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Buddhism and the Issue of Co-functionality with Śaivism in the Early Medieval Period

Part I: An Outline of Buddhism (*bauddha-dharma*, *bauddha-śāsana*)

The first phase of Buddhism is generally called by scholars Theravāda ('the way of the elders') after its only surviving school,¹ but it is also referred to as Nikāya,² Śrāvaka ('the hearers,' referring to the early disciples), or 'Hīnayāna' ('the lesser vehicle', as it was polemically called by the second major phase of Buddhism, which of course called itself the Mahāyāna ['great vehicle']). It can also be simply referred to as 'Mainstream Buddhism'.³ This multiplicity of names is due to the fact that the earliest phase had no distinct name for itself, there being no other kind of Buddhism for it to distinguish itself from. It (and the singular pronoun is misleading, for at one time there were 18 schools of thought distinguished in Mainstream Buddhism) generally referred to its own doctrine simply as the *śāsana* or teaching.

Though the doctrine of the Nikāya is the foundation of all later forms of Buddhism, it being well established, I will not discuss it here.⁴ Some Mahāyāna thinkers would later articulate the notion of three 'turnings of the wheel of the dharma' (*dharma-cakra-pravartana*) which imaged the shifts in Buddhist doctrine as the progressive refinement of the teachings,

¹ Theravāda is seen by some scholars as one of four subdivisions of the Vibhajyavādins ('Distinctionists'), each flourishing in a different area (the other three being the Mahīśāsakas in the Deccan, the Dharma-guptakas in Central Asia, the Kāśyapīyas in North India). The Vibhajyavādins were a continuation of the earliest school, the Sthaviravādins of the First Council: they were so named because they distinguished themselves from the heretical Pudgalavādins or 'Personalists' who asserted a kind of *ātmavāda* doctrine.

² E.g., by John Strong. Lit., 'congregation' and 'assemblage', but here referring to the collection of central canonical texts, *Dighanikāyādi*. It is of course not entirely satisfactory to use a textual term to refer to a whole religion.

³ As does Paul Williams in *Buddhist Thought*; a designation much reinforced by chapter one of Schopen's *Fragments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism*.

⁴ See Appendix A for a more or less complete summary of my understanding of the tenets of Nikāya Buddhism.

for more and more advanced disciples, by the Buddha himself, here pictured as a spiritual *cakravartin*, or wheel-turning emperor. (Snellgrove 80) The first turning, then, was that of the schools collectively designated as the Hīnayāna, while the second turning was the Mahāyāna, beginning just before the turn of the common era with the *sūtras* (= *buddha-vacana*) called *Prajñāpāramitā* or 'Perfection of Wisdom'. (Williams 131-33) These theological texts taught the six perfections of giving, morality, patience, effort, meditative concentration, and wisdom. The wisdom in question is the capacity to see things as they really are – that is, empty of inherent essence or permanent existence. Now, such teachings were not new to Buddhism, but the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts were considered a second turning of the wheel of the dharma because they radicalized this teaching, claiming that *all* things—even the *dharmas* which earlier schools had taken as the irreducible primary existents of our experience—are entirely empty, not only of Selfhood but also of any *svabhāva* whatsoever, even that of 'existent'. One would think that the sole unconditioned state, that of *nirvāṇa*, would be excepted, but no:

„Even Nirvāṇa, I say, is like a magical illusion, is like a dream. How much more so anything else! ...Even if perchance there could be anything more distinguished, of that too I would say that it is like an illusion, like a dream. (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, trans. Conze [99])

These *sūtras* laid the foundation for the first major school of Mahāyāna philosophy, that of the Madhyamaka, founded by Nāgārjuna in c. the 1st century CE. Nāgārjuna elaborated on the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* in the sophisticated terms of the philosophical dialectic of the highly educated Indian. He explain that all things *qua* things are empty in the sense that they are merely mental constructs, inseparable from the causes and conditions that bring them about; that is, they are dependently originated (Williams 141), and we only speak of a 'thing' as a convenience of language, a construct or *vikalpa* that when falsely reified leads inevitably to grasping, and thence to suffering. Nāgārjuna radicalized the language of the early Mahāyāna further by analytically deconstructing every possible category of thought and discourse the opponent (*pūrvapakṣin*) wished to establish. He thus prefigured the major 20th-century

movements of Continental philosophy by two millennia, specifically certain aspects of Levi-Strauss's Structuralism, Derrida's Deconstructionism, and the emphasis of process over substance in Karl Popper's critical rationalism. Of course, Nāgārjuna did not put forth a proposition of his own, as his whole point was that the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth (Williams 148)—at least, none that can be articulated in language (Conze 1960). He skirts here dangerously close to nihilism, a charge which he vehemently rejected (as nihilism is just another mental construct, equally empty) and indeed claimed that his thought charted the middle path between eternalism and annihilationism (Williams 140), just as the Buddha had taught.

We must of course understand Nāgārjuna's thought in context, for it may have been a response to the endless philosophical quibbling and hair-splitting of earlier Buddhism, the sort of quibbling that led to its fragmentation into 18 schools of thought, though the vast majority of them were *doing* the same thing(s) and following the same Vinaya. Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka seemed to make such argumentation pointless, and seems to be calculated to impel the hearer towards letting it go and simply sitting for meditation (Williams 151), as the only sane response to this philosophy.

However, like Derrida's, Nāgārjuna's deconstructionist thought closes too many doors. For this reason, another school developed, which pictured itself (e.g., in the *Sandhinirmocana-sūtra*) as the third turning of the wheel of the dharma. This was known as the Vijñānavāda ('Consciousness School') or Yogācāra ('[School based on insights derived from] the practice of Yoga,' i.e. meditation). This school argued that everything that can be named is a mental construct, empty of own-existence (*niḥsvabhāva*) except for one thing, that fluxing but unified field of experience out of which which all *vikalpas* were constructed, as it were. Nothing makes sense, ontologically and epistemologically, without a substratum to our experience; for the fact that we have a moment-to-moment flow of experience is the one indisputable proposition.

(Williams 157) Thus the 'constructed aspect' (*parikalpita-svabhāva*) of our ordinary everyday experience, characterized by a polarisation of all cognitions into subject and object, is itself an ignorant and falsely dichotomous perception of the true state of things, referred to as *paratantra-svabhāva* or 'the nature upon which all else depends'.⁵ This is the substratum of existence, the continuum of experience. We may also translate it as 'the interdependent aspect', for it is a dependently originated flow of interdependently co-arising things (for more on *pratityasamutpāda*, see the Appendix). And it is nothing but consciousness (*cittamātra*, another name for the school), free of all duality. The realization of this truth is the third or 'perfected aspect' (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*), which is defined as emptiness. Yet here the emptiness spoken of is the fact that the *paratantra-svabhāva*, the continuum of experience and only truly real thing, is empty of subject-object duality. (Ibid.) The division into *grāhya* and *grāhaka*, upon which all our grasping and suffering is predicated, is artificial and false, for the cognized and cognizer must be aspects of each other, due to the fact that their arising is invariably concomitant and interdependent. Insight into this truth, gained through the practice of meditation (*yogācāra*), is itself the third of the three aspects (*trisvabhāva*) that characterize Vijñānavāda theory. Thus the third is epistemological while the first two are ontological.⁶ It is not surprising that the Yogācāra was more successful than the Madhyamaka in India, (Gray 2007a: 3, Williams 2000: 149) for its doctrine was more compatible with other established schools of Indian philosophy; though we should be careful not to take either the *paratantra-svabhāva* or its corresponding manifestation on the level of the individual, the *ālaya-vijñāna* ('substratum consciousness') as an immutable Absolute. On the contrary: though nondual, it is in constant flux. Still, the philosophy gave something that was a constant to avoid the

⁵ Taking the compound as a *bahuvrīhi*, I disagree here with Williams' translation of *paratantrasvabhāva* as 'dependent aspect' as it seems to obscure the issue.

⁶ Though, as Prof. Richard Gombrich has argued, the culmination of Indian philosophical thought of any school can usually be characterized as a collapse of the epistemological and the ontological (personal communication: Michelmas term, 2003).

apparent nihilism or relativism of the *śūnyatāvāda*;⁷ and the fact that that something was consciousness itself brought the Yogācāra into the arena of debate in India, for others, such as the Vedāntins, also identified consciousness as the ultimate principle. The Yogācāra school saw itself as the last word in Buddhist philosophy, in that it described earlier schools and their scriptures (though buddha-vacana) as all *neyārtha*, requiring interpretation, whereas Yogācāra was *nītārtha*, precisely defined and of sure meaning, capable of laying arguments to rest. (Snellgrove 95) These two became key terms in Buddhist discourse in the later Tantric sphere as well.

The development of the Mahāyāna and its second and third turning of the dharma-wheel was for the most part an intellectual/doctrinal process that took place within the established institutions of Buddhism, and did not create a new sect in the way Europeans think of that term, for it did not significantly alter Buddhist practice (for several centuries, at least), and it is upon practice that Indian religious institutions are primarily based. One reason that Mahāyāna did not significantly impact practice ‘on the ground’ was that it was a marginal movement both intellectually and geographically within India (as opposed to the opposite situation in China). This has recently been shown, *contra* previous perspectives, in the tight and well-supported arguments in chapter one of Gregory Schopen’s recent book, *Fragments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (2005: 5-14). There Schopen demonstrates that the Mahāyāna was a marginal minority movement until the 5th or 6th centuries, for at this period we begin to see donative inscriptions and artistic representations associated with the Mahāyāna, and

⁷ We might compare the situation with that of Einsteinian physics, whereby the relativity of all frames of reference is rendered coherent as a theory by the postulation of a single constant, the speed of light, with respect to which all else is relative or, in a sense, *niḥsvabhāva*.

these are our only real measure of what was 'really happening' on the religious scene in India.⁸ By the 11th century, the Mahāyāna was well-known in India (Schopen 2005: 5).

