām ātmāguṇānām abhavāt | yad āhuḥ buddhisukhaduḥkhecchādveṣaprayatnasaṃskāradharmādharmānām 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 *Paramokṣanirāsaikārikā* 47.

⁵⁷¹ On this useful distinction of “freedom from” and “freedom to” models of liberation, see WATSON & GOODALL (2013), p. 19.

and sentient.⁵⁷² Certainly 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*).⁵⁷³ 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,⁵⁷⁴ although this posthumous event is ostensibly guaranteed by the liberating initiation (*nirvāṇadīkṣā*) received by an initiand during their lifetime.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, once these powers fully manifest at

⁵⁷² For the refutation of this view, see *Paramokṣanirāsaikārikā* 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 Rāmakaṇṭha. 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 Sadyojyotiḥ's *Mokṣakārikā*, vv. 57-62. An examination of the status of Siddhas in Saiddhāntika scriptures and the writing of Sadyojyotiḥ awaits a future study.

⁵⁷⁵ On the view that full liberation is only possible after death, including an interesting interpretation of the term *jīvanmukta*, which normally refers to just the opposite, namely “liberation while living,” see Rāmakaṇṭha's *vṛtti* ad *Kiraṇatantra* 1.21ab: *tena [yad]asya samam iṣṭanimittam aniṣṭanimittam ca karma | yad āhuh na hr̥ṣyaty upakāreṇa nāpakāreṇa kupyati | yaḥ samah sarvabhūteṣu jīvanmuktaḥ sa ucyate iti | tasmin sañjāte sati guruṇā mantragaṇeśvareṇācāryādhipikarāṇa dīkṣyate nānyathā | tathābhūtakarmasamatvaṃ vinācāryasya śaktipātāniścayāt | ... yadā tv asadyonirvāṇadīkṣayā dīkṣito na punaḥ saṃsārī yadā patitaśarīro bhavati tadā śivatoavyaktisampūrṇo bhavati na prāgarabdhakāryakarmabhogoparodhena sarvātmanā*

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,⁵⁷⁶ the duty of dispensing grace and creating the universe is

bandhakṣayasya śivatvasya vyakteś cākaraṇād iti vakṣyāmo yenedaṃ tadd hi bhogata ity atra | śivatvasya vyaktir iha mokṣaḥ na tu siddhe saṅkrāntir āveśaḥ samutpattir vety etad apy atah siddham | evaṃ ceha dīkṣayaiveśvaravyāpārātmikayā puṁsāṃ vimokṣaḥ na vijñānāyogasannyāsaiḥ dravyato'ād bandhasya cakṣuṣaḥ paṭalāder iva teṣāṃ niṣṛṭtihetuto'āsiddheḥ | api tu paṭalādeś cakṣur vaidyaavyāpāreṇaiveśvaravyāpāreṇa mantrakaraṇena dīkṣākhyenaiveti jñānavicāropāyapadārthānām apy atraiva nirṇayaḥ siddhaḥ 'By this (*śaktipāta*) his *karman*, [both] that which gives rise to something desirable and that which gives rise to something undesirable becomes [perceived by the soul as] equal, as [some authority] expressed in the following verse: "He who does not take pleasure because of being helped or get angry at being harmed, who remains the same in the face of all things, that man is taught to be liberated in this life." When this [equanimity with regard to *karman*] has come about and not otherwise, then the soul is initiated by the guru, i.e. by the Lord through the person of the initiating priest by means of the collection of mantras, since without such equanimity with regard to action the initiating priest could not be certain about the descent of [Śiva's] power... But the soul who is initiated with initiation that gives gradual liberation does not again [in another life] become involved in *samsāra*, and, when his [current physical] body falls, he is filled with the unfolding of [his innate] Śivahood. This does not [happen] before, because [this sort of initiation is] not a means of revealing [innate] Śivahood and of totally destroying bonds because of the impediment of the experience of [the fruits of] accumulated *karman* whose effects are already underway as we shall teach... 'but that *karman* by which this [body is sustained can be destroyed only] by experience. In this system liberation is the revelation of [innate] Śivahood. It is not [characterised by] transference [of Śivahood] into the adept. And so in this system men's liberation is brought about by initiation, which is the work of the Lord, and not by knowledge, yoga and asceticism, since it is not demonstrable that these can be the cause of the cessation of [the activity of] bondage, since that is of a physical nature like cataracts of the eye and like disorders. It is rather that [the cessation of the activity of the bonds is caused] by the work of the Lord called initiation with mantras as his instrument, just as [the cessation of the ill-effects to the eye] of cataracts and the like [is brought about] by the work of an eye-doctor." Edition and Translation of GOODALL (1998).

⁵⁷⁶ *Paramokṣanirāsa-kārikāvṛtti* ad 12b: *tathā hi siddhasya tāvat tadānīm labdhācaritārthasavakartṛtvato yadā kartṛtvam parameśvarasyāpi tadākartṛtvam vibhinnaṃ ity anekakartṛsambhavaṇa navam idam astu purāṇam idam astu iti sarganirmāṇādaḥ vaiśaṇam syāt* '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,⁵⁷⁷ 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.⁵⁷⁸ This is partially

⁵⁷⁷ *Paramokṣanirāsa-kārikāvṛtti* ad 12cd: *athāyaṃ vādī lobharāgādikāraṇatvāt puṃsāṃ matyanyathābhāvasya tan niścītya muktau rāgādyabhāvenānekasiddhayogenāpi matyanyathābhāvābhāvena sarganirmāṇādivaiśaṣaṇi parihariṣyati* ‘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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā* 4.13: *meyaṃ sādharmaṇaṃ muktaḥ svātmābhedenā manyate | maheśvaro yathā baddhaḥ punar atyantabhedavat* ‘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 autocommentary (*vṛtti*): *baddhamuktayor vedyam ekaṃ kiṃtu baddho ’tyantavibhedena tad vetti vimuktaḥ 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 saṃvittiḥ kṛīḍātvenākṣhilaṃ jagat | sa paśyan satataṃ yukto jīvanmukto na saṃśayaḥ* ‘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: *evaṃsvabhāvaṃ yasya cittaṃ yathā manmayam eva jagat sarvaṃ iti sa sarvaṃ kṛīḍātvena paśyan nityayuktatvāt jīvaṇ eva īśvaravat mukto | na tv asya śarīrādi bandhakatvena 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 outcome⁵⁷⁹ 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: *sarvajñānanidhānaṃ tu guruṃ saṃprāpya susthitaḥ | | tam evārādhayed dhīmāṃs tattajijñāsanonmukhaḥ* ‘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 (*sakalavit*). 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: *yathādhārādharaḥ proktavastutattvānuvādataḥ | uttaram kathitaṃ saṃvitsiddhaṃ tadd hi tathā bhavet | | yaduktādhikasaṃvittisiddhavastunirūpanāt | apūrṇasarvavitproktir 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,⁵⁸² 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 (*nirūpaṇa*), 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 to 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 *Vākyapadīya*, and early Nyāya, and arguably provides a template for the way in

⁵⁸² Jayaratha, in his *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 37.7, brings out the "experiential" dimension of this verse by glossing "established in awareness" (*saṃvitsiddha*) 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 Śaiva traditions of Kashmir, see WALLIS (2014), in particular the encapsulation and theoretical analysis in pp. 450-461.

which Sāṅkhya 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 *Ānandatantra* 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-

⁵⁸³ *Tantrāloka* 37.9-12ab: *ūrdhvaśāsanavastvaṃśe dṛṣṭvāpi ca samujjhite | adhaśśāstreṣu māyātvaṃ lakṣyate sargarakṣaṇāt | | śrīmadānandaśāstrādaḥ proktaṃ ca paramaśinā | ṛṣivākyāṃ bahukleśam adhruvālpaphalaṃ mitam | | naiva pramāṇayed vidvān śaivam evāgamaṃ śrayet | yad ārṣe pātahetūktam tad asmin vāmaśāsane | | āśusiddhyai yataḥ sarvaṃ āraṇyaṃ 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 adharaśāsaneṣv apy ātmā jñātavyo mantavyaḥ ity ādīdṛṣā jñānādi uktam iti atra kasmāḍ asarvajñapraṇītavāṃ jñāyate ity uktam ity āśaṅkya 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;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*)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 paradigm⁵⁸⁷ for the instrument of valid knowledge that is “word” (*śabdapramāṇa*): the logical illustration of a neutralizing poison, i.e., a scripture’s

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.”

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.

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” (*upadeṣṭṛ*)⁵⁸⁸ and “trustworthy authority” (*āpta*):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 (*anupadeṣṭṛ*), 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 Śrīkaṇṭha 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),⁵⁹⁰ is also found in Vātsyāyana’s commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra*.⁵⁹¹ In that context, this example is

⁵⁸⁸ For the use of this term, see *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* ad *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7, which is cited above.

⁵⁸⁹ *Tantrāloka* 37.12cd-14: *yathā khageśvarībhāvanīḥśaṅkatoḥ viṣaṃ vrajet | | kṣayaṃ karmasthitis tadvad aśaṅkā bhairavatvataḥ | ajñātoḥanupadeṣṭṛtvasaṃdaṣṭe dharaśāsane | | etad viparyayād grāhyam avāśyaṃ śivaśāsanam | dvāv āptau tatra ca śrīmacchrīkaṇṭhalakuleśvarau.*

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. IPV 80-81: *āgamas tu nāmāntaraḥ śabdānarūpo draḍhīyastamavimarśātmā citsvabhāvasyeśvarasyāntaraṅga eva vyāpāraḥ pratyakṣāder api jīvitakalpaḥ | tena yad yathāmṛṣṭam tat tathāiva yathā naitad viṣaṃ māṃ mārayati garuḍa evāham 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.”

