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István Keul (Ed.)

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István Keul

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István Keul
Thimphu, June 2011

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Introduction

ISTVÁN KEUL

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

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

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

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

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

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

South Asia

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

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

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

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

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

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

5 DAVIDSON, this volume, p. 88.

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

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

Shaman Hatley's essay discusses the history of Mother goddesses (*mātṛs*, *mātṛkās*) in South Asia. Starting from popular divinities in various religious traditions of ancient India, he traces their development, through conceptual transformations, into the Seven Mothers in the Gupta period, to their roles in the emergence of the *yoginīs* in tantric Śaivism and of *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs* in early medieval tantric Buddhism. Kuṣāṇa-era (ca. 1-3rd century CE) sculptural evidence from the Mathura region, in addition to such important textual sources such as the *Mahābhārata* link the *mātṛs* with Skanda and Kubera. Some of these early Mother goddesses (Śaṣṭhī, Hārītī) were well known and worshipped in their own right. By the fifth century, a new configuration arises in the form of the brahmanical Seven Mothers (*saptamātṛkā*: Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī, and Cāmuṇḍā). In addition to their popularity in the elite traditions of the Gupta and post-Gupta period, the Seven, later Eight Mothers become closely connected to the medieval cult of the *yoginīs* in Tantric Śaivism. However, the diverse group of flying, often theriomorphic, shape-shifting, and extremely powerful *yoginīs* has in many respects clear continuities with the ancient Mother-goddess conceptions.⁷ In the early *Skandapurāṇa* (c. 6-7th century), descriptions of both a non-tantric and a tantric cult of the Mothers occur. For the latter, the text lists Śaiva *yāmala*s⁸ ("Union Tantras") and identifies them with the *mātṛtantras* ("Tantras of the Mother Goddesses") that contain rites that can be employed by (male) practitioners to acquire supernatural powers (*siddhis*). Mother goddesses appear in the *Mantrapīṭha* and *Vidyāpīṭha* texts of the *Bhairavatantras*, including the scriptures of the Kaula system. While the *yoginīs* are at the cultic focus of many of these Śaiva tantric texts, the *mātṛs* remain significant, for instance, as matriarchs of the *yoginī*-clans. Beyond the Hindu traditions, the Mothers appear as tantric goddesses in medieval Buddhism, as "wrathful Mothers," "Great Sky Mothers," or Mother goddesses associated with various cosmological regions. In later Buddhist texts *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs* come to the forefront, while Mother goddesses become less important. Still, Hatley cites numerous examples to illustrate a large variety of *mātṛ* and related traditions persisting in South Asia to the present day, in the "high,"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mongolia, Tibet, and China

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Japan

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

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

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

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

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

... and Beyond

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PART I
South Asia

Recoding the Natural and Animating the Imaginary

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

ANNETTE WILKE

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

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

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

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

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

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

and the *pañcamakāra* (I.8; I.12; I.24). Even up to the late 19th century the Brahmin commentators stress the *padārthas*, i.e. the real liquor, meat and intercourse, and regard the five Ms as most important (*mukhya*) ritual means. We have to wait for the 20th century to find an ‘evaporation’ of the body, which in other lineages of Śrīvidyā has already been happening since the 12th century.

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

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

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

Imagining Tantra and the challenges of representing Tantra

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 DAVID G. WHITE, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric sex” in its South Asian contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

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

13 BHARATI, *Tantric Traditions*, 228, 251-265, see particularly 255, 260, 263.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20 On this construction see also URBAN, *Tantra*, op. cit. Even for Urban, however, sexuality is one of the major defining criteria (see *ibid.* 1 and 40).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Śrīvidyā of the PKS and its “Kaula cosmopolis”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

36 The widespread dissemination of common Tantric ideas and practices and even of individual lineages seems to have a much older history – at least on the conceptual level. Remarkably, the *Brahmayāmala* (probably composed between the 7th and the early 9th centuries) already claims a pan-South Asian genealogy. Cf. HATLEY, *Brahmayāmalatantra*, 228, 231-236, who considers this claim not totally implausible. He suspects a rural social milieu in Orissa to be the most probable place of origin. The conceptual framework was apparently a topographic *maṇḍala* that encompassed central India and the Deccan, the North-Indian heartland, and Orissa and Bengal. Possibly such a topographic *maṇḍalic* scheme is also the secret superstructure of the four goddesses of the PKS (whose major cults go back to different regions).

37 Regarding the artistic combination see ANNETTE WILKE, “Basic Categories of a Syntactical Approach to Rituals: Arguments for a ‘Unitary Ritual View’ and the Paraśurāma-Kalpasūtra as ‘Test-Case,’” in *Grammars and Morphologies of Ritual Practices in Asia*, ed. AXEL MICHAELS and ANAND MISHRA (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 215-261.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the *Kulārṇava* (11.57-58). Calling the Veda a prostitute is an interesting twist. Here “prostitute” apparently means something exterior and publicly available. The Veda is seen as the exterior, outermost layer of the more esoteric Tantric tradition that is regarded as more powerful soteriology than the Veda-determined values.⁵⁰ There is great stress on strict secrecy that belongs to the ethical code of Tantric behaviour, just as on a positive attitude towards the *pañcamakāra* and the requirement to eventually give up caste affiliations. All of this correlates with the *Kulārṇava*, but the PKS shows much greater interest in deliberately associating and merging with the Veda. Correspondingly, there is greater secrecy and discretion regarding the *pañcamakāra*. They are never mentioned by name, but instead by relational terms (the first, the middle one, etc.). There is much stronger ritual control and Kaula practice becomes almost invisible. Although the PKS borrows extensively from the famous 13th-century source by quoting it at least 27 times more or less verbatim, the following daring verses of the *Kulārṇava* are conspicuously missing:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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