To my mind it seems unlikely to be a coincidence that a) this is precisely the period of the explosive growth of Tantric Buddhism in India, and b) Tantric Buddhism saw itself as doctrinally tied to the Mahāyāna, indeed as the practical aspect of Mahāyāna teachings, as we will see below. Thus I would suggest the hypothesis, for which much more evidence is of course needed, that it was Tantric Buddhism that was responsible for the Mahāyāna's success in India. I will turn now to an exploration of that subject.

Part II: Tantric Buddhism (*mantranaya, mantrayāna, vajrayāna*)

While earlier phases of Buddhism have recent much scholarly attention, that of Tantric Buddhism has not, for misunderstandings about it and negative valuations of it by European and Indian scholars once proliferated. (Tribe 2000: 193) These latter were the result of the (often unconscious) projection of normative views based on the tacit assumption of the ethical and intellectual priority of European religious values. The (so far partial) relinquishment of such views has been one of the more fruitful outcomes of the deconstruction of culture and value systems by 20th century philosophy, leading directly to the opening up and reappraisal of the desirability of doing Tantric studies. But the amount of work to be done is daunting. Prominent Indologist and philologist Harunaga Isaacson estimates that there are approximately 2,000 Tantric Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, the vast majority of which have not

⁸ For, as Sanderson has pointed out, our textual sources for the study of Indian religious history are overwhelmingly prescriptive as opposed to descriptive. (See his *Initiating the Monarch*, forthcoming, p. 1) Only in the last decades have scholars of religion realized in a concrete way that "map is not territory" (in the words of the famous dictum of Jonathan Z. Smith) and begun to adjust their claims accordingly. It was a failure to realize this, and avoid taking prescriptive texts as descriptive, that caused earlier scholars like Stcherbatsky (1927) to refer to the development of the Mahāyāna as the "radical revolution" that "transformed the Buddhist Church." (cited in Schopen 2005: 7) Of course, it must be noted that the Mahāyāna was very successful from an early date in China, which Schopen duly discusses.

been published, let alone translated. (Isaacson 1998: 26) He suggests that therefore “a comprehensive history of Indian tantric Buddhism is something that may not be possible within our lifetimes” (1998: 27).

However, it is certainly possible to sketch the broad parameters of the development of Tantric Buddhism in India, at least in terms of its textual corpus. Before doing so, we must approach the issue of what we mean by ‘Tantric Buddhism,’ for despite extensive scholarly usage of the term, it is still far from clear what ‘tantric’ means in any context. The most facile definition, and indeed the one that refers to the origin of the term, is to call ‘tantric’ the doctrines and practices taught in texts calling themselves *tantras* (the adjectival form being *tāntrika*, though this is rarely used in the literature itself). But this will not do, for many texts that contain material we treat as tantric call themselves *-sūtras*, *-āgamas*, *-saṃhitās*, and so on. Though the Sanskrit word *tantra* can simply mean text (as in the *Pañcatantra*), it can also mean ‘system’ and this seems to be the sense in which the Tantric texts use it, for the majority of *tantras* (or *āgamas*) in the Śaiva or Bauddha context teach a complete cultus, though sometimes they expected that the reader would supplement their instructions from associated *paddhatis* or *kalpas* (ritual manuals). This sense of ‘system (of practice)’ is also what we see in perhaps the only ostensive indigenous definition of the term *tantra*, that of the Śaiva Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, who writes: “A Tantra is a body of teachings establishing obligatory ordinances (*vidhi*) and prohibitions (*niṣedha*) for the worship of God, preceded by the exposition of extraordinary consecration ceremonies, for (the benefit) of those eligible for the higher and lower aims of human existence [i.e. *mokṣa* and *siddhi*]; it is factually his [God’s] decree (*ājñā*).”⁹ Now, this precise definition is equally functional for Buddhist Tantra(s), if we simply replace “God” with

⁹ *Sārdhatrīṣati-kālottara-vṛtti*, p. 5. Translated by Dr. Somadeva Vasudeva in an unpublished handout, “The Kaula Teachings of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra”, dated September 1, 2005.

“the Buddhas“ or “Bodhisattvas“ (which itself seems to be a revealing fact).¹⁰ Due to the problems of translation, we must also add that in these contexts, ‘worship‘ involves at least the actual evocation or summoning of the deity, and at most ritually or meditatively becoming that deity. Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha’s definition, then, highlights several features that scholars agree are key to the tantric mode of Indian religions: 1) concern with ritual modes of manipulation (of the environment or one’s own awareness), 2) requirement for esoteric initiation (to receive access to the scriptural teachings and practices), 3) twofold goal of practice: the soteriological and supramundane one of liberation (variously conceived) and/or the mundane one of extraordinary power over other beings and one’s environment, and 4) the claim that these three are explicated in scriptures that are the word of God (*āgama*) or the Buddha (*buddhavacana*).

This would seem to be sufficient definition, except for two issues that arise in the context of Western academia. The first is that this definition could perhaps be made to fit esoteric modes of religious practice in completely different cultures (though this is debateable). The second is that the definition given is almost wholly concerned with practice rather than doctrine, and Western prejudices cause us to want to ask “but what did they *believe*?“ And it does seem to be the case that there are some commonly held concepts, if not actual doctrines, across the Tantric traditions, to which we will come. For now, it will suffice to list some of the features of Tantric Buddhism that scholars of the latter have enumerated in their attempt to come up with a useful scholarly definition of their subject. In so doing, they have invoked the notion of ‘polythetic definition‘ popularized by Jonathan Z. Smith on the basis of the work of biologists Sokol and Sneath.¹¹ Anthony Tribe, writing the chapter on Tantric Buddhism in the

¹⁰ Note that in both Śaiva and Bauddha contexts, we find a spectrum with some (usually earlier) texts devoted almost entirely to *siddhi* and others devoted almost entirely to *mokṣa/nirvāṇa*.

¹¹ See Smith, *Imagining Religion*, pp. 4-5, citing Robert Sokol and Peter Sneath’s *Principles of Numerical Taxonomy*. Rodney Needham seems to be another source for the concept. Note that Indologists (e.g. Brooks, Tribe, Lopez)

finest introduction volume by Paul Williams called *Buddhist Thought*, enumerates the following characteristics (discussed 2000: 197-202):

- centrality of ritual, esp. evocation and worship of deities
- centrality of mantras
- visualization and self-identification with deity
- necessity of initiation / esotericism / secrecy
- importance of the teacher (*guru*, *ācārya*)
- ritual use of maṇḍalas (“a ubiquitous feature“)
- transgressive/antinomian acts
- revaluation of the body
- revaluation of the status and role of women
- analogical thinking [incl. microcosmic/macrocosmic correlation]
- revaluation of 'negative' mental states

All of these apply equally to Tantric Śaivism,¹² which supports an argument that will be given later about the validity of the construction of a general category called Tantra. But let us compare this to the definitional list given by another fine scholar, Stephen Hodge, in the introduction to his voluminous translation of the *Mahāvairocanaḥisambodhi Tantra*, highlighting what Tantric Buddhism added over and above non-tantric Buddhism (2003: 4-5, summarized and reordered here):

- alternative path / new revelation
- lay/householder practitioners
- addition of mundane aims, achieved through largely magical means
- special types of meditation that aim to transform the individual into an embodiment of the divine after a short span of time
- new technologies: **maṇḍalas**, **mudrās**, **mantras**, **dhāraṇīs**
- creative contemplation/**visualization of deities**
- proliferation of in the number and types of deities
- **centrality of guru and initiation**

seem to conflate the concept of polythetic definition with Wittgenstein's 'family resemblance' theory, which Smith does not do.

¹² With the partial exceptions that maṇḍalas are not quite as ubiquitous in Śaivism, and that transgressive acts characterize only certain sects.

- linguistic mysticism
- rituals from non-Buddhist sources
- spiritual physiology (i.e. subtle body)
- **importance of the feminine** and utilization of “sexual yoga“

We begin to realize how complex this religious milieu is when we see how few things are held in common between the two lists (these are in bold above). And again, all of these (with the exception of *dhāraṇīs*) apply to Tantric Śaivism as well. To these two lists, Donald Lopez’s polythetic definition adds only a handful of less crucial features: the symbolism of the *vajra*, the cultivation of bliss, spontaneity (*sahaja*, a technical term) and the claimed rapidity of the path.¹³ Two earlier definitions of Tantra should be briefly mentioned here: Snellgrove (1959: 138) lists the process, goal, and means as “the evoking of deities and the gaining of various kinds of *siddhi* by means of various kinds of *mantra*, *dhyāna*, *mudrā*, and *maṇḍala*.” The soteriological goal is not explicit here. By contrast, John Newman defines Tantra solely in such terms, calling it “a path of soteriological apotheosis.” (1987: 5) Both definitions are clearly incomplete and therefore inadequate.