⁵⁹¹ *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.68: *mantrāyurvedaprāmāṇyavac ca tatprāmāṇyam āptaprāmāṇyāt* ‘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 tad āyurvedenopadiśyate idaṃ kṛtveṣṭam adhigacchati idaṃ varjayitoḥaṇiṣṭam jahāti tasyānuṣṭhīyamānasya tathābhāvaḥ satyārthatāvīparyayaḥ | mantrapadānām ca viśabhūtāsanipratīṣedhārthānām prayoge rthasya tathābhāvaḥ etat prāmāṇyam.* For a translation and close reading of this passage, analyzed as one component in Vātsyāyana’s greater inferential argument, see FRESCHI & GRAHELI (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 (*upadeṣṭṛ*) 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 (Vāmaśāśana) 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 (*tantraprakriyā*). 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 *māyā*.⁵⁹⁴ Even the Bhairavatantras of the “right-stream” are overrun with rituals, albeit of a more fierce character,⁵⁹⁵ and thus fall short of the pure expediency of Kaula gnosis.⁵⁹⁶ 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 malamāyādirūṣitam*.

⁵⁹⁵ *Tantrāloka* 37.27c: *dakṣiṇaṃ raudrakarmāḍhyaṃ*. Jayaratha gives examples of *raudra* or “fierce” rituals: rites such as those that cause death or ruin one’s enemies (*māraṇoccātanādi*). Abhinavagupta also finds fault with the Vāmaśāsana, specifically its fixation upon supernatural enjoyments, in *Tantrāloka* 37.27d: *vāmaṃ siddhisamākulam*.

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 (*upāya*), 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.” This

⁵⁹⁷ *Tantrāloka* 37.28: *svalpapuṇyaṃ bahukleśaṃ svapratītivivarjitam | mokṣavidyāvihīnaṃ ca vinayaṃ tyaja dūrataḥ*. Jayaratha's *viveka*, ad loc., glosses *vinayaṃ* 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 guruṇā nirvikalpaṃ prakāśitam | muktas tenaiva kālena yantraṃ tiṣṭhati kevalam*.

⁵⁹⁹ Abhinavagupta tells us that this verse is found both in the *Ratnamālā* 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.⁶⁰⁰ 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,⁶⁰¹ 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 *Tantrāloka* within this greater scriptural horizon. By a natural extension of his emphasis in this chapter on the role of

of this verse in *Tantrāloka* 28.72-73, where it is embedded in a longer citation that he ascribes to the *Niśāṭana*.

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 *Tantrāloka* 13.229cd: *tadā ca dehasamīstho 'pi sa mukta iti bhāṇyate* ‘And then, even while inhabiting a body, that person is described as “liberated”. For further consideration of the meaning of this oft cited hemistich: *yantram 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 *Niśvāsamuka*, as we touched upon in chapter two. See *Tantrāloka* 35.26-27: *laukikaṃ vaidikaṃ sāṅkhyaṃ yogādi pāñcarātrakam | bauddhārhatanyāyāśāstram padārthakramatantram | | siddhāntatantraśāktādi sarvaṃ brahmodbhavaṃ yataḥ | śrīsvacchandādiṣu proktaṃ 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 Śākta 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 Sadāśiva] beginning with Sadyojāta.’; *Tantrāloka* 35.36: *sāṅkhyaṃ yogaṃ pāñcarātram vedāṃś caiva na nindayet | yataḥ śivodbhavāḥ sarva iti svacchandaśāśane* ‘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 *Tantrāloka* *viveka* ad loc. for citations of the relevant passages from the *Svacchandatantra*.

“trustworthy teachers” as an essential criterion in validating revelation, this statement is highly suggestive regarding his own unique status as an author: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 [*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 *Tantrāloka*, after providing a brief description of the topics of each chapter of the text,⁶⁰³ he declares:⁶⁰⁴

The wise person who constantly practices these thirty-seven chapters [comprising the *Tantrāloka*] becomes Bhairava incarnate. Since it is Bhairava whose awareness is all-encompassing⁶⁰⁵ 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]?⁶⁰⁶

Chapter thirty-seven of the *Tantrāloka* is dedicated to an analysis of why Abhinavagupta’s composition should be adopted (*upādeyatva*),⁶⁰⁷ in other words,

⁶⁰² *Tantrāloka* 37.32-33ab: *itthaṃ dadadanāyāsāḥ jīvanmuktimahāphalam | yathepsitamahābhogadātrtvena vyavasthitam || śaḍardhasāraṃ sacchāstram upādeyam idaṃ sphuṭam.*

⁶⁰³ *Tantrāloka* 1.278-284ab.

⁶⁰⁴ *Tantrāloka* 1.284cd-286ab: *iti saptādhikāṃ enāṃ triṃśataṃ yaḥ sadā budhaḥ | āhnikānāṃ samabhyasyet sa sāḁṣād bhairavo bhavet || saptatrimśatsu saṃpūrṇabodho yad bhairavo bhavet | kiṃ citram aṇavo 'py asya dṛśā bhairavatām iyuḥ.* Jayaratha cites this verse ad *Tantrāloka* 37.32-33ab.

⁶⁰⁵ The translation of *pūrṇa* as “all-encompassing” is indebted to SANDERSON.

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 *Tantrāloka*, but rather from looking at Bhairava in the form of the text.

⁶⁰⁷ *Tantrāloka* 1.284ab: *... śāstropādeyatvanirūpaṇam* ‘[The topic of chapter thirty seven:] is the analysis on why [this] *śāstra* must be adopted. This is restated at the conclusion of chapter

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 indispensable “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*),

thirty six by way of introduction to the final chapter. See *Tantrāloka* 36.16ab: *upādeyabhāvo nirṇīyate 'dhunā*.

⁶⁰⁸ For the sense of *upādeya* 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 *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*; 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 capable⁶⁰⁹ 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 reimagination 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

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: *idānīm etadgranthābhīdhāne svātmani योग्यातां प्रकाशयितुं सात्विशयवप्रयोजकिकारेण देशवाम्शदासिकādikramam uttānkya svetiorṭtam 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 not the māyic subject under the influence of cosmic necessity (*niyati*),⁶¹⁰ 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 notes⁶¹¹ 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

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).

⁶¹¹ TORELLA (2013), p. 477.

human agents, and completely extrinsic to human consciousness).⁶¹² In many ways, Abhinavagupta is much more aligned with revelation as it is imagined by Bhartṛhari, early Naiyāyikas, the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, and the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*. 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 Sāṅkhya, 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

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.”⁶¹³ 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*).⁶¹⁴

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* 1.333:⁶¹⁵

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

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 *Tantrāloka*viveka ad 1.333: *te parāhaṃparāmarśātmakamantravīryajñāḥ... ity arthaḥ ata eva śivasadbhāvamayāḥ parāpramātrekātmajñānaśālināḥ iti yāvāt ata eva ca guravaḥ tāttvīkārtthopadeśināḥ yad vakṣyati [Tantrāloka 3.224:] guror lakṣaṇam etāvad ādim āntyaṃ ca vedayet | pūjyaḥ so 'ham iva jñāntī bhairavo devatātmakaḥ.*

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*).⁶¹⁶ 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*,⁶¹⁷ and they signify both supreme reality (a = *anuttara*) and the entire immanent universe (ha = *visarga* or emanation).⁶¹⁸ In virtue of cognizing all speech and reality as “I” (*aham*), the guru is Bhairava,⁶¹⁹ the all-embracing consciousness that experiences the full gamut of

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: *ādimāntya vihīnās tu mantrāḥ syuḥ 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 (*√bhr̥* ‘to hold’ and *√bhr̥* ‘to nourish’), in the sense that he manifests upon the screen (*bhittih*) 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 (*√ru* ‘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 (*√vam* ‘to vomit’, metaph. ‘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*]).⁶²⁰ This helps make sense of what Abhinavagupta means when he described the ideal recipient of the *Tantrāloka* as becoming Bhairava incarnate, i.e., one whose “awareness is all-encompassing (*pūrṇa*) amidst the thirty-seven *tattvas* (reality levels).”⁶²¹

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

⁶²⁰ This very idea is spelled out in descriptions of *jīvanmukti* cited above. In particular, these two passages are germane: Kallaṭa’s *ṛtti* ad *Spandakārikā* 30: *evamsvabhāvaṃ yasya cittam yathā manmayam eva jagat sarvam iti* ‘The one whose thought is oriented in this way, namely, “I pervade this entire universe,” ...’; Utpaladeva’s *ṛtti* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā* 4.13: *baddhamuktayor vedyam ekaṃ kiṃtu baddho ’tyantavibhedena tad vetti vimuktaḥ svātmadehatvena* ‘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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā* 4.12: *sarvo mamāyaṃ vibhava ity evaṃ parijānataḥ | viśvātmano vikalpānāṃ prasare ’pi maheśatā* ‘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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā* 4.14: *sarvathā tv antarālīnānantatattvaughanirbharaḥ | śivaḥ cidānandaghanah paramākṣaravigrahaḥ* ‘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, *ṛtti* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā* 4.14: *sarvathā tv antarlīne prameye haṃmatau pūrṇāyāṃ śivataiva* ‘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 *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 *Niśāṭana*(*tantra*): 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 (*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 (*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 *Tantrāloka* 1.256: *svayam evaṃ vibodhaś ca tathā praśnottarātmakaḥ | guruśiṣyapade 'py eṣa dehabhedo hy atātvikaḥ* '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 *Svacchandatantra* 8.31, and then adds another relevant citation with a greater Śākta leaning. Jayaratha's *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 1.256: *tad uktam guruśiṣyapade sthitvā svayaṃ devaḥ sadāśivaḥ | pūrvottarapadair vākyais tantram samavatārayat iti tathā praṣṭrī ca prativaktrī ca svayaṃ devī vyavasthitā* 'That is taught [in the scriptures accordingly]: "becoming established on the plane of the Guru and the disciple, Lord Sadāśiva himself causes the 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 *Svacchandatantra* is identified, and further analyzed, in BAÜMER (2011), p. 63.

⁶²³ *Tantrāloka* 28.72-73ab & 28.74cd-75ab: *śrīmanniśāṭane' py uktam kathanānveṣaṇād api | śrotrābhyantarasaṃprāpte guruvoaktrād vinirgate | | muktas tadaiva kāle tu yantram tiṣṭhati kevalam | ... paryantavāsī yo jñānī deśasyāpi pavitrakaḥ | | tatra saṃnihito devaḥ sadevikaḥ sakiṅkaraḥ.*

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 Uḍḍiyāna (/Oḍḍiyāna) 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 gurus who assumed human forms. See *Tantrāloka* 28.390-393.