Now, with the matter of definition in hand (or rather, with its intractable complexity adumbrated) we can proceed to a brief historical overview of Buddhist Tantra. The relevant indigenous categorization of texts, in chronological order of their appearance, is as follows (with the number of texts in the catalogued Tibetan canon parenthetically enumerated, as the Indian canon has not been catalogued yet):

1. Kriyā (Action) Tantras (450; e.g. the *Ananta-mukha-dhāraṇī-sūtra*, *Amitābha-dhyāna-sūtra*)¹⁴
2. Caryā (Observance) Tantras (8; e.g. *Mahāvairocana Tantra*)
3. Yoga Tantras (15; e.g. the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha-sūtra*)

¹³ Again, these all apply to Tantric Śaivism, with the obvious exception of the first, which is a virtual trademark for Tantric Buddhism.

¹⁴ The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is sometimes cited as a prototypical text of this class, though it is much later than most of the texts labelled Kriyātantras.

4. Yogottara aka Mahāyoga Tantras (37; e.g. *Guhyasamāja Tantra*)
5. Yoginī aka Yoganiruttara aka Yogānuttara Tantras¹⁵ (82; e.g. *Hevajra Tantra*, *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*, *Laghusaṃvara Tantra*)

Note that a four-fold list is sometimes given (Snellgrove 119), as the Yogottara Tantras are often subsumed under the category of the Yoga Tantras.

We will address briefly the vexed question of dates. Some Buddhist scholars have implied or stated that Tantra begins with Mahāyāna Buddhism; but we cannot conclude that this is the case. Such a perception derives from the fact that the so-called 'Action Tantras' (#1 above) were composed from at least the beginning of the 3rd century CE.¹⁶ However, the contents of these texts do not allow us to constitute a category 'Tantra' around them, for they do not possess a significant number of the criteria cited in our polythetic definitions above.¹⁷ Stephen Hodge concurs, saying "[in the] early tantric phase only a few of these elements may occur together in any given text," (2003: 5) though he uses the term 'tantric' anyway. Indeed, the early 'Action Tantras' are simply mantra-manuals (*mantrakalpa*) for achieving worldly ends, whether concerning what we would call natural or supernatural things (they, of course, make no such distinction). They contain no doctrine at all (Granoff 20; Isaacson 28), no requirement for initiation, and nothing that would impel us to call them Tantric; nor do they call themselves *tantras* (Tribe 205). They are, I would argue, simply the appearance in the Mahāyāna sphere of the type of techniques called *paritta* in Nikāya Buddhism (Tribe 206; cf. Davidson 2002: 117). They are, Hodge says, "for the benefit of unsophisticated ordinary people beyond the confines of the great monasteries" (2003: 7). Davidson argues most strongly that

¹⁵ Isaacson notes that the popular term *anuttarayoga-tantra* often used for this class is not found in the Sanskrit sources (1998: 28n); the source of this term, used mostly by scholars of Tibetan Buddhism, is unknown to me.

¹⁶ Hodge (2003: 6) cites dated Chinese translations of these texts starting ca. 230 CE. He does not call his list Kriyātantras but rather "Sūtras with 'Tantric' Elements' which seems more appropriate.

¹⁷ Smith (loc.cit.), following the usage in the taxonomical endeavors of the biological sciences, argues that a thing need have a "large number" of the requisite criteria. I would prefer a majority of them for inclusion in the class.

we cannot take esoteric elements in early texts of the Kriyā Tantras as constituting a unified system (= *tantra*, see above p. 8). For “[t]hey were not considered constituents of a self-contained path and did not contribute a sense of identity within the community... The ritual secrecy, the transmission of separate precepts, the intimate connection between master and disciple—these had not come together in a self-aware manner.” (2002: 117) This would come, he says, only in the second half of the seventh century.

The true advent of early Tantric Buddhism is in the late sixth century (Gray 1997: 1). The Caryā Tantras (#2 above) begin at this period, with the other classes of text following rapidly after, the Yoginī Tantras (#5) appearing starting in the early eighth century (Gray 2007: 2).¹⁸ We saw that Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha specifically defines Tantra in terms of a two-fold goal, the soteriological goal of highest liberation on the one hand, and the worldly one of power and pleasures on the other; and it is in this period that we have Tantric Buddhist texts espousing both.¹⁹ Isaacson also takes the soteriological element, and the self-conscious articulation of a path to it, as crucial for the category of ‘Tantric Buddhism’ (1998: 27);²⁰ and so does Newman, as we saw above.

We also have negative evidence for this dating; I will give but two examples. Śāntideva, a somewhat conservative Mahāyānist who flourished 700-750 CE, only prescribes practices that we may call tantric in five short passages (Hodge 2003: 9). The Chinese monk Xuan-zang (aka Hsüan-tsang) travelled around India until 645 CE, and wrote a detailed account which does not

¹⁸ Note that here I am dating the beginning of each class of text, not implying that they succeeded one another; in fact, we have Kriyā Tantras from the 12th century as well.

¹⁹ Hodge (2003: 5) speaks of a “gradual progression from external ‘mundane’ rituals and objectives to the internal and the ‘spiritual’, from the unsystematic to the systematic.”

²⁰ He sees the earliest evidence for this element in the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha*, which was translated into Chinese in 723 CE; he calls it (loc.cit.) “if not the first certainly one of the earliest and most influential texts in which a tantric way to liberation is taught.”

mention tantric practices (Hodge 2003: 9).²¹ Just thirty years later, two different Chinese pilgrims do refer to tantric practices: Yi-jing (aka I-ching) calls them “new teachings”,²² while Wu-hsing (aka Wu-xing) refers to the new and exceptional popularity of the esoteric path in India around the same time (Davidson 2002: 118).²³

Extensive evidence for full-fledged Tantric Buddhist texts, fitting our criteria above, exists for the period of the seventh century on and need not be presented here. It is in the mid-to-late seventh century that Tantric Buddhists are self-conscious enough to name their path, choosing the term “Vajrayāna” (Tribe 196). This indicated a nascent awareness of it as a separate vehicle from the Mahāyāna; the emergence of the former term is coeval with appearance of soteriological tantric rites. Up to this point these esoteric practices were referred to as the *mantranaya* or ‘way of mantras’ as complementary to (and compatible with) the *pāramitānaya* or ‘way of perfections’ that constituted the teachings of the Mahāyāna (Snellgrove 1987: 122). Even after the designation Vajrayāna began to be used (and note that the variation Mantrayāna followed soon after), Tantric Buddhism was intimately tied to the Mahāyāna, and articulated relatively few original doctrines. As Isaacson comments,

It is important to realize that many [Tantric] texts say little or nothing about doctrine; and when they do, many offer little more than some allusions or simple explanations of well-known ideas and teachings of the Mahāyāna. Tantric Buddhism thus in the main sees itself as having its own identity distinct from non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism primarily in the sphere of means (*upāyā*)... (1998: 28)

²¹ As Xuan-zang was a “keen observer” Hodge concludes “It is likely that any specifically tantric texts and practices that were already in existence at that time had not yet gained general acceptance in the main centers of Buddhism he visited, such as Nālandā.” (Op.cit.) Davidson notes that Xuan-zang dismissed “ignorant users of spells [*dhāraṇīs*]” (2002: 118).

²² Hodge 2003: 9-10. Yi-jing adds that there is a “no way of comprehending them without an oral transmission,” presumably because the commentaries had not yet been written. He also implies that a permanent maṇḍala [Chinese: tán] had been installed at Nālandā where he stayed (673 CE). [NB: this is also how Gray reads the passage at 2007: 54 fn 212.] If so, the only conclusion possible is that these teachings reached Nālandā between 645 and 673, indicating perhaps a very rapid spread.

²³ Hodge translates Wu-xing: “recently the Mantra Method has come to be venerated throughout the land.” (2003: 11)

That is to say, the Vajrayāna distinguished itself as a different vehicle only in terms of the techniques used to reach Buddhahood.²⁴ These comments should not of course be taken to indicate a lack of creativity on the part of Vajrayānists, for they were enormously innovative in the area of technique. Moreover, the Vajrayāna already had appropriate doctrines to fit its agenda for practice, in the form of the Yogācāra school of the Mahāyāna discussed above. Its idealist standpoint, that all things are ultimately consciousness and therefore awareness is fundamental to practice, perfectly fit with many Vajrayāna techniques, such as those involving an interiorized ritual performance whereby one identifies with a bodhisattva deity (or one's Buddha-nature) and reimagines—and therefore recreates—the world in the image of the deity's maṇḍala, which is nothing but a sacred mapping of reality as ordered hierarchies of divinity. In the context of Yogācāra principles, vivid visualization led to identification, and identification when strongly established re-shaped reality. In other words, thoroughly believing oneself to be a Buddha brought about Buddhahood, if done in the right (scripturally prescribed) way. It was for this reason that the Vajrayāna could claim that it was a faster path to the goal. On the whole, its relationship to the Mahāyāna might be characterized as parallel to the complementary relationship between Sāṅkhya and Yoga that is envisioned by the author of the Gītā, where they can be translated as 'theory' and 'practice' respectively.²⁵

Part III. Mantramārga and Mantrayāna: A Comparison

²⁴ Though there was and is debate on whether the goals of the different yānas are in fact the same. Gellner argues that the three yānas have three different soteriological ideals: arhat, bodhisattva, and siddha. But different terms do not necessarily indicate different concepts. Snellgrove asserts that the Vajrayāna is "as distinguishable from the Mahāyāna as this is distinguishable from the so-called Hīnayāna" (1987: 129) while Tribe indicates that the Vajrayāna was always connected to, if not actually dependent on, the Mahāyāna (2000: 220-22).

²⁵ Which is not to say that there is not such a thing as a non-tantric Mahāyāna practice; e.g., that prescribed by Śāntideva.

We may now proceed to the main thesis of this paper, that Tantric Buddhism and Tantric Śaivism are conterminous, coeval, and co-functional. In fact, I believe the evidence supports the notion that they are co-functional and conterminous to the same degree as Tantric Śaivism is with Brāhmanism, thereby belying the notion that the latter two are “branches of Hinduism“, at least for the early medieval period. For various agenda-driven reasons, the interchange of Śaivism and Brāhmanism is well documented; what is less frequently acknowledged is the extent to which Tantric Śaivism and Tantric Buddhism borrowed freely from one other, creating marked parallelisms primarily in practice, and sometimes in thought as well. They even have synonymous names: for the emic name for Tantric Śaivism is the *Mantramārga*, a parallel with Tantric Buddhism’s *Mantrayāna* as well as the earlier *Mantranaya*. But much more convincing evidence will be presented below.

First I will briefly examine common doctrinal presuppositions and intellectual exchange and interdependence in philosophical discourse. Then I will demonstrate how both Śaivism and Buddhism formulated a religious hierarchy of truth that included the other on lower levels. Thirdly, I will touch on the issue of ritual co-functionality, and fourth, on outright appropriation from each other on many levels. Finally, I look at the movement towards total assimilation in the late medieval period. All this evidence will further serve to show that modern scholars have not gone entirely astray in their attempts to formulate an interreligious category called ‘Tantra‘.

We noted above that with very minor exceptions, all of the criteria that Buddhist scholars identified with Buddhist Tantra above apply equally to Śaiva Tantra. This is perhaps because Tantra is fundamentally a way of thinking and a modality of practice that is not necessarily tied to a specific doctrine (though it might make more sense in certain doctrinal environments), making it malleable, protean, and exportable. It is a *form*, not so much a

content, and is therefore adaptable and adoptable. Without denying any of the elements in the useful polythetic lists given above, my non-sectarian definition of Tantra is as follows: *an Indian interreligious movement driven by a ritual practice presupposing initiation, oral instruction from a guru, and micro-meso-macrocosmic²⁶ correlations, and utilizing mantras, creative meditations, and sometimes sensual or antinomian means to access and experientially assimilate the divine energy of the (various conceived) Godhead, in order to achieve power, pleasures, and liberation.* This definition, while dense, seems to encompass as much that is essential of what we would like to call Tantra as possible.²⁷

Parallel Canons

Śaiva and Bauddha Tantra are also nearly coeval and parallel in the structure of their canons. As we saw above, Tantric Buddhism as defined began in the sixth century. This is also the date for the earliest scripture of Tantric Śaivism, the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā*, the bulk of which was composed by 550 CE (GOODALL and ISAACSON 2007; SANDERSON 2006: 152-55). There is a key difference, however: the *Niśvāsa* represents the irruption into the textual record of a tradition that must have been developing orally for some time, for the text is a vast (4,500 v.) and complex work, treating not only ritual but theology, cosmogony, and cosmology. Therefore we must conclude that Śaiva Tantra predates Bauddha Tantra, for the contemporaneous Bauddha Tantric texts show none of this complexity, sophistication, and nuance, even if we were to date the *Niśvāsa* nearly a century later. But sufficient evidence of

²⁶ Utilizing David White's useful term 'mesocosm' (White 2000: 9), referring to any of the several ritual items or maps that mediate between the forces of the universe and the practitioner's (subtle) body; most usually the mesocosm is a maṇḍala or yantra, but may also be an icon, image or (more rarely) a rosary, sword, or mirror. (Tórszók 2003: 191)

²⁷ Some features that some scholars would like to include in such a definition, such as nonduality (or infusion of divinity into the mundane world) and emphasis on the feminine in worship or practice, are disallowed from an all-encompassing definition because they do not characterize a significant pan-Indian school of Tantric Śaivism, that of the early Śaiva Siddhānta.

this to convince the scholarly community must wait for the publication of an edition of the *Niśvāsa*.

The development of the two Tantric canons is parallel, with the exception that the Śaiva texts of the Mantramārga (= Tantric/Āgamic) are very much concerned with doctrine (*jñāna*) for they are (for the most part) unconnected from any earlier textual strata,²⁸ whereas, as we have seen, the Bauddha scriptures of the Mantrayāna are relatively unconcerned with doctrine, for nearly all necessary doctrine had already been enunciated by the Mahāyāna.

The first phase of the Mantramārga, that of the Śaiva Siddhānta, is dualist, non-transgressive and does not include worship of the feminine in any substantial way (though it did initiate women); it may be compared to the Caryā and Yoga Tantras in the Bauddha canon, though its textual output is at least two or three times more substantial (Dyczkowski 1988).²⁹ The second main phase, sometimes called the Mantrapīṭha or the Svachanda-Bhairava sect, introduces mild transgressive imagery and worships the deity and his consort more or less equally; this parallels the Yogottara Tantras, which introduce erotic elements.³⁰ Finally, the third phase of Āgamic (scriptural) Śaivism, sometimes called the Vidyāpīṭha (where *vidyā* is a feminine equivalent of mantra), is the most highly transgressive, including both mortuary and erotic elements, the most focused on worship of the feminine, and the most emphatically non-dual in its doctrine. Thus it is parallel to the Yoginī Tantras, which have all the same features; unsurprisingly, as it is this phase of Vajrayāna texts that is most directly indebted to the Śaiva

²⁸ The *Niśvāsa* is connected to the earlier Śaiva textual stratum of the Ātimārga (i.e. non-tantric Śaivism of the Pāśupatas, Lākulas, etc.), and of course Śaiva texts owe something to earlier Indian literature in general, but not often in terms of specific traceable textual dependence.

²⁹ It is of course possible that a large number of Buddhist Tantras were lost, if they were centralized in monastic libraries destroyed by the Muslims; but this is not strongly likely, due to the decentralized and grass-roots nature of much of Tantra.

³⁰ But note that the Mantrapīṭha, unlike the Yogottara Tantras, does not require sexual congress within the initiation ceremony or at any other time. I will argue that this is because the Bauddha Tantras, each phase of which followed closely on the heels of their Śaiva counterparts, tried to 'up the ante' and out-do their rivals in transgression and thus ritual power.

sources.³¹ All these texts on both sides are usually written in a register of Sanskrit that deviates from Pāṇinean norms and reflects vernacular influence. This does not indicate that they were written by non-elites, but probably that most of them were composed in marginal regions, outside the brāhmanical heartland of Āryāvarta in the Gangetic Plain. This style was in time established as a scriptural register of Sanskrit, and bizarrely, we have evidence of later scriptural authors attempting to imitate the 'poor' Sanskrit of these texts. At any rate, their language contrasts greatly with that of the sophisticated exegetes of the scriptures. On both Śaiva and Bauddha sides, the exegetes flourished from the 10th to the 13th centuries, and both sides produced some towering intellectual polymaths in this period (e.g., Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta; Abhayākaragupta and Ratnākaraśānti). Of course, this was also the period in which Tantric Buddhism was effectively transitioning out of India and into Tibet, or else, I suspect, these parallelisms would have continued, perhaps even to the point of syncretism, at least in practice.³²

Theoretical Commonalities Suggesting Interdependence

The two tantric traditions also contain significant parallels in the theory that undergirds their practice. In a recent article, Francesco SFERRA outlines some of these, citing numerous primary sources. Both traditions emphasize, as we have seen, the prerequisite of initiation and the importance of the guru who grants it (SFERRA 2003: 63 and fn12).³³ In both traditions, initiates are enjoined to view the guru as an aspect of the deity and never to speak ill of him (TRIBE 198-99). Secondly, Sferra notes that for both these two traditions, liberation

³¹ These parallelisms outlined at Sanderson 1988: 678-9. Note that the three-phase periodization of Śaivism I have given here is much simplified; for example, śākta and transgressive elements were present from the beginning, in certain groups only, and in various unsystematized ways.

³² See the syncretism of practice on the Hindu side in Bühnemann CHECK.