⁶²⁵ *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa*, closing verses 16-17: *bhrāmyanto bhramayanti mandadhīṣaṇās te jantucakram jaḍam svātmīkṛtya guṇābhīdhānavaśato baddhvā drḍham bandhanaiḥ | drṣṭvetthaṃ gurubhāravāhavidhaye yātānuyātān paśūn tatpāśappravikartanāya ghaṭitaṃ jñānatrīśūlaṃ 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.⁶²⁶ As one ascends within the Śaiva tradition, from the orthodox Śaiva Siddhānta to the more restricted domain of the Kaula teachings, abandoning non-definitive gurus along the way,⁶²⁷ each new threshold of revelation requires its own initiation, and thus initiatory guru.⁶²⁸ The teachers of the Śaiva Siddhānta, the exoteric base of the

bahubhir api so 'ham eva bhramitas tattvopadeśakamanyaiḥ | tattoam iti varṇayugam api yeśāṃ rasanā na pasparśa 'Those erroneous [gurus, themselves] slow-witted, first accepting a dull group of students and then tightly binding them with fetters by talking about [all] the excellent qualities [they possess], cause them to go astray. Upon seeing such a state of these bound souls following after [those teachers only] to carry their heavy burden, I have made a trident of knowledge to cut their bonds. I count myself as a person who was also set astray by a number of people passing themselves off for teachers of *tattva* [reality] whose tongue had not even touched the two syllables *tat-tva*!'

⁶²⁶ *Tantrāloka* 13.346cd-47ab *lokādhyātmātimārgādikarmayogavidhānataḥ | sambodhotkarṣa-bāhulyāt kramotkrṣṭān vibhāvayet* '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 *Tantrāloka* 13.356: *yas tūrdhva pathaprepsur adharaṃ gurum āgamam | jihāsec chaktipātena sa dhanyaḥ pramukhikṛtaḥ* '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 *Tantrāloka* 22.40cd-22.42ab: *siddhānte dīkṣitās tantrā daśāṣṭādaśabhedini | | bhairavīye catuḥṣaṣṭau tān paśūn dīkṣayet trike | siddhāvīrāvalīsāre bhairavīye kule 'pi ca | | pañcadīkṣākramopāttā 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 *Siddhāvīrāvalīsāra*, and the Bhairavakula as well, the initiation that is designated as the ultimate one is granted only after a series of five [previously received] initiations.'

Mantramārga from Abhinavagupta' vantage point, although genuine teachers capable of efficaciously bestowing Śaiva initiation, are nonetheless depicted as mere "ritual functionaries" (*karmin*).⁶²⁹ 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.⁶³⁰ 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.⁶³¹ Abhinavagupta and company, on the other hand, see impurity as nothing but ignorance, banishable only by correct

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'officiant, le maître initiateur, et opérerait 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.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."⁶³³ Abhinavagupta explains: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 (*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 *Devayāyāmala* 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 (*lakṣaṇa*) of a person eligible for election to the seat of guru by way of consecration (*abhiṣeka*), and many of them include stipulations regarding the

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."

⁶³³ Jayaratha's *viveka* introducing *Tantrāloka* 23.13: *asmacchāstre punaḥ kasmād ayaṃ niyamo noktaḥ*.

⁶³⁴ *Tantrāloka* 23.13cd-23.15ab: *yas tu karmitayācāryas tatra kāñādivarjanam | | yataḥ kārakasāmagryāt karmaṇo nādhikaḥ kvacit | devyāyāmalaśāstre ca kāñcyādivarjanam | | taddṛṣṭadoṣāt krodhādeḥ samyakjñātary asau kutaḥ*.

candidate's physical form,⁶³⁵ family background,⁶³⁶ and geographical provenance.⁶³⁷ 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:⁶³⁸

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”⁶³⁹ into reality, it is of no consequence if they happen to be a

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 faults etc., see *Sarvajñānottara* 19.6-7. There is also the restriction of people with a shortage or excess of limbs in *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha* 10.4. *Kiraṇatantra* 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 (*viśiṣṭakulaja*).

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 deśakulācāradehalakṣaṇakalpanām | | anāḍṛtyaiva saṃpūrṇajñānaṃ 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*.⁶⁴⁰ 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.⁶⁴¹

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

the Jñānin from the Karmin, bearing in mind that the latter is also required to demonstrate exhaustive knowledge of ritual and corresponding cosmological matters. By way of example, regarding the necessity of knowledge in the Siddhānta teacher, see GOODALL, SANDERSON & ISAACSON (2015), p. 49 [citing the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṅgraha*:] “[Now an excellent ācārya (should be)] knowledgeable about the colours of the earth in places [for rituals]; knowledgeable about the days, asterisms and conjunctions [appropriate for rites]; informed about the rites for laying hold to a piece of land [for a ritual]; he should know the particularities of incubation... he should know how to perform a consecration rite; he should know how to perform bathing, worship and fire-rites... he should know how to perform sudden [yogic] suicide.” For an important proviso regarding the importance of knowledge in Siddhānta scriptures, see TÖRZSÖK (2007), p. 491.

⁶⁴⁰ *Tantrāloka* 23.25: *jñānahīno guruḥ karmī svādhikāraṃ samarpya no | dīkṣādyadhikṛtiṃ kuryād vinā tasyājñāyā punaḥ* ‘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 pūrvō gurus tyaktādhikāraḥ | | yatheccham vicared vyākhyādīkṣādaḥ yantraṇojjhitaḥ | kurvaṇ na bādhyate yasmād dīpād dīpavad īdrśaḥ | | 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,⁶⁴² as a “time-consuming”⁶⁴³ endeavor within the repertoire of seekers (*sādhaka*) of this-worldly rewards.⁶⁴⁴ 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*, *niyamaḥ*) 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 bhogaṃ ca mokṣaṃ ca vāñched vijñānam eva ca | svabhyastajñāninaṃ yogasiddhaṃ sa gurum āśrayet | | tadbhāve tu vijñānamokṣayor jñāninaṃ śrayet | bhuktyamīṣe yoginaṃ yas tatphalaṃ dātum 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: *adhareṣu ca tattveṣu yā siddhir yogajāsyā sā | vimocanāyāṃ nopāyaḥ sthitāpi 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,⁶⁴⁵ 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*),⁶⁴⁶ 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.⁶⁴⁷ However, in early Vidyāpīṭha

⁶⁴⁵ VASUDEVA (2004), p. 148: "The audience of Abhinavagupta's subsequent exegesis were predominantly 'householder ritualist-agnostics', 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 *vicakṣaṇaḥ* 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 Yogin in the *Mālinīvijayottara*'s system, i.e., the Susiddha Yogin who is same as Sadāśiva, only bestows liberation "indirectly." See *Tantrāloka* 13.331 and *Tantrālokaiviveka* 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 Yogin 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: *uttarottaravaiśiṣṭyam eteṣāṃ samudāhṛtam | jñānināṃ yogināṃ caiva dvayor yogavid uttamah | | yato 'sya jñānam apy asti pūrvo yogaphalajjhitaḥ | yataś ca mokṣadaḥ proktaḥ svabhyastajñānavān budhaiḥ* '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 [Yogin] 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 mokṣadaḥ*, Jayaratha claims the *ca* means *eva* and must be understood as "out of place," (*bhinnakrama*) and thus presumably meant to follow *svabhyastajñānavān*, 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 uttamah*, 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 agents⁶⁴⁸ capable of bestowing initiation resulting in veritable signs⁶⁴⁹ that the recipient has been penetrated by the power of Śiva. These and other descriptions of the guru's transmissible power⁶⁵⁰ 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*.⁶⁵¹ 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,

the third type of Yogin (i.e. the Siddhayogin) is being described here. Another significant point, which VASUDEVA deftly illuminates, is that the *Mālinīvijayottara* is operating on a different understanding of knowledge (*jñāna*) than Abhinavagupta in this context. See VASUDEVA (2004), p. 237: "Yoga and gnosis are in the *Mālinīvijayottara*'s definition mutually supportive or even dependent. The Yogin must achieve oneness only with what was previously defined as *upādeya*, the entities in the pure universe. In this sense gnosis is a prerequisite for yoga. The contrast between yoga and gnosis envisaged by the *Mālinīvijayottara* in this context is therefore one between a conceptual understanding of scriptural injunction and its appropriation to direct experience. Against this, Abhinavagupta decidedly upholds the preeminence of gnosis over yoga."

⁶⁴⁸ *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 2.4-5; *Mālinīvijayottara* 2.10 & 2.13. Cf. *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 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 TÖRZSÖK (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 *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, uttarasūtra, 5.41.

⁶⁴⁹ *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 2.6-10; *Mālinīvijayottara* 2.14-17.

⁶⁵⁰ *Mālinīvijayottara* 2.11: *dr̥ṣṭāḥ saṃbhāṣitās tena spr̥ṣṭās ca pr̥itacetasā | narāḥ pāpāiḥ pramucyante sap̥tajanmakṛtair 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. *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, 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.⁶⁵² Via a word, glance, or touch⁶⁵³ of the Kaula guru, the power of Śiva is directly transmitted into the body of the disciple, and this transference (*saṅkrānti*)⁶⁵⁴ is predicated on the guru's own fusion with the reality of Śiva.⁶⁵⁵

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,

⁶⁵² TÖRZSÖK (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 *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 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 (*dehasthaṁ mahākūṇḍaṁ*), 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 *Ūrmikaulārṇava*. 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 śiṣyaprabodhakaḥ || adharottaraḥ gair vākyaṁ prabhuśaktiyupabṛṇhitaḥ* '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 *āviṣṭa* guru becomes a medium for the *śakti* 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 (*pratyaya*) [of knowledge] that is his own self.

To elucidate the main sources of revelatory knowledge, and their relationship,

Abhinavagupta quotes *Kiraṇatantra* 9.14ab:⁶⁵⁷

Since it is taught in the *Kiraṇa(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 tarkaḥ svata eva pravartate | sa ca sāṃsiddhikaḥ śāstre proktaḥ svapratyayātmakaḥ.*

⁶⁵⁷ *Tantrāloka* 4.41cd-4.42ab: *kiraṇāyāṃ yad apy uktaṃ gurutaḥ śāstrataḥ svataḥ | tatrottaraṇāṃ mukhyaṃ pūrvapūva upāyakaḥ.*

one's own self, should be interrelated.⁶⁵⁸ 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 Sāṃsiddhika 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 kīraṇākhyāyāṃ saṃhitāyāṃ māyādharmaiḥ śūnyam param tattvaṃ jñātum śūnyam evaṃvidhaṃ jñeyam gurutaḥ śāstrataḥ svataḥ ityādinā kāraṇatrayam uktaṃ tatra uttarottaram mukhyam vivikṣitaṃ yathā gurutaḥ śāstram tato 'pi svaparāmarśaḥ yataḥ pūrvāḥ pūrvā yathā guruḥ śāstre upāyaḥ tad api svaparāmarśe evaṃ upādāyāpi ye heyās tām upāyān pracakṣate ityādyuktayuktyā guruśāstrayor upāyatvād amukhyatvam iti svaparamārśasyaiva prādhānyam yenātrāsyāiva upādānam* 'Moreover, since supreme reality is to be known as devoid of the properties of *māyā* in the scripture called the *Kīraṇa*, 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: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.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

⁶⁵⁹ *Tantrāloka* 4.42cd-4.43: *yasya svato 'yaṃ sattarkaḥ sarvatraivādhikāravān | | abhiṣiktaḥ svasaṃvittidevībhīr dīkṣitaś ca saḥ | sa eva sarvācāryāññāṃ madhye mukhyaḥ prakīrtitaḥ.*

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 (*jñānī*) 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 (*abhiṣekaḥ*), in which an initiate is raised to the office (*adhikāraḥ*) 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 (*kumārī*) 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 Sāṃsiddhika 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 Sāṃsiddhika 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 (*śaktipāta*). 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 satyaṃ yad yan na bhāsayet | sarvaśāstrārthavettṛtvam akasmāc cāsyā jāyate | | iti śrīpūrvavākyaḥ tad akasmād iti śabdataḥ | lokāprasiddho yo hetuḥ so 'kasmād iti kathyate | | sa caiṣa parameśānaśuddhavidyāvijṛmbhitam.*

guru, instantly dissolves one's ignorance but preserves the body,⁶⁶³ so the Sāṃsiddhika guru can transmit their unimpeachable insight, based on its intrinsic character, to others.⁶⁶⁴

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:⁶⁶⁵

'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*).⁶⁶⁶ The one who knows in this way, according to reality, has that initiation leading to liberation (*nirvāṇadīkṣā*)—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:⁶⁶⁶

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

⁶⁶³ For a highly condensed summary of the relationship between the gurus described in chapter four of the *Tantrāloka* and the levels of *śaktipāta*, see SANDERSON (1995), p. 45.

⁶⁶⁴ *Tantrāloka* 13.130cd-132: *tīratīvoraḥ śaktipāto dehapātavaśāt svayam || mokṣapradas tadaivānyakāle vā tāratamyataḥ || madhyatīvrāt punaḥ sarvaṃ ajñānaṃ vinivartatate || svayam eva yato vetti bandhamokṣatayātmātām || tatprātibhaṃ mahājñānaṃ śāstrācāryānapekṣi 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 *śāstra* 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: *adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo 'py evaṃ yaḥ kaścid vetti tattvataḥ || sa siddhibhāg bhaven nityaṃ sa yogī sa ca dīkṣitaḥ || evaṃ yo vetti tattvena tasya nirvāṇagāminī || dīkṣā bhaved iti proktaṃ tac chrītrīṃśakaśāsane*.

⁶⁶⁶ Jayaratha's *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 4.49-50: *yaḥ kaścit evaṃ eva svata eva tāttvikena rūpeṇa viśeṣānupādānāt svātmānaṃ vetti sa dīkṣitaḥ svasaṃvittidevībhīr eva pāśakṣapaṇapurāḥsaraṃ svātmajñānapātratām āpāditāḥ ata eva sa nityaṃ yogī vyutthānakāle 'pi parameśvaraikātmyavān ata eva sa siddhibhāg jīvaṇn eva mokṣalakṣaṇaṃ siddhiṃ bhajamānaḥ*.

forever a Yogin, i.e. even at the moment of emerging [out of *samādhi*] he is [still] identified with Parameśvara, 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,⁶⁶⁷ also described as a self-generated (*svayambhū*) master,⁶⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁶⁹ These are “Natural and Trained” gurus (*akalpita kalpaka*).⁶⁷⁰ Other masters may actually need to refresh their spontaneous

⁶⁶⁷ *Tantrāloka* 4.51ab: *akalpito gurur jñeyah samsiddhika iti smṛtaḥ* ‘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 *Devīyāmala*, explicitly prohibits “self-made” gurus (*svayambhū*). Abhinavagupta presents a clever interpretive solution to this incongruity 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 tadrūpabhāg ātmabhāvanātaḥ paraṃ vinā || śāstravit sa guruḥ śāstre prokto ‘kalpitakalpakaḥ | tasyāpi bhedā utkr̥ṣṭamādhyamandādyupāyataḥ || bhāvanāto ‘tha vā dhyānāj japāt svapnād vratād hutēḥ | prāpnoty akalpitodāram abhiṣekaṃ mahāmatih* ‘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” (*akalpita kalpaka*) [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.⁶⁷¹ 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.⁶⁷² This is based on the following principle, which Abhinavagupta conveys through an illustrative analogy.⁶⁷³

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 (*sāmsiddhika*). In the presence of that [Sāmsiddhika 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 [Sāmsiddhika 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: *yas tu śāstram vinā naiti śuddhavidyākhyasamvidam | guroḥ sa śāstram anvīcchus taduktam kramam ācaret* ‘But the one who does not attain the awareness known as Pure Wisdom (*śuddhavidyā*) 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: *tasya yo ‘kalpito bhāgaḥ sa tu śreṣṭhatamaḥ smṛtaḥ | utkarṣaḥ śuddhavidyāṃśatāratamyakṛto yataḥ* ‘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: *yathā bhede ‘nādisiddhāc chivān muktaśivā hy adhaḥ | tathā sāmsiddhikajñānād āhṛtajñānino ‘dhamāḥ || tatsamnidhau nādhikāras teṣāṃ muktaśivātmavat | kiṃ tu tūṣṇīmsthitiḥ yadoḥ kṛtyaṃ tadanuvartanam*. The reading *bhede ‘nādi...* in place of the KSTS edition’s *bhedenādi...* 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

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 saṁvādadṛḍhatākṛte | anyato labdhasaṁskāraḥ sa sākṣād 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: *yaḥ punar akalpitarūpo ‘pi guruḥ svānubhavamātragocarasya svayaṁpravṛttasya jñānasya paratrāpi tathopalabhyamānatvātmanā saṁvādanena evam etat nānyathety evaṁrūpaṁ dārdhyaṁ kartum anyato guruśāstrādeḥ samastād gurutaḥ śāstrato vā vyastāt prāptātiśayaḥ sa svātmani nairākāṅkṣyeṇa sākṣād bhairavaḥ pūrṇaparasaṁvidāviṣṭa 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 tajjñāguruprajñānuśīlanāt | ātmapratyayitaṃ jñānaṃ pūrṇatvād 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: *svaṃ kartavyaṃ kimapi kalayaṃ loka eṣa prayatnāt no pārakyaṃ prati ghaṭayate kāñcana svātmavṛttim | yas tu dhvastākḥilabhavamalo bhairavibhāvapūrṇaḥ kṛtyaṃ tasya sphuṭam 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.⁶⁸¹

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."⁶⁸² 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."⁶⁸³

impurities worldly existence have been destroyed, is certainly only performed for all people.'

⁶⁸¹ Jayaratha's *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 4.47cd-4.48: *tatrāśya nirmalasamvīdo 'nugrāhyān prati nirupakaraṇam eva anugrahakāritvam ity asau niranusaṃdhānadarśanamātreṇaiva svasaṃvitsaṃkrānteḥ svasāmyāpādanena tān anugrhnāti.*

⁶⁸² *Tantrāloka* 1.256d: *dehabhedo hy atāttvikaḥ* 'The difference between the bodies [of the guru and disciples] is not ultimately real. Jayaratha elaborates in his *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 1.256d: *nanu guruśiṣyayoḥ parasparaṃ bhedaḥ sāksād upalabhyate iti kiṃ nāma anayor bodharūpatvam ity āhaiṣa ityādi | atāttvikaḥ ity avāstavaḥ | bodha eva hi svasvātantryamāhātmyāt svātmani tattaddehādibhāvam ābhāsayaṭīti bhāvaḥ* 'But surely a mutual difference between the guru and disciple is directly perceived; therefore, do they [really] have the [same] form of awareness? In response to this, he says [the portion of the verse] beginning with "This [difference based upon their separate bodies is not ultimately real]." "Not ultimately real" means [the difference is] fictitious. What is meant [by the author] is that consciousness alone makes the existence of various bodies etc., shine forth within its own self through the magnificent power of its own freedom.'

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"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

with reference to the Mīmāṃsakas. See SANDERSON (2007), pp. 247-248: "Similarly, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha is more restrictive than the Śāktas in his assessment of the criteria of selection for initiation, trenchantly opposing the lax theory of inferable grace that enabled the Śāktas to justify post-mortem initiations performed at the request of the deceased's relatives, the fervour of such requests, or simply the Guru's own desire to assist the dead being taken as valid signs that Śiva wished the ritual to be performed. This opposition between Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha and the Śāktas prompts the observation that while the Śaivism of the Śāktas was in general more esoteric and less public than that of the Siddhānta it nonetheless encompassed a spectrum of practice that extended further into the domain of social religion than the Saiddhāntikas felt able to go. The staid Siddhānta stressed in accordance with its metaphysical pluralism (*dvaitavādaḥ*) the primacy and irreducibility of individuals acting for their own benefit, so aligning itself in the wider context of religious values with the autonomism of the brahmanical Mīmāṃsaka ritualists. Just as the Mīmāṃsakas' autonomism prevented them from providing an adequate account of the domain of social religion, where religious acts are performed by individuals as representatives of families or communities who expect to share the merit of those acts, so that the frequent assertions of shared merit in the literature have to be dismissed as not literally true (*arthavādaḥ*), so the Siddhānta, as it chose to draw closer to this polarity of brahmanical thought, found itself disinclined to justify those areas of established Śaiva practice in which individualism was blurred."