³³ Where he cites a verse on the guru found in several Bauddha texts, *gurur buddho gurur dharmo guruḥ saṅghas tathaiva ca*, which in my view seems to be formed on the basis of the famous verse, originally Śaiva, now Hindu: *gurur brahmā gurur viṣṇur gurur devo maheśvaraḥ*.

means in some sense *becoming* the deity (ibid.),³⁴ whether through merging with it, realizing one always was identical with it, or becoming a deity separate but equal to the one evoked. Thirdly, he correctly argues that both traditions, despite their hyper-ritualism, possess what Sanderson has called a 'subitist' dimension of spontaneous gnosis, the notion that immersion into our true nature (*svabhāva*) is possible at any moment; whether that nature is conceived of as *śūnyatā* or *śivatva*. Sferra states, "Although the concepts relating to the true nature of the self are very different, the underlying belief is the same." (2003: 67) This might seem a surprising and even unscholarly claim, yet scriptural passages can be cited to support it. A number of Śaiva texts describe Śiva, the highest aspect of reality, as a stainless void, a clear transcendent space of pure awareness.³⁵ And Sferra here simply means that both traditions assert that our inner being or true nature "lies behind adventitious maculations" (ibid.) and that experiencing it, through whatever means, is the goal. He wonders if there is any *real* difference between the concept of *śūnyatā* and that of *sarvaṃ sarvātmakam* (which the Śaivas assert). He notes that a verse expressing this sentiment, of unknown provenance (though Abhinavagupta attributes it to the *arhats*), is found in a number of Bauddha, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava works (2003: 69, fn 25, 26): *eko bhāvas tattvato yena dṛṣṭaḥ sarve bhāvās tattvatas tena dṛṣṭaḥ | eko bhāvaḥ sarvabhāvasvabhāvaḥ sarve bhāvā ekabhāvasvabhāvāḥ ||* "One who sees one entity as it really is sees all entities as they really are. One entity has the (same) innate nature as all entities, and all entities have the same innate nature as any single entity." Sferra's point

³⁴ He cites the *Prajñopāya-viniścaya-siddhi* 5.33: *sa eva bhagavān vajrī tasmād ātmaiva devatā* as parallel to the *Mahārtha-mañjarī-parimala*, which has *svātmaiva devatā proktā lalitā viśvavigrahā*.

³⁵ I find two early Saiddhāntika Śaiva sources without any effort: the *Svāyambhuva-sūtra-saṅgraha* Yogapāda, 20.43 teaches: *vyomarūpaśivadhyānī vyomamanāḥ sudhīḥ | sarvasaṅgavinirmuktaḥ parāṃ nirvṛtiṃ ṛcchati ||* "The wise one who meditates on Śiva as the void, his mind absorbed in the void, attains the highest release, completely free of all attachment." (Quoting from Christopher TOMPKINS's unpublished edition of that chapter.) The *Vijñāna-bhairava* also associates the highest tattva with *śūnya* in verse 127. Perhaps there is Buddhist influence at work here, but if so, it only reinforces my argument, as I show below. Finally, another important early source, the *Kāljāna* recension of the *Kālotara*, has (v. 97c): *cinmātrapuruṣo jñeyaḥ śivo* "Śiva must be understood as a being consisting only of consciousness." (Quoting from the critical edition of Dominic GOODALL.)

then, as I take it, is that this principle underlies the different religious theories about what exactly that innate nature is, and that the different names given to it obscure the parallel thinking at work. He notes further that both traditions require a relinquishment of the notions of 'I' and 'mine', the *vikalpas* that veil the truth (2003: 68). Finally, Sferra notes that both traditions entail in their soteriological *sādhana*s a process of de-identification with one's conceptual representations of the past and the future and immersing oneself in the consciousness of the present moment (2003: 74-75, texts cited); and both allow for the possibility of final liberation through gnosis alone (2003: 77 fn41, texts cited).

Exegetes of both traditions cite the other sympathetically, despite the *de rigueur* attacks on one another (which Sferra argues are generally clichés, stock criticisms, and simplifications, pp. 70 and 77); after citing a number of examples, Sferra writes,

"More generally, it is evident that Buddhist doctrines constituted an important standard of comparison for many exponents of Hindu Tantrism, at least in exegetical literature; one only has to think how heavily authors such as Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta depended on Buddhist logicians just to develop their technical terminology." (2003: 73, fn34)

Which leads us to briefly consider the interdependence of the philosophical discourse of these traditions, which is a feature mainly of the exegetical phase (see above). Davidson presents the notion that in the seventh century Buddhist philosophy underwent a "turn to epistemology", that is, it began to engage in debate using the pan-Indian, intersectorian terms of epistemological discourse rather than the terms and arguments endemic only to the Buddhist tradition. (2002: 102-5) This shift, he suggests, both strengthened and weakened the Buddhist tradition in various ways, for it brought Buddhist thought into a wider sphere of debate, equipping it with tools but comprising its religious capacity for self-validation. The main proponents of this development were Dignāga (early sixth century) and Dharmakīrti (first half of the seventh century), the latter of which was more influential, possessing a highly refined

analytical mind and writing in an extraordinarily dense and concise *kārikā* style of high-register Sanskrit. It was Dharmakīrti whom the Śaivas took on as their principal non-Śaiva interlocutor,³⁶ as well as Dharmottara, one of his successors. For example, Dharmakīrti is quoted no less than 44 different times in a single chapter of a work by Śaiva exegete Rāmakaṇṭha.³⁷ Raffaele TORELLA writes that the masters of Buddhist logic “are opponents, of course, but they are evoked so constantly and always with such profound respect, particularly Dharmakīrti, that the nature of their relationship is not immediately evident.” (1992: 327) Here he is referring mainly to nondual Śaivas (such as Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta) who engaged most frequently with the *Pramāṇavārttika*, *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, and *Nyāyabindu*, and were clearly aware of some of the commentaries on those works as well. Torella discusses this engagement and the resulting dialectic in two important articles (1992 and 2001). A central work of Śaiva nondualist philosophy, the *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-kārikās* (early 10th c.) is also deeply engaged with Buddhist thought, and Torella’s annotated translation of it (1994) briefly takes this up at various points in his notes.

The intellectual connection between Śaivas and Buddhists can be even more easily seen in the work of a dualist exegete of the Śaiva Siddhānta school, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha, for a young scholar of the Oxford school has recently published a thorough examination of the latter’s views in a book entitled *The Self’s Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha’s Arguments against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self* (Watson 2006). This work is a study primarily of a philosophical *śāstra* of Rāmakaṇṭha called the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā-prakāśa*. In it, Watson clearly shows Rāmakaṇṭha’s a “sympathy with and understanding of” the Buddhist position (2006: 214), for the latter positions his Buddhist interlocutor *above* other so-called ‘Hindus’ like the Sāṅkhyas, Naiyāyikas etc. in terms of their relative understanding of the true nature of being (216). In

³⁶ Torella suggest that Dharmakīrti was more appropriate for this role than Dignāga because the former accepted the legacy of Bhartṛhari, another formative influence on Śaiva discourse. (1992: 338, fn 7)

³⁷ In the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā-prakāśa* ch. 1; see Watson 2006: 87, fn 129.

fact, Rāmakaṇṭha's strategy in the first two chapters of this text is to have his Buddhist *pūrvapakṣin* refute the arguments of all the other schools, so that when he himself refutes the Buddhist, he will be seen to have claimed the intellectual victory. This strategy clearly entails a vision of the Buddhist interlocutor as a 'proximate other' rather than a 'remote other'.

Watson says, "He stands with Buddhism against the Brāhmaṇical realist traditions in denying a Self beyond cognition [itself]." (215) Indeed, in Rāmakaṇṭha's *Kiraṇavṛtti* he uses almost identically worded arguments to those of his Buddhist in *Nareśvaraparīkṣā-prakāśa*, but here attributing them to his own school! (215-6) It would appear that the only difference he has with the Buddhist is that while he agrees there is no perceiving self apart from consciousness, the Buddhist believes that consciousness to be different with each cognitive perception, while Rāmakaṇṭha believes the same consciousness witnesses different perceptions.³⁸ But this agreement on many points would not be sufficient for Rāmakaṇṭha to make the Buddhist his ally in their argumentation if he perceived the latter as 'wholly other'.

Ritual Eclecticism and Cofunctionality

It has long been noted that ritual is an identity marker in Indian religious culture, and that sectarian boundaries are more likely to be drawn along ritual lines than doctrinal ones (Granoff 2000: 399). However, in an important article of seven years ago, Phyllis Granoff broached the subject of what she calls *ritual eclecticism*, that is, the permission or even injunction on the part of one Indian religion to perform the rituals, use the mantras, or worship the deities of another. She presents much interesting evidence there, but strangely does not clearly draw from it a conclusion which I would regard as fundamental and significant, that all ritual eclecticism takes place on the level of mundane pursuits (*siddhi* and *bhoga*), none involving soteriological rituals. I will summarize some of the evidence she

³⁸ Watson writes, "It is not so much a dispute over the existence or non-existence of an entity, but rather over the nature of an entity they both agree to exist." (217) This is not to say that the point of difference is not significant.

presents, together with corroborating sources. My argument here is not that the religious boundaries were blurred in the early medieval period, but rather that all the different traditions saw themselves as co-functional with each other on the *laukika* level (excepting perhaps the Vaidika), Buddhism no less than the rest.

It is not surprising that the least successful (in terms of numbers of adherents, amount of patronage, etc.) of the early medieval Indian religions was also the most permissive: Jainism as represented by the *Yogabindu* of Haribhadrasūri enjoins its hearers to worship all the gods equally (!), saying

“And so the teacher of religion, who knows that his disciple, like a dumb beast [*paśu*], is not capable of discriminating with respect to rituals such as the worship of the gods, and who therefore directs him to perform all rituals, to worship all the gods without distinction in order to accomplish some specific goal, is not to be faulted in any way.” *Yogabindu* 15-16 (Granoff 2000: 403)

The implication of ‘some specific goal’ here is a non-soteriological goal. It seems as Haribhadrasūri, knowing that Jainism did not offer enough in the way of worldly ritual technology to compete in the ‘marketplace’, encourages Jains to use whatever means necessary to accomplish their worldly ends. I would propose that this was seen as preferable to losing adherents by denying them such permission. But let us turn back to Buddhism, for it too engaged in such eclecticism, though in a more restricted manner. Granoff explores sections of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, a (relatively) late Kriyā Tantra class text of which she says, “There is nothing inherently Buddhist about the rituals of the [text] or about its goals” (2000: 418), corroborating the argument about the Kriyā Tantras generally above, though she may here be slightly overstating the case. We do see on p. 15 of the text the injunction that “a bodhisattva is told both not to abandon his own mantra nor to let go of the mantras belonging to others” and on the following page the instruction to “not belittle either *laukika* or *lokottara* mantras” (2000: 404) where of course the former refers to non-Buddhist mantras. All mantras,

the text declares, of any sect or religion (citing those of Vaidika, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava deities) can be utilized, as long as they are brought into a Buddhist context, either by prefixing the seed-syllable or *ekākṣara* given by the text or by reciting them before its maṇḍala. (2000: 405) Indeed, the implication seems to be that it is the text's maṇḍala, conceived as Buddhist, that renders them efficacious. In other words, by integrating them into a Buddhist vision of the world, they become valid.

The Caryā Tantra called *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra* (its commentator Buddhaguhya calls it a tantra) exhibits a similar attitude, for it instructs the listener to draw the *laukika* divinities in the outer layer of its maṇḍala (such as Agni, Yama, the Mothers, Indra, Varuṇa, Āditya, Sarasvatī, Viṣṇu, Skanda and so on), implying their ritual worship as well. (Ch. 2, sections 49-55) Such 'inclusivism' (cf. Paul Hacker) is attested in a number of other Buddhist sources as well.³⁹ The commentator describes these deities as "Adornments of the Bhagavat's Inexhaustible Body" and argues that as such (i.e. in a Buddhist context) they are more powerful. (Hodge 2003: 117) Additionally, in its first chapter, the *Mahāvairocana* presents a hierarchy of nine different types of mind, all subordinate to the *bodhicitta*. The first seven of these generate merit through moral observances, leading to the appearance of 'spiritual friend' who instructs them in the worship of the *laukika* divinities, such as the Vaidika (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śaṅkāra [sic], etc.) and popular divinities (Nāgas and sages), saying "These gods are great gods: they bestow happiness upon all. If you respectfully make offerings to them, you will become fortunate in all things." (Hodge 2003: 62-3) The text clearly sanctions such worship for people of lower aptitudes, saying "This is the most excellent refuge of the foolish common folk who wander lost in *saṃsāra*" (ibid.). The sense seems to be that any religiosity is better

³⁹ See also Abhayākara Gupta's *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, which includes Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, and the Dikpālas in the periphery of its deity circuit (Bühnemann 1999: 303), and the *Dharmadhātu-vāgīśvara-maṇḍala*, a Yogatantra which includes in the fourth circuit of its maṇḍala the Vaidika dik-pālas, the Mothers, the planets, and sectarian deities such as Viṣṇu and Śiva Maheśvara (Vira & Chandra 1995: 70-75).

than none, and can be considered a step towards the right path. Higher than this eighth mind are those of the Sāṅkhya/Yoga school (the ones who pursue *kaivalya*), but higher than them of course is the mind that seeks to generate *bodhicitta* (though that specific term is not used: see 2003: 72-3).

Śaivism exhibits this eclectic quality far less often, which is not surprising, as it is the dominant religion of the early medieval period, and did not have to be as accommodating.⁴⁰ We see some eclecticism, however, in the influential Śaiva text called the *Netratāntra* (9th c.), which teaches the worship of Amṛteśvara-bhairava, aka Mṛtyuñjaya. The text declares that Amṛteśvara can be worshipped not only in the form of any of the other Śaiva deities (which cross-sectarianism is unusual enough), but also in the form of Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Brahmā, Gaṇeśa, and the Buddha or indeed “all other deities“, by incorporating their names within Amṛteśvara’s mantra. (Sanderson 2004: 245) This astonishing assertion is explained by Sanderson as due to the fact that the purpose of this text was to give Śaiva officiants the ritual tools necessary to take on the position of the *rājapurohita* or king’s royal chaplain, traditionally the province of Atharvavedin brāhmins. The audacious attempt to replace orthodox Vaidika officiants in this crucial role is itself evidence of Śaivism’s success, and Sanderson presents further evidence that they were successful to some extent, at least in the far north (2004) and that Atharvavedins responded by appropriating Śaiva techniques (2007)! As for the inclusion of the Buddha in the forms in which Amṛteśvara could be worshipped, Sanderson explains this by saying that the Buddha is one of the deities of the local religious calendar of required observances in Kāshmir, as documented in the *Nīlamatapurāṇa* (2004: 254) and that the officiant of the *Netra* had to be able to worship all such deities on the king’s behalf. The worship of the

⁴⁰ See Sanderson 2004: 231; Sanderson, 14th Gonda Lecture, 24 November 2006 (text available at alexissanderson.com), and “The Śaiva Age: an Explanation of the Rise and Dominance of Śaivism During the Early Medieval Period,” lecture at the International Workshop on Tantrism, Tokyo, October 2005 (outline available at alexissanderson.com).

Buddha though was also done for the women of the court, as the *Netra* states that the Buddha's special role is "bestowing the reward of liberation upon women" (ibid.), perhaps because Kashmirian queens in this period were patrons of Buddhism. At any rate, none of this contextual information invalidates my claim for a degree of co-functionality between Buddhism and Śaivism. Just as Buddhism had its *laukika* dimension, within which it admitted co-functionality with other deities, Śaiva texts too spoke of a *laukika* realm, which for it was generally the Vaidika one. The fact that it extended co-functionality to this realm was not evidence of co-religiosity; just like Buddhism, Śaivism did not admit of any soteriological value to any Vaidika rite (see Field Statement 2).

Finally, we have the negative evidence for ritual eclecticism, in the forms of texts that forbid it. Clearly, such prohibition indicates that the prohibited was being done by some group(s). Weighing in against hybrid practice (*śabala karma*) we have early texts like the *Sarvajñānottara*, *Tantrāloka* (e.g. 4.249-51), *Somaśambhupaddhati*, and *Matāṅga* (CP 2.2-7), practical Sthāpaka-tantras like the *Mohacūrottara*, and later texts like the *Parameśvarasaṃhitā*, which warns against *vyāmiśrayājīn*, those who mix together different rituals (Granoff 2000: 420). These are in direct opposition to works like the 12th c. *Dānasāgara*, which not only mixes ritual materials from Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Saurya *purāṇas* (ibid.) but condemns those *purāṇas* that have clearly been redacted from sectarian Tantric Śaiva scriptures (e.g. the *Liṅga-purāṇa*); on this side we also have a number of medieval donative inscriptions that seem to indicate blurred religious boundaries (Orr 2000).

As a final piece of evidence for co-functionality through ritual eclecticism, we have the works of Gudrun Bühnemann, who has done enormously detailed work on ritual texts of the late medieval period. While it is impossible to go into those details here, Bühnemann's works of 1999, 2000a, 2000b, and 2001 contain much detail about the appropriation of Buddhist

deities and even *sādhanas* into Hindu ritual manuals.⁴¹ Table 2, attached, gives some of the evidence of appropriation that she cites in clear tabular form. Three very brief and particularly fascinating examples will be given here in the text. The *Īśānaśivagurudeva-paddhati* (ĪŚP), a late Śaiva manual, imports into its Mantrapāda (MP) the earth goddess Vasudhārā from Buddhist sources and assimilates her to Lakṣmī, and further imports her retinue and mantras: the practitioner is instructed to “bow to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas in the beginning of the worship ritual” (Bühnemann 1999: 306)! Furthermore, it also imports Jambhala; what is particularly strange about this is that Jambhala is a Buddhist deity created specifically as a parallel to the popular Kubera deity (they are described with similar appearance and deformities and both called ‘lord of the yakṣas’), but the ĪŚP MP already includes Kubera himself.⁴² (1999: 309) This clearly shows that the text was aiming to be as complete as possible. Evidence that it was influential is seen in the fact that extensive passages from it are adopted by the later *Tantrasāra-saṅgraha*. Finally, Bühnemann notes the bizarre irony by which the ĪŚP MP gives mantras for the destruction of the enemies of the Vedic dharma (including Buddhists), which include the mantra of Yamāntaka (1999: 314)!

We may sum up this section with a key statement from a Buddhist authority that perfectly captures the sentiment behind this ritual eclecticism or co-functionality. Puṇḍarīka asserts in his *Vimalaprabhā* (quoting the [Bauddha] *Yoginīsañcāra* for support) that all *darśanas* have equal value (“from the point of view of the relative truth of the world”) for realizing mundane perfections. He cites commonly held theories on the nature of action and calls them “equal” (*tulya*) and states: “there is no difference [on this level] between the Buddhists and the

⁴¹ Since these texts generally date from the 15th century and later, the term ‘Hindu’ is appropriate.