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 (*sākṣātkara*) 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.

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 (*vivṛtivismarśinī*) 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 *Nāṭyaśāstra* (six verses), his gloss (*locana*) of Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyālokalocana* (three verses), and his shorter commentary (*vimarśinī*) 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

⁶⁸⁶ At least within the realm of his tantric exegesis. Regarding his philosophical writings, the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikāvivṛtivismarśinī* 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?⁶⁸⁷

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

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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* 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 *Tantrāloka*'s audience regarding the reliability of Abhinavagupta as an author.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.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 *Tantrāloka* must also be prodigious. This interpretation of the purpose of Abhinavagupta's autobiographical passage, based on a close reading of its

⁶⁸⁹ Abhinavagupta argues that this is the function of Utpaladeva's self-reference as the son of Udayākara in the final verse of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*. See Abhinavagupta's *vimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā* 4.18: *udayākaraṣya putras śrīmān utpaladevo 'smat paramagurur idam śāstram akārṣīt iti tatprasiddhyā janaḥ pravartata iti pravartanadvāreṇa so 'nugrḥāto bhavatīti ubhayanāmanirdeśaḥ* '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 hy āgamo niyatādhikārideśakālasahakāryādiniyantritam eva vimarśaṃ vidhatte vidhirūpo niṣedhātma vā.*" RATIE's translation of this statement is given in chapter four. See also *Tantrāloka* 35.25: *tasmin viśayavaiviktyād vicitrāphaladāyini | citropāyopadeśo 'pi na virodhāvaho 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 *Tantrāloka* 35.25, Jayaratha elaborates what Abhinavagupta means by "particular contexts": *deśakālādhikāryādiviśayabhedaṃ 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 (*yogyatā*) 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: *idānīm etadgranthābhīdhāne svātmani yogyatām prakāśayitum sātīśayatvaprayojakāreṇa deśavamśadaiśikādikramam uṭṭāṅkya svetivṛttam abhidhatte*.

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:⁶⁹²

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 Madhyadeśa. 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 Himālayas.

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,⁶⁹³ beckoned by king

⁶⁹² *Tantrāloka* 37.37-39ab: *kanyāhvaye 'pi bhuvane 'tra param mahīyān deśaḥ sa yatra kila śāstravarāṇi cakṣuḥ | jātyandhasadmani na janma na ko 'bhininded bhinnāñjanāyita-ravipramukhaprakāśe || niḥśeṣaśāstrasadanam kila madhyadeśas tasminn ajāyata guṇābhyadhiko dvijanmā | ko 'py atrigupta iti nāmaniruktagotraḥ śāstrābdhicarvanakalodyadagastyagotraḥ || tam atha lalitādityo rājā nijam puram ānayat prañayarabhasāt kaśmīrākhyam himālayamūrdhagam.*

⁶⁹³ This event is also referenced in *Parātrīśikāvivarana*, closing verse 11: *antarvedyām atriguptābhidhānaḥ prāpyotpattiṃ prāviśat prāgryajanmā | śrīkāśmīrāṃś candracūḍāvatārair niḥsaṃkhyākaiḥ pāvitopāntabhāgān* '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 *vivṛtivismarśinī* on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā* and the first concluding verse of Abhinavagupta's *abhinavabhāratī* on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Lalitāditya.⁶⁹⁴ 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.⁶⁹⁵

Kānyakubja became a prominent city in part thanks to the legendary career of Harṣavardhana⁶⁹⁶ in the seventh century, the patron of Bāṇa who narrates his political rise in the *Harṣacarita* ('The Exploits of King Harṣa').⁶⁹⁷ The thirteenth-century poet and royal chronicler Kalhaṇa depicts Lalitāditya's victory over the king of this region, Yaśovarman,⁶⁹⁸ which would have taken place close

⁶⁹⁴ For a later reference to another Kashmirian sovereign, Gopāditya, bringing ancestral scholars from Madhyadeśa to adorn Kashmir, see *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.73. The author, Bilhaṇa, also describes the impact of his fame in Kānyakubja during his travels in *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.90.

⁶⁹⁵ See the first closing verse of Helārāja's *prakāśa* on the *Vākyapadīya*: *muktāpīḍa iti prasiddham agamat kaśmīradeśe nṛpaḥ śrīmān khyātayaśā babhūva nṛpates tasya prabhāvānugaḥ | mantrī lakṣaṇa ity udāracaritas tasyānvavāye bhavo helārāja imam prakāśam akaroc chrībhūtirājātmajaḥ* 'There was an illustrious king in the region of Kashmir, who became well known as [Lalitāditya] Muktāpīḍa, whose fame is celebrated. The minister Lakṣaṇa, 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 *Kādambarīkathāsāra*, 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 *Rājataranṅinī* 4.144-146, translated in STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 134 of the translation: "Yaśovarman, who had been served by Vākpatirāja, 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 Kālīkā, 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).⁶⁹⁹ To Yaśovarman's accolades, Kalhaṇa reports that he is the patron of the poets Vākpatirāja (author of the *Gaiḍavaḥo*) and the playwright Bhavabhūti of *Uttararāmacarita* fame.⁷⁰⁰ 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,⁷⁰¹ 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,⁷⁰² together with other sources,⁷⁰³ their questionability in terms of providing

the Gaṅgā [breaks through] the Himālaya, his army proceeded with ease to the eastern ocean."

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 *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 4.144-146.

⁷⁰¹ For an assessment of legendary nature of Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa's world conquest (*digvijaya*) in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, with reference to independent historical sources, see STEIN (1900), volume 1, pp. 90-92.

⁷⁰² Kalhaṇa mentions Suvrata's compendium of earlier chronicles of Kashmirian dynasties in *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.11-12, and Kṣemendra's *Nṛpāvali* at *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.13. In *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.14 he tells us that he has consulted eleven texts in all on the dynastic history of the region. *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.17 refers to the *Pārthivāvali* of a certain Helārāja whom he describes as a Mahāvratin. It appears the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 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

⁷⁰³ On Kalhaṇa's range of sources for the *Rājataranginī*, see STEIN (1900), vol. 1, pp. 24-27.

⁷⁰⁴ *Tantrāloka* 37.52: *tasmin kuberapuracārisitāṃśumaulisāmmukhyadarśanavirūḍhapavitrabhāve | vaitastarodhasi nivāsam 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: *tasyānvaye mahati ko 'pi varāhaguptanāmā babhūva bhagavān svayam antakāle | gīrvāṇasindhulaharīkalitāgramūrdhā yasyākarot param anugraham āgrahṇa* '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: *tasyātmajaś cukhalaketi jane prasiddhaś candrāvadātadhiṣaṇo naraśimhaguptaḥ | yaṃ sarvaśāstrarasamajjanaśubhracittaṃ māheśvarī param alaṃkurute sma bhaktiḥ*.

His [i.e. Varāhagupta's] son, Narasiṃhagupta, his intellect bright like the moon, was well known among people as "Cukhalaka." His mind radiant from being steeped in the blissful essence (*rasā*) 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.⁷⁰⁷

After wrestling the tempest of the sea that is youth, having forcibly boarded the steady little skiff that is dispassion, arriving at the gem mountain⁷⁰⁸ 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,⁷⁰⁹ although a similar idea can be read into another verse dedicated to Narasiṃhagupta.⁷¹⁰ What is important in Abhinavagupta's idealized

⁷⁰⁷ TĀ 37.55: *tārunyasāgaratarāṅgabharān apohya vairāgyapotam adhiruhyā dr̥ḍham haṭhena | yo bhaktirohaṇam avāpya maheśacintāratnair alam 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 *vimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā* 1.1.1: *tata evāha samasta iti paramēśvaratālābhe hi samastāḥ saṃpadas tanniḥṣyandamayyaḥ saṃpannā eva rohaṇālābhe ratnasam̐pada 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 *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa* concluding verse 12: *tasyānvavāye mahati prasūtād varāhaguptāt pratilabdhanmā | saṃsāravṛttāntaparāṇmukho yaḥ śivaikacittaś cukhalābhidhānaḥ* 'There was man named Cukhala, son of Varāhagupta who was born in the great lineage of that [Atrigupta]; shunning the affairs of *saṃsāra*, 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.⁷¹¹ Abhinavagupta's overall indebtedness to his father's tutelage is also expressed in two of his benedictory verses in which he is eulogized.⁷¹²

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;⁷¹³ 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: *yaḥ pūrṇānandaviśrāntasarvaśāstrārthapāragah | sa śrīcukhulako diśyād iṣṭam me gurur uttamah* 'May auspicious Cukhulaka, that superlative guru who reposes in perfect bliss and has mastered the doctrines of all the *śāstras*, teach me what I desire [to know].' See also *Mālinīśloka-vārttika* 1.5: *gurubhyo 'pi gariyāṃsam yuktam śrīcukhalābhīdham | vande yatkṛtasamskārah sthito 'smi galitagrahaḥ* 'I adore [my father], a scholar whose name is Cukhala and who is more venerable than even the teachers. It is through his education (*saṃskāra*), that I have become free from attachment.' Translation of HANNEDER (1998), p. 59.

⁷¹³ *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa*, closing verse 13: *tasmād vivecitasamastapadārthajātāl labdhvāpi dehapadaṇḍīm parameśapūtām | prāptābhayo 'bhinavaguptapadābhīdhānaḥ prāveśayat trikasatattvam idaṃ nigūḍham* '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 *viṣṭivimarśinī* on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*: *labdhvānugraham īśvarān nijamahāsaṃbhārasaṃdīpino dehe 'smin narasimhaguptaghaṭite labdhāspadaḥ paścime | śrīmālakṣmaṇaguptadarśitapathaḥ śrīpratyabhijñānāvidhau tīkārthapravimarśinīm racayate vṛttim praśiṣyo guroḥ* '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 Lakṣmaṇagupta, 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā-viṣṭivimarśinī*, 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 *maṅgala*⁷¹⁴ 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 ’bhinavagupta iti prasiddhah śrīcandracūḍacaranābjaparāgapūtaḥ | mātā vyayūyujad amuṃ kila bālya eva daivaṃ hi bhāvīparikarmaṇi saṃskaroti | | mātā param bandhur iti pravādaḥ sneho ’tigāḍhīkurute hi pāsān | tanmūlabandhe galite kilāsyā manye sthitā jīvata eva muktiḥ.*

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 memoir 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.⁷¹⁷ 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.⁷¹⁸ 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

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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānākārikā* 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 *kāvya*s.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 *kāvya*s that postdate him, Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* (ca. 1085)⁷²⁰ and Maṅkha's *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* (ca. 1128-1144).⁷²¹ There are also compelling parallels with the poetic portrayal of Kashmir in Kalhaṇa's *Rājataranṅinī* (1148-1150)⁷²² and Jayadratha's *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* (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 Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, the *Kumārasaṃbhava* of Kālidāsa, and in the third chapter of Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha*. Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya*, 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 *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*, 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 *Rājataranṅinī* 1.52 and 8.3404.

⁷²³ Jayadratha is the brother of the author of the *Tantrāloka*, 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 *Haracaritacintāmaṇi*, see SANDERSON (2007), p. 378, footnote 475: "From Jayaratha's brother Jayadratha we have the *Haracaritacintāmaṇi*, 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 *Rājataranṅiṇī*'s paean⁷²⁴ to Kashmir at the outset of the work succinctly captures some of the recurrent leitmotifs found in poetic descriptions of the region: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,⁷²⁶ allusions to Kāmadeva's presence (frequently in tandem with the beauty of Kashmirian women),⁷²⁷ the founding of Pravarapura (Śrīnagara)⁷²⁸ by the sovereign Pravarasena,⁷²⁹ the holiness of the Vitastā river,⁷³⁰ the coolness of

⁷²⁴ *Rājataranṅiṇī* 1.25-1.43.

⁷²⁵ *Rājataranṅiṇī* 1.42: *vidyā veśmāni tuṅgāni kuṅkumaṃ sahimaṃ payaḥ | drākṣeti yatra sāmānyam asti tridivadurlabham*. Translation of STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 10 of translation.

⁷²⁶ *Nīlamatapūrāṇa* 1.12-13; *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.1; *Rājataranṅiṇī* 1.25-27. This event is not alluded to in Abhinavagupta's regional descriptions.

⁷²⁷ On the theme of Kāmadeva's presence in the region, see *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.5, 3.8, 3.31. On the beauty of the women of Kashmir, see *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.15, 3.22-23, 3.25; *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.11-13, 18.17, 18.20-21. For references to both Kāmadeva and women, see *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.27, 3.29-30.

⁷²⁸ On the identification of Pravarapura as Śrīnagara, see STEIN (1900), volume 1, p. 98 of the translation, footnotes to vv. 3.339-349.

⁷²⁹ *Tantrāloka* 37.47-48; *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.28; *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.21; *Rājataranṅiṇī* 3.336ff.

⁷³⁰ *Tantrāloka* 37.50-51: *rodhaḥpratiṣṭhitamaheśvarasiddhaliṅgasvāyaṃbhuvārcanavilepanagandhapuṣpaiḥ | āvarjyamānatanuvīcinimajjanaughavidhvastapāpmamunisiddhamanuṣyavandyā | | bhogāpavargaparipūraṇakalpavallī bhogaikadānarakāṃ surasiddhasindhum | nyakkurvātī harapinākakalāvātīrṇā yad bhūṣayaty avirataṃ taṭinī vitastā* 'Where the river Vitastā constantly adorns that [land] together with the fragrant blossoms that are the ritual ointment for the adoration of the Shiva and Siddha liṅga 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,⁷³¹ 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,⁷³² 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.⁷³³ Moreover, this amplified attention of Kashmirian poets to

[those faults] away.’ For the Vitastā river in the imagination of other Kashmirian poets, see *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.7, 3.20, & 3.24; *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.22; *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.29; *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 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*, *hariṇī*, *śārdūlavikrīḍita*, *mandākrāntā*, *vasantatilakā*, *vaṁśasthavila*, 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 Kalhaṇa, 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*, *Vitastāmāhātmya*, and the *Śāradāmāhātmya*.

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:⁷³⁴

[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 śāradacandraśubhrā śrīśāradeti prathitā janeṣu | śāṇḍilyasevārasasuprasannā sarvaṃ janam svair vibhavair yunakti*. 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.”⁷³⁸ Kashmir’s symbolism as the Land of Śāradā and references to this Goddesses’ pilgrimage site are not only celebrated by local poets,⁷³⁹ but even figure in a story about Hemacandra (c.a. 1088-1172),⁷⁴⁰ the great Jain polymath of Gujarat, the poet Śrīharṣa,⁷⁴¹ as well as in accounts of India’s sacred geography in the works of Al-Bīrūnī and Abu’l-Fazl.⁷⁴²

Kashmir’s glorification as a treasury of learning is further accentuated in another one of Abhinavagupta’s charming verses:⁷⁴³

⁷³⁸ Jayaratha’s *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 37.41: *svair vibhavair yunaktīty anenātra sarvavidyākaraṣṭhānatvaṃ prakāśitam.*

⁷³⁹ Śrīkaṇṭhacarita 3.10, 3.19; Vikramāṅkadevacarita 1.21; Rājatarāṅgiṇī 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 Jayasiṃha, of Gujṛāt, 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. Jayasiṃha 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*.

⁷⁴¹ GRANOFF (1995), p. 361.

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 Albērūnī 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 vāgmī candroddyotā masṛṇagatayaḥ 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.⁷⁴⁴ 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.⁷⁴⁵

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:⁷⁴⁶

[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

⁷⁴⁴ For references, see footnote 727.

⁷⁴⁵ *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.19: *kaṭākṣite śāradayā dayāmṛtadravādradṛṣyā śrutiśaṣkulīpadam | na śāstrabhogānaśanavratakriyāsahiṣṇu bālāpi yatra bibhrati* '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 gaurīkāntaḥ karair vijayādibhir | yugapad akhilaṃ bhogāsāraṃ rasāt paricarcitum*.

Vijaya [/ in order to examine the floods of wealth (raised) as tributes through his (temples) such as Vijayeśvara].

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.⁷⁴⁷ 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.⁷⁴⁸ 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:⁷⁴⁹

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,⁷⁵⁰ to the Trika tradition he has

⁷⁴⁷ For further references to this site, see *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.38 & 1.105-106, and STEIN's footnotes ad loc.; *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 1.5 & chapter ten, which narrates the story of the inception of this form of Śiva; the third concluding verse of the *Abhinavabhāratī* 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: *sadvṛttasāragurutaijasamūrtayo hi tyaktā api prabhuguṇān adhikam 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: *udyadgaurāṅkuravikasitaiḥ śyāmaraktaiḥ palāśair antargāḍhāruṇarucilasat-kesarālīvicitraiḥ | ākīrṇā bhūḥ pratipadam asau yatra kāśmīrapuṣpaiḥ samyag devītritayajananodyānam āviṣkaroti*.

⁷⁵⁰ See *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* 18.72; *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 3.6, 3.17; *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 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 theme⁷⁵¹ 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 *kandalī* [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 *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* 1.42, which is cited above.

⁷⁵² *Tantrāloka* 37.42: *nāraṅgāruṇakānti pāṇḍuvikacadbhāvadātacchavi prodbhinnāmalamātulunṅa-kanakacchāyābhirāmaprabham | kerikuntalakandalīpratīkṛtīśyāmaprabhābhāsvaram yasmīn śakticatuṣṭayojjvalamalaṃ madyaṃ mahābhairavam*. Along with GNOLI (1999), p. 639, footnote 6, I am uncertain of the botanical referent of *kerikuntala* in this verse.

⁷⁵³ *Tantrāloka* 29.12cd-29.13: *drākṣotthaṃ tu paraṃ tejo bhairavaṃ kalpanojjhitam | | etat svayaṃ rasaḥ śuddhaḥ prakāśānandacinmayaḥ | devatānāṃ priyaṃ nityaṃ 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 *navamadyapāna* ('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:⁷⁵⁵

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,⁷⁵⁶ often in conjunction with the influential presence of Kāmadeva,⁷⁵⁷ 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.

instrumental music, congregating in the snow, honoring women, and various entertainments such as the dancing of courtesans.

⁷⁵⁵ *Tantrāloka* 37.40cd: *tan manye 'haṃ samabhilaṣitāśeṣasiddher na siddhyai kaśmīrebhyaḥ param atha purāṇi pūrṇavṛtter na tuṣṭyai.*

⁷⁵⁶ *Tantrāloka* 37.49: *saṃpūrṇacandravimaladyutivīrakāntāgādhāṅgarāgaghanakuṅkumapiñjaraśrīḥ | proddhūtavetasalatāsitacāmarauḥgai rājyābhiṣekam anīśaṃ dadatī 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 *Tantrāloka* 37.43: *trinayana-mahākopajvālāvīlīna iha sthito madanaviśikhavrāto madyacchalena vijṛmbhate | katham itarathā rāgaṃ mohaṃ madaṃ madanajvaraṃ vidadhad anīśaṃ kāmātāṅkair 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

Devī.⁷⁵⁸ 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 *Tantrāloka* 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

⁷⁵⁸ The adaption of Goddess Sarasvatī into Parā by the redactors of the *Siddhayogeshvarīmata*, noticed by TÖRZSÖK and discussed in chapters two and four, is obvious in the text’s *parāsādhana*. See *Siddhayogeshvarīmata* 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 Sādhakas 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 *Tantrāloka*), 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 Śaṅkhaḍhara, 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 trivium⁷⁶⁰ 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 Rāmakaṇṭha, 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 evodāharaṇaṃ yad vijñānārthinā mayā lokottare dvayādvayātmani śaivaśāstrādāv abhikhyāmātraprakhyāpitaparaśreyaḥsaṃśrayaḥ śrīmān kalyāṇaḥ pūrṇavijñānavān eka eva gurur labdhaḥ padavākyaḥ pramāṇāḍau laukike śrīmān sugrhitānāmādheyāḥ śaṅkhaḍharaś 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 (*vākyaśāstra*), for its part, furnishes sophisticated principles of scriptural exegesis, which would also be vital to a project the likes of the *Tantrāloka*, 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 (*śāstrajāla*) in the Krama tradition, Abhinavagupta reiterates⁷⁶¹ 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā*, Abhinavagupta argues for the indispensability of these two fields of discourse, worldly scholastics and otherworldly revelation, in the process of Self-realization:⁷⁶²