⁴² This may be seen as an example of what Agehānanda Bharati called the ‘Pizza Effect’: the exportation of a cultural element, its alteration by the borrower, followed by its re-importation in the altered form by the original lender. More research would be needed to identify what has been altered in this case other than the name.

tīrthikas.⁴³ The only difference concerns the reality of emptiness.⁴⁴ (Sferra 2003: 73-74)

Isaacson has noted that this verse is found in other Bauddha sources, and a similar sentiment in Śaiva sources as well (Sferra 2003: 74 fn36). Here we have the means to begin to resolve the debate about a 'common religious substratum' first put forward in the West by Ruegg in 1964, followed by Beyer and others, criticized by Sanderson starting in 1994, and recently discussed by Sferra (2003) and Gray (2007b). Sanderson rightly rejected the substratum model (SM) insofar as the substratum posited was an undocumented and undocumentable popular folk tradition that somehow intruded its iconography and practices into the rites of the elite. However, the evidence we have seen compels us to accept an SM, comprising precisely the *observable* religious and cultural elements shared by all Indian religions. No-one would deny that ubiquitous demigods like the nāgas and yakṣas and various supernatural spirits are 'common cultic stock' to all these traditions, nor that certain practices, like that of the *homa*, become intertraditional and universal. So the actually existent SM, I would argue, is the one 'hidden' in plain sight, the very commonality that allowed the borrowing Sanderson has argued for to take place; as Ruegg said in his 2001 rejoinder, the "background of shared categories and concepts" against which borrowing made sense. The debate, then, should focus on what belongs to this substratum.⁴⁵ To conclude, a useful insight into this knotty problem is furnished by Lopez (1996: 88) citing Heesterman on the fact that in the Vedic context, there are two opposed terms: *pradhāna*, denoting the 'primary' part of the sacrifice, different for each deity, and *tantra*, denoting the auxiliary acts that were interchangeable among different sacrifices. Without positing any direct historical relationship between these terms, it could be that Tantra as a ritual phenomenon diffused across religious boundaries initially precisely

⁴³ This word Sferra (and others) translates as 'heretics'. But its literal meaning is something like 'pilgrims' and refers simply to non-Buddhists, though certainly with a derogatory connotation.

⁴⁴ *īha lokasaṃvṛtyā vicāryamāṇaḥ sarvadarśanasiddhāntaḥ samāno laukikasiddhaye*, Yoginīsañcāra 11.2ab

⁴⁵ Note that the substratum cannot be called 'Hinduism' as it includes (the 'lower' levels of) Buddhism as well.

because it (at first) applied to the doctrinally-neutral *laukika* realm (as in the Kriyā Tantras), where religious interchange happened freely, as opposed to the transcendent, specific, and soteric ‘*pradhāna*’ realm, different for each religion. The precedent established, it became tempting to then surreptitiously borrow within the *pradhāna* realm, as we will see.

Appropriation and Borrowing

Ritual eclecticism, as defined by Granoff, specifically refers to the borrowing of others’ mantras and rites, while implicitly or explicitly acknowledging them as other. This, then, is different from ritual appropriation, which attempted to conceal the act of borrowing. This was considered necessary whenever done in the realm of what we called the *pradhāna* dimension, also known as the *lokottara* or *pāramārthika*. For in this soteriological realm, any acknowledgment of borrowing would clearly weaken the status of the religion’s claim to scriptures revealed by omniscient deities unique to that religion. Yet extensive borrowing did take place. Recent detailed research by Sanderson points towards the conclusion, still to be confirmed by more data, that Śaivism was the dominant religion in the early medieval period, thus accounting for the borrowing by other religions in the attempt to compete for patronage. Sanderson writes,

There can be no doubt that for several centuries after the sixth [Śaivism] was the principal faith of the elites in large parts of the Indian subcontinent and in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia. Only Mahāyāna Buddhism was able to rival it during this period; and when it achieved success in this rivalry, either equalling or excelling Śaivism as the beneficiary of patronage, it was in a form led by the Way of Mantras, a system of ritual, meditation and observance in which Buddhism had redesigned itself, if not in essence, then at least in style and range of functions, on the model of its rival. (“Purohitas,” 2004: 231)

Yet this borrowing was not all one way. I will try to show, briefly, first that Śaivism borrowed from Buddhism in the constitution of its exoteric dimension, and secondly that (as Sanderson describes) Buddhism borrowed from Śaivism in the constitution of its esoteric dimension. For (to proceed with the first claim) the two religions were also structurally parallel in terms of

their institutions. Though not yet well recognized, textual and epigraphal evidence suggests that the elite of the orthodox current of Śaivism (Śaiva Siddhānta) also administered sizable complexes of temples, monasteries, and associated institutions supported by government land grants in many parts of India (Sanderson 2005). Both religions possessed a large community of uninitiated householders or 'lay' adherents, participating in the religion on an exoteric level and without access to scriptural texts or oral transmission, and nevertheless contributing substantial economic resources. Now, Śaivas borrowed frequently and obviously from the earlier Buddhist model (as well as the Brāhmanical) in the constitution of this exoteric dimension of their religion, centered around temples, āśramas, and associated institutions (Sanderson 2004: 231). This exoteric domain was overseen by the orthodox Saiddhāntika Śaivas, who referred to the laity as Upāsakas, the same term used for them in the Bauddha and Jaina spheres.⁴⁶ We also see distinctly Buddhist practices prescribed for these Śaiva Upāsakas (also known as Rudrabhaktas), such as taking sympathetic joy in the meritorious practices of other devotees (*puṇyānumodanā*), ritually generated at the three *sandhyās* of the day.⁴⁷ Furthermore, instructs the *Śivadharma* ('The Religion of Śiva'), before the Rudrabhakta does (exoteric) *pūjā* to Śiva he must generate the four sentiments of *maitrī*, *kāruṇya*, *muditā*, and *upekṣā*; in other words, the four divine states or *brahmavihāras* of Buddhism. The *Śivadharma* and *Śivadharmottara* also describe religious institutions such as monasteries (*maṭha*), managed by Pāśupata or Saiddhānta *ācāryas*, clearly modelled on Buddhist ones, that request and receive substantial donations (*śivadāna*) from the public and from the king, and also (unlike in Buddhism) serve the public through dispensaries (*ārogyaśālā*) and charitable food distribution; inscriptions provide evidence to corroborate the texts (Sanderson 2002, 2004, 2005).

⁴⁶ See the *Kiraṇavṛtti* ad 6.11-12 and the *Mataṅgavṛtti* VP p. 98.

⁴⁷ See *Śivadharma* ch. 1, critical edition forthcoming.

This borrowing, however, was not as thorough and pervasive as the borrowing that took place in the eighth to tenth centuries that produced the last phase of Tantric Buddhism, that of the Yoginī Tantras. Sanderson has presented extensive evidence for this, primarily relying on the science of text-critical philology, in a seminal article of 1994, a more detailed one in 2001, and a detailed presentation at his Koyasan lecture in 2006.⁴⁸ Corroboration is given by the detailed analysis of the passages borrowed from the *Brahmayāmala* in Hatley 2007: 176-83. Sanderson's evidence is summarized in simple tabular form in Table 3. In brief, Sanderson has discovered that of one the central Yoginī Tantras, the *Laghusaṃvara* (aka *Cakrasaṃvara*, *Herukābhīdhāna*), the core tantra of the Saṃvara/Śaṃvara cycle, owes approximately half its verses to Śaiva sources (primarily the *Yoginīsañcāra* of the *Jayadrathayāmala*, the *Siddhayogeśvarī*, *Brahmayāmala*, and *Tantrasadbhāva*). He has also discovered evidence of borrowings in a number of other texts.⁴⁹ And this borrowing does not center on matters of little consequence. In fact, the entire consecration (*abhiṣeka*) rite described in *Yogottara*- and *Yoginī-tantras* and redacted from them into a standard form in Abhayākaragupta's *Vajrāvalī* (1100 CE; the rite is described at Sanderson 1994: 88-92) is modelled in almost every element (ritual actions, mantra forms, role of the maṇḍala) on the standard Śaiva *dīkṣā* or initiation rite outlined in (earlier) Śaiva scriptures and described in detail in unpublished *paddhatis* (paraphrased at length in Sanderson 2002 and 2004U). There is a significant exception in that the Buddhist *abhiṣeka* as presented in the texts required ritualized sexual congress and consumption of sexual fluids (one's own and one's guru's); this did not occur in the Śaiva rite, except in some forms of Kaula initiation.⁵⁰ I propose that in

⁴⁸ A handout from the lecture, given at the International Conference on Esoteric Buddhist Studies in September 2006, showing parallel passages indicating redaction from the Śaiva to the Bauddha, is available on his website.

⁴⁹ In research done for his book *Pious Plagiarism*, which unfortunately was never published.

⁵⁰ But note that careful hermeneutical exegesis of the scriptural sources soon (two to four centuries?) resulted in the sexual ritual being performed mentally or not at all. (Tribe 234-5) Certainly these same initiations when performed today (e.g. by the Newars) do not have a sexual component, despite drawing on very old *paddhatis*.

adopting rites from the Śaiva Tantras, the Buddhists, conscious of the need to prove their own versions superior, increased the transgressive element by including it in the initiation rite, thus creating a greater empowerment, for in this ritual world greater transgression, successfully negotiated, yielded greater power.⁵¹

The Śaiva rite was said to guarantee liberation (*nirvāṇa-dīkṣā*) at the moment of death or earlier, while the parallel Bauddha rite was said to guarantee the generation of empowered *bodhicitta* that inevitably leads to liberation. We know the Śaiva rite was at least slightly earlier for Dharmakīrti attacked the idea that it could grant liberation, prior to 650 CE (SANDERSON 2001, 2006), in addition to the evidence of the textual criticism already alluded to.