⁷⁶¹ See second closing verse of Abhinavagupta's *vivṛtivismarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā*: *tajjanmadehapadabhāk padavākya mānasamānskārasamīkṣatamatih paramēśaśakteḥ | sāmāthyataḥ śivapadāmbujabhaktibhāgī dārātmaprabhṛtibandhukathām anāptaḥ* '[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 *Dhvanyālokalocana*: *śrīśiddhicelacaranābdjaparāgapūtabhaṭṭendurājamatisamīkṣatābuddhileśaḥ | vākya pramāṇapada-vediguruprabandhasevāraso vyaracayad dhvani vastuvṛttim* '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 *vivṛtivismarśinī* and closing verse 2 of the *vimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā*: *vākya pramāṇapadatattvasadāgamārthāḥ svātmopayogam amutaḥ kila yānti śāstrāt | bhaumān rasāṇi jalamayāṁś ca na sasyapuṣṭyai muktvārkaṁ ekam iha yojayitum kṣamo 'nyaḥ*. 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],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

⁷⁶³ The identification of "that" (*amutaḥ*) *śāstra* in this verse with Pratyabhijñā is based on the previous verse, *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśiṇī* closing verse 11, the topic of which is the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*[*kārikā*]: *paricīnuta tad enām īśvarapratyabhijñāṁ dahata hr̥di nivīṣṭaṁ vāsanācakravālam | jvaladanalaśikhāntarlelihānāraṇeyasthiraparicayabhāk kiṁ sūṭaye bījapuñjaḥ*.

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

⁷⁶⁴ *Tantrāloka* 37.58-59: *pitṛā sa śabdagahane kṛtasampraveśas tarkārṇavormipṛṣatāmalapūtacittatḥ | sāhityasāndrarasabhogaparo maheśabhaktyā svayaṃ grahaṇadurmadayā grhītatḥ || sa tanmayībhūya na lokavartanīm ajīganāt kāmapi kevalaṃ punaḥ | tadīyasambhogavivṛddhaye purā karoti dāsyam guruveśmasu svayam.*

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 (*vivṛtivismarśinī*) on the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁵ *Tantrāloka* 37.60-62: **āmardasamtatimahārṇavakarnadhārah saddaiśikairakavarātmajavāmanāthaḥ (āmarda em. : ānanda Ed.) | śrīnāthasamtatimahābaragharmakāntiḥ śrībhūtirājanayāḥ svapitrprasādaḥ | | traiyambakaprasarasāgaraśāyisomānandātma jotpalajalakṣmaṇaguptanāthaḥ | turyākhyasamtatimahodadhipūrṇacandraḥ *śrīsaumataḥ (em. : śrīsomataḥ Ed.) sakalavit kila śambhunāthaḥ* '(1) Vāmanātha, son of the excellent Guru Eraka, [my] helmsman over the ocean of the [Saiddhāntika] Āmardaka [alias Ānanda] lineage, (2) the son of Bhūtīrāja, initiated by his father, [my] sun in the vast sky of the Śrīnātha lineage, (3) Lakṣmaṇaguptanātha, disciple of Utpala, the disciple of Somānanda, [my Viṣṇu] lying on the ocean of the lineage of Tryambaka, (4) [the Kaula lineage] Śambhunātha who was known to be omniscient, descended from Sumati[nātha], [my] full moon over the ocean of the Kaula lineage (5) Candraśarman, (6) Bhavabhaktivilāsa, (7) Yogānanda, (8) Abhinanda, (9) Śivaśakti, (10) Vicitrānātha, and other great [scholars] such as (11) Dharmāśiva, (12) Vāmanaka, (13) Udbhaṭaśrī, (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 *vivṛtivismarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*:
pūrṇavyākaraṇāvagāhanaśuciḥ sattarkamūlonmiṣatprajñākalpalatāvivekakusumair abhyarcya hrdddevatām | pīyūṣāsavasārasundaramahāsāhityasauhityabhāg viśrāmyāmy aham īśvarādvayakathākāntāsakhaḥ sāmpratam.

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.⁷⁶⁷

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 (*vākyaśāstram*), Poetics (*sāhityaśāstram*), and finally the study of the Śaiva scriptures." To support this sequence of learning, SANDERSON refers to four concluding verses of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā-vivṛtivismarśinī* (vv. 2-5), *Tantrāloka* 37.58a, and *Mālinīślokovārttika* 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 *padavākyaṃ* (in *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā-vivṛtivismarśinī* v. 2) is a formula whose order is flexible. The second closing verse of the *Dhvanyālokalocana*, for example, gives *vākyaṃ* 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.

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-ultimacy 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

⁷⁶⁸ This idea of studying philosophy and literature intensely, only to find the ultimate bliss of devotion to God, is found in *Dhvanyāloka* 3.43b: *yā vyāpāravatī rasān rasayitūṃ kācit kavīnām navā dṛṣṭī yā pariniṣṭhitārthaviśayonmeṣā ca vaipaścītī | te dve apy avalambya viśvam anīṣa nirvarṇayanto vāyam śrāntā naiva ca labdham abdhīṣayan tvadbhaktitulyam 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 *Dhvanyāloka* 3.43b: *evam prathamam eva parameśvarabhaktibhājah kutūhalamātrāvalambitakavipramāṇikobhayaavṛtteḥ punar api parameśvarabhaktiviśrāntir eva yukteti | sakalapramāṇapariniṣcitadrṣṭādrṣṭaviśayaviśeṣajam yat sukham yad api lokottaram rasacarvaṇātmaṃ tata ubhayato ‘pi parameśvaraviśrāntyānandaḥ prakṛṣyate tadānandavipruṇmātrāvabhāso hi rasāsvāda ity uktam prāg asmābhiḥ | laukikam tu sukham tato ‘pi nikṛṣṭaprāyam bahuttaraduḥkhānuṣaṅgād* ‘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."⁷⁶⁹ 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.'

⁷⁶⁹ BRONNER (2013), p. 172.

fifteen of the teachers that he served,⁷⁷⁰ he specifies the tangible effects of this eclectic education on his own consciousness, which culminated in his becoming enamored with Śaiva philosophy:⁷⁷¹

[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 Lakṣmaṇagupta.

It is in virtue of studying with many of the best gurus (*nānāgurupravara*) 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 adaptations, from a scripture called the *Śrīmata*, another name for the *Ṣaṭsāhasrasaṃhitā* of the Kujjikā corpus of Kaula scriptures:⁷⁷²

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

⁷⁷⁰ See *Tantrāloka* 37.60-62, cited and translated above.

⁷⁷¹ Third closing verse of Abhinavagupta's *viṣṭivimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānārikā*: *nānāgurupravaraṇāpādanipātajātasamvītsaroruhavikāsaniveśitaśrīḥ | śrīśāstrakṛdghaṭita-lakṣmaṇaguptapādasatyopadarśitaśivādvayavāḍadṛptaḥ*.

⁷⁷² *Tantrāloka* 13.335: *āmodārthī yathā bhr̥ṅgaḥ puṣpāt puṣpāntaram vrajet | vijñānārthī tathā śiṣyo guror gurvantaram vrajet*. For the scriptural source of this quote, *Ṣaṭsāhasrasaṃhitā* 20.16cd-19ab, see DYCZKOWSKI (2009), vol. 3, p. 21. Abhinavagupta's transformation of the content and meaning of this verse is notable.

(*tirobhāvaśakti*).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, rapidly⁷⁷⁴ up the ladder, receiving initiations in progressively higher teaching traditions,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

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 obscurity (*tirobhāvasvarūpa*).

⁷⁷⁴ *Tantrāloka* 13.300cd-301: *kramikaḥ śaktipātaś ca siddhānte vāmake tataḥ | dakṣe mate kule kaule śaḍardhe hr̥daye tataḥ | ullāṅghanavaśād vāpi jhaṭity akramam eva vā* 'A gradual descent of Power [is one where] a person in the Siddhānta school then enters the Vāma school, [then] the Dakṣiṇā, 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.

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 dīkṣitās tantrē daśāṣṭādaśabhedini || bhairavīye catuḥṣaṣṭau tān paśūn dīkṣayet trike | siddhavīrāvalīsāre bhairavīye kule 'pi ca || pañcadīkṣākramopāttā dīkṣānuttarasamjñitā* 'He may initiate into the [system of the] sixty-four [scriptures] of Bhairava such bound souls as have already been initiated into the [*Siddhānta*] with its ten and eighteen constituent [Śivatantras and Rudratanttras], and those in turn into the Trika [= *Mālinīvijayottara*], and the *Bhairavakula*, whose essence is the *Siddhavīrāvalī*. 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: *hautrī dīkṣā tu siddhānte tantrē yojanikā smṛtā | trike samāveśavatī kule stobhātmikā matā || sāmāsyamayī kaule dīkṣā pañcavidhoditā* 'Initiation is taught to be of five kinds. In the *Siddhānta* 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 Trika [= *Mālinīvijayottara*], initiation requires [one of the modes of penetration by Rudraśakti known as] Samāveśa. In the Kula [= *Bhairavakula*] it is a state of automatism (*stobhaḥ*) [in which it is the possessing deity that moves one's limbs]. In the *Kaula* [= *Vīrāvalī* / *Siddhavīrāvalī*] 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.⁷⁷⁶

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 *Tantrāloka* itself testifies, and Abhinavagupta advocates, one should synthesize the knowledge of all scriptural traditions:⁷⁷⁷

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

⁷⁷⁶ *Tantrāloka* 22.43-22.44: *yo 'pi hr̥tsthamaheśānacodanātaḥ suvistr̥tam | śāstrajñānaṃ samanvicchet so 'pi yāyād bahūn gurūn | | taddīkṣāś cāpi gr̥hṇīyād abhiṣecanapaścimāḥ | jñānopodbalikāś tā 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.'

⁷⁷⁷ *Tantrāloka* 13.343: *nānāgurvāgamasrotahpratibhāmātramiśritam | kṛtvā jñānārṇavam svābhir vipruḍbhīḥ plāvayen na kim.*

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, Kallaṭabhaṭṭa, author of the *Spandakārikās*, which inspires his own approach.⁷⁷⁸

This is the verdict of the blessed guru Kallaṭa [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 Kallaṭabhaṭṭa’s few self-referential statements in his ninth-century *Spandakārikāvṛtti*.⁷⁷⁹ Kallaṭa boasts that he was a disciple of

⁷⁷⁸ *Tantrāloka* 13.344-13.346 & 13.349ab: *ā tapanān moṭakāntaṃ yasya me ‘sti gurukramaḥ | tasya me sarvaśiṣyasya nopadeśadaridrātā || śrīmatā kallaṭenetthaṃ guruṇā tu nyarūpyata | aham apy ata evādhāṣṣāstradrṣṭikutūhalāt || tārkikaśrautabauddhārhadvaiṣṇavādīnn aseviṣi ... tasmān na gurubhūyastve viśaṅketa kadācana.*

⁷⁷⁹ *Spandakārikāvṛtti* third concluding verse.

everyone (*sarvaśiṣya*), 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 Vaiṣṇava 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 *kautūhala* 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.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:⁷⁸²

If [one objects]: ‘The will of the Lord, which is absolute (*avikala*), 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

⁷⁸¹ See Abhinavagupta’s *locana* ad *Dhvanyāloka* 3.43b: *evaṃ prathamam eva parameśvarabhaktibhājaḥ kutūhalamātrāvalambitakavipramāṇikobhayavṛtteḥ punar api parameśvarabhaktivośrāntir eva yukteti*. This commentary, and the original verse, are both translated above.

⁷⁸² *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* 126–127: *avikalā bhagavadicchā na vicārapadavīm adhiśeta iti ced alaṃ granthadhāraṇavācanavyākhyānavicāraṇādimitiḥyāyāsena parityājya evāyaṃ gurubhāraḥ tūṣṇīm bhāvaśaraṇair eva stheyam bhagavadicchaivottāraṇīyam uttārayettadicchaivānugrahātmaivaṃ vicāraṇāyāṃ paryavasāyayati na khalu pādaprasārikayaiva sukhaṃ śayānair bhuñjānais ca svayam avimṛśadbhiḥ svāpekṣatīvratarādīparameśvarānugrahotpannādhikādhikasūksma-tamavimarśakuśaladhiṣaṇāpariśīlanaparāṇmukhair vā sthātavyam iti*. Translation of RATIE (2013), p. 439, footnote 135.

one's realization (*vimarśa*), is echoed in Abhinavagupta's description of his own inspired condition: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.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

⁷⁸³ *Tantrāloka* 37.80: *bhrātā tadīyo 'bhinavaś ca nāmnā na kevalaṃ saccaritair api svaiḥ | pītena vijñānārasena yasya tatraiva tṛṣṇā vavṛdhe nikāmam.*

⁷⁸⁴ *Tantrāloka* 37.70: *ācāryaṃ abhyarthayate sma gādhaṃ saṃpūrṇatantrādhigamāya samyak | jāyeta daivānugṛhītābuddheḥ saṃpat prabandhaikarasaiva saṃpat* '[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" (*saṃpat*) is a technical term, referring to the incomparable realization that is liberation in the non-dual Śaiva system. For more on this concept, see Abhinavagupta's *vimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*, in particular his gloss of *samastasaṃpat*.

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:⁷⁸⁵

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 Siva, 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,⁷⁸⁶ 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

⁷⁸⁵ *Tantrāloka* 37.63-64: *ete sevārasaviracitānugrahāḥ śāstrasārapraudhādeśaprakāṣasubhagaṃ svādhikāraṃ kilāsmi | yat saṃprādur yad api ca janānn aikṣatākṣetrabhūtān svātmārāmas tad ayam anīsaṃ tattvasevāraso 'bhūt | | so 'nugrahītum atha śāmbhavabhaktibhājaṃ svaṃ bhrataram akhilaśāstravimarśapūrṇam | yāvan manaḥ praṇidadhāti manorathākhyam tāvaj janaḥ katipayas tam upāsasāda.*

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 (*ardhatraiymbaka*) 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 *Mālinīślokovārttika*...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 Bhaṭṭanātha [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

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 *Mālinīślokovārttika* 1.2-4: *yadīyabodhakiraṇair ullasadbhiḥ samantataḥ | vikāsihṛdayāmbhojā vayan sa jayatād guruḥ || sābhimarśaṣaḍardhārthapañcasrotaḥsamujjvalān | yaḥ prādān mahyam arthaughān daurgatyadalanavratān || śrīmatsumatisaṁśuddhaḥ sadbhaktajanadakṣiṇaḥ | śambhunāthaḥ prasanno me bhūyād vākpুষpaṭoṣitaḥ*. Translation and minor emendation of SANDERSON (2005a), p. 131.

⁷⁸⁹ *Tantrāloka* 1.16: *śrībhaṭṭanāthacaraṇābjayugāt tathā śrī bhaṭṭārikāṁghiryugalād gurusantatir yā | bodhānyapāśaviṣanuttadupāsanoṭthabodhojvala 'bhinavagupta idaṁ karoti*.

(*āpta*). Furthermore, the Kaula transformation of this concept of religious authority from the Naiyāyikas (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*:⁷⁹⁰

[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 [here] 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 (*sākṣātkaraṇa*) 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 (*sākṣātkāraḥ*, *avagatadharmā*, *cikhyāpayiṣayā*, and the various derivations of √*upadiś* consonant with *upadeṣṭṛ*), he goes on to make it clear by directly citing Vātsyāyana’s definition (*śākṣātkṛtadharmā*

⁷⁹⁰ Jayaratha’s *viveka* ad *Tantrāloka* 1.16: *tasya gurūparamparāgatasya jñānasya upāsanam punaḥ punaḥ cetasi viniveśanam tata utthito yo ’sāv upadeṣṭavyaviṣayo bodhaḥ sākṣātkāraḥ tena ujjuvalaḥ samyagavagatadharmā san idam gurūpadeśāt saṁśayaaviparyāsādirahitatvenādhigatam anuttaratrikārthaprakriyālakṣaṇam parān prati cikhyāpayiṣayā karoty upadiśati ity arthaḥ | abhinavaguptaḥ iti sakalalokaprasiddhanāmōdīraṇenāpi āptatvam eva upodbalitam | uktaṁ hi śākṣātkṛtadharmā yathādr̥ṣṭasyārthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta upadeṣṭā cāptaḥ.*

yathādr̥ṣṭasyārthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta upadeṣṭā cāptaḥ). The structure of the verse, as well as the previous one from the *Mālinīśloka-vārttika*, 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 *āptas*. 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 illumined Kaula guru, who unlike the Vedic seers has internalized all of the principles and levels of reality, can be furnished from the *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa*.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 deft 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 *Parātrīśikāvivarāṇa*: *haṃho hṛccakracārāpraviracānalasan-nirbharānandapūrṇā devyo 'smatpāśakoṭipravighaṭanapaṭujñānaśūlordhavadhārāḥ | cetovākkāyam etad viḡatabhāvabhayotpatti yuṣmāsu samyak protaṃ yat tena mahyaṃ vrajata kila hr̥di drāk prasādaṃ prasahya | | vyākhyādikarmāparipāṭipade niyukto yuṣmābhir asmi gurubhāvam anupraviśya | vākcittacāpalam idaṃ mama tena devyas taccakracārucaturasthitayaḥ 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.”⁷⁹²

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 sāṅṣāt 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

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 Kālīdāsa.” 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.⁷⁹³ 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 saptādhikām enām triṃśataṃ yaḥ sadā budhaḥ | āhnikānām samabhyasyet sa sāṅśād bhairavo bhavet | | saptatrimśatsu sampūrṇabodho yad bhairavo bhavet | kiṃ citram aṇavo 'py asya drśā bhairavatām iyuḥ* '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 in⁷⁹⁴ 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).⁷⁹⁵ 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*: [...] *vākyapramāṇapadavediguru-prabandhasevāraso*.

⁷⁹⁵ See closing verse 12 of the *vivṛtivismarśinī* and closing verse 2 of the *vimarśinī* ad *Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā*: *vākyapramāṇapadatattvasadāgamārthāḥ svātmopayogam amutaḥ kila yānti śāstrāt | bhaumān rasān jalamayāms ca na sasyapuṣṭyai muktvārkam ekam iha yojayitum kṣamo 'nyaḥ*. 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 *Īśvarapratyabhijñārikā*). 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 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

⁷⁹⁷ Proof that Abhinavagupta consciously uses suggestion or poetic manifestation (*dhvani*) in his Śaiva exegesis is found in the *Dhvanyālokalocana*, 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 *Dhvanyāloka* 1.13 = *Tantrāloka* 1.332: *bhāvaavrāta haṭhāj janasya hṛdayānyākramya yannartayan bhaṅgībhir vividhābhir ātmahṛdayaṃ pracchāḍya saṃkrīḍase | yas tvām āha jaḍaṃ jaḍaḥ saḥṛdayaṃ manyatvadulṣīkṣito manye' muṣya jaḍātmatā stutipadaṃ tvatsāmyasambhāvanāt* '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 (*sahṛdaya*), the ideal audience of poetry and plays, in relationship to Śaiva practices found in texts such as the *Vijñānabhairava* (which Jayaratha cites in his commentary) that have a clear Kaula flavor. See *Tantrāloka* 3.209cd-210: *tathā hi madhure gīte sparśe vā candanādike | | mādhyaस्थ्यavigame yāsau hṛdaye spandamānatā | ānandaśaktiḥ saivoktā yataḥ saḥṛdayo janaḥ* '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 (*sahṛdaya*).'

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.

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 Nisvāsa. 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 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 Uttaramīmāṃsā 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 Purāṇic 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 Svachchandabhairava 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 fore 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 (*kulaprakriyā*) 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

⁷⁹⁹ SANDERSON (2007a), p. 425.

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" (*Abhidhāvṛttamāṭṛkā*) 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 *Kāvyaṭīkārasūtrasaṅgraha* 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 *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* has attracted plenty of attention in secondary scholarship regarding Kalhaṇa'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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EFEO = École française d'Extrême-Orient

GRETEL = Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages

IFP = Institut Français de Pondichéry

KSTS = Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies

MIRI = Muktabodha Indological Research Institute

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