Another piece of evidence for borrowing is necessary here, and such is provided by Sanderson in his 1994 article that showed clearly that the *Samvarodaya* (of the *Samvara* cycle) borrowed its listing of the 24 sacred *pīṭhas* from the Śaiva *Tantrasadbhāva* (95), a listing which contains no known Buddhist sites but several known Śaiva ones. Scholars such as Davidson (2002: 206-211) have resisted this conclusion, which is odd as the Buddhist tradition itself is aware that this was an attempt to 'take over' Śaiva sites. This is seen in the famous myth of the subjugation of Śiva, well-studied in its *Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha* version by both Snellgrove and Davidson, and translated in full in an even longer version by Gray (2007a: 30-34) from Indrabhūti's commentary on the *Cakrasamvara*. Here we are explicitly (and of course polemically) told that Bhairava and Umā dwell in these 24 sites, along with their hordes of *yakṣas*, *gandharvas*, *rākṣasas*, *nāgas* and so on: "Having taken control of the three realms, they overpowered the world. In these twenty-four places they [behaved like] worldly ones, acting out their lust and hatred. Wherever they were, Lord [Iśvara] Bhairava and Umā engaged in love-play, along with their retinue." The Buddhist forces of Heruka and Vajrayoginī are

⁵¹ It is of course also possible that the Buddhists drew specifically on texts that included sexual rites more prominently and (possibly for that reason) did not enter the Śaiva mainstream and thus become incorporated into the paddhatis.

pictured as conquering them, and then taking on their names and appearances: “the names of those disciplined were attached to the heroes [*vīras*, a tantric term] and yoginīs who disciplined them.” (Gray 2007a: 33-4) A clearer self-awareness of appropriation we could hardly ask for. Yet we have another piece of evidence of this type: that of the Śaiva response. This is demonstrated in a story narrated by Jayadratha in the 13th c. *Haracaritacintāmaṇi*, discussed by both Sanderson (1994) and Granoff (2000). In this story, Bṛhaspati declares his intention to delude the demons by converting them to Buddhism; as they were devout Śaivas, this must be done by creating Buddhist texts and practices that looked like Śaiva ones but claimed even greater power. The key passage is: “...Once I have established these [Buddhist] icons [depicted trampling on Śaiva deities] and seen to it that they are widely recognized, I shall add certain mantras culled from the Śaiva Tantras; and lifting various passages out of these scriptures of Śiva I shall fabricate and propagate a system of [Buddhist] Tantric ritual.” (Sanderson trans., 1994: 93) Thus we have explicit acknowledgments of appropriation from both sides.

Sanderson’s arguments have recently been questioned and disparaged by Ronald Davidson in a chapter of his 2002 book that betrays significant confusion about the difference between tantric and non-tantric Śaiva sects, a lack of necessary chronological perspective, and ignorance of the contents of the Śaiva canon, among other problems. He agrees that there must have been “sustained [Śaiva] influence”⁵² but questions whether Śaiva texts were the primary sources for the Yoginī Tantras, without arguing for any other sources, other than the uncorroboratable idea that the nebulous figures of the Bauddha *siddhas* might have been a

⁵² Though he uses the word *Kāpālika* (2002: 202), not realizing that that term as a sectarian term designates the non-tantric sect also known as the *Somasiddhānta*. The *kāpālika* aesthetic was deeply influential on certain branches of Tantric Śaivism (e.g. the *Kaula* and *Kālikula*), but there was no sect with that name. This error is not surprising, however, for these relationships were only clarified by Sanderson in the last six or seven years. Indeed, Davidson exhibits some confusion in his endnote (386: 105) when he observes that Sanderson does not use the term ‘*Kāpālika*’ in his 2001 article.

source.⁵³ He speculates that the more likely scenerario is one of mutual influence, but provides no evidence whatever for the notion. He criticizes Sanderson’s work for a) “chronological difficulties“, a bizarre statement that suggests a lack of careful reading on Davidson’s part, for Sanderson’s work is notable for an almost obsessive attention to valid means of establishing chronology; and b) a “lack of examination of the sources of Śaiva formulations“ (203) despite the fact that no such (textual) sources have yet been traced, other than a non-specific indebtedness to classical Sāṅkhya and Yoga and certain Upaniṣads. Certainly there is no evidence for the borrowings from Bauddha texts that he imagines “must have“ taken place; the instances he cites from Bühnemann’s work are from a much later period than the one in question. Davidson’s critical footnote (386: fn105) which analyzes what it takes to be an error in Sanderson’s text criticism, is even more absurd, for it indicates either a failure to read the cited source carefully or a lack of awareness of the methods of textual criticism.⁵⁴ In the same footnote, he accuses Sanderson of a “curious theology of scripture“ for his privileging of the Śaiva sources, which is ironic as it is precisely what one can accuse Davidson of, for resisting the conclusions that the evidence suggests. He claims that Sanderson presumes that the category of the Vidyāpīṭha “formed as as whole“ despite hundreds of pages of closely argued publications to the contrary. My assessment of Davidson’s counter-argument, such as it is, is fully corroborated by the analysis in Hatley 2007: 184-87 and partially in Gray 2007b. Note that the latter article and the detailed introduction to Gray’s new annotated translation of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* (2007a) demonstrates clearly that later redactions of the text (such as that of commentator Bhavabhaṭṭa) removed some Śaiva elements and added more and more

⁵³ Wedemeyer (2006: 375), in an exceedingly trenchant review, has criticized the selective use Davidson makes of siddha hagiography as a historical source.

⁵⁴ For example, he badly misuses philological dictum that the harder reading (*difficilior lectio*) is to be preferred. This of course means the more sophisticated and (for that reason) difficult to understanding reading, not the more ungrammatical and messy sort of difficult to understand reading. See West (CHECK).

Bauddha ones, taking the text further from its Śaiva/Śākta origins, quite apparent in the earlier redaction of the text commented on by Jayabhadra. (2007a: 6-7)

Interestingly, Śaiva influence on the Yoginī Tantras was acknowledged as early as 1828 by H.H. Wilson, who wrote upon examining some manuscripts of tantras for the first time that “the Buddha creed has been modified by Tāntrika admixture“; we see that for him this means Śaiva/Śākta traditions when he elaborates that “the Śākta form of Hinduism is...the chief source of the notions and divinities foreign to Buddhism“ (Wedemeyer 2001: 239). This perceptive assessment, corroborated soon after by Burnouf (240), was apparently dismissed in time along with much other work of early ‘Orientalists’ whose one advantage, as Davidson rightly notes (though with infelicitous phrasing, 2002: 13), was a total lack of interest in producing a predetermined conclusion from their work, which is hardly the case with some modern Buddhologists.

We should also note that the very title of this corpus of work, the Yoginī Tantras, reflects their origin in Śaiva and Śākta modes of practice, for the yoginīs were central to the latter, as seen in the early Yāmala Tantras, especially the extant *Brahmayāmala* (aka *Picumata*; Hatley 2007) and the *Jayadrathayāmala* (partially critically edited by Sanderson but unpublished). Indeed, the earliest external reference to Śaiva texts that we have, that of Dharmakīrti, refers to them as Ḍākinī- and Bhaginī-tantras (Sanderson 2006: 149).⁵⁵ There is a truly a surfeit of evidence for the redaction of the Buddhist Yoginī Tantras from those of the Śaivas; but as we have space for only one more piece, let it be a powerful piece of evidence, from within the tradition. David Gray reports that the Chinese biographer Hui Li tells us that when King Harṣa Śīlāditya was travelling in Orissa, he was reproached for his support of Nālandā by “Hīnayāna” monks, who argued that “The Monastery of Nālandā and its ‘sky-

⁵⁵ Sanderson has shown (2001) that the Bhaginī-tantras most probably refers to the Vāma-tantras of Tumburu and his four sisters (*bhaginī*), and Hatley (2007) and Gray (2005) have shown that at this period, the only Buddhist mentions of the *ḍākinīs* is clearly entirely negative, grouping them with *piśācas* and the like.

flower' [i.e. absurd] doctrine is not different from the Kāpālika sect.” (Beal 1911: 159, cited in Gray 2007)

Yet one final point remains to be made. The fact of borrowing and appropriation having been established, what is its significance? What does it tell us? Davidson has presented a convincing picture of the political and economic instability of India in the early medieval period, in which competition for royal patronage was absolutely necessary for the survival of a religious institution (Davidson 2002, chs. 2-4). Part of the strategy, then, was the “sacralization of the sociopolitical environment” (114), for example, through the rite of *abhiṣeka*, which paralleled in certain ways the coronation rite of the king,⁵⁶ and through symbolism of the *maṇḍala*, which is remarkably similar to the image of the king at the center of circles of vassals, exerting his power over his realm. Another strategy, then, was the wholesale appropriation of Śaiva rites and scriptures; this is explained by the enormous success Śaivism exhibited in the winning of patronage and its resultant dominance in this period (fully documented at Sanderson 2005 and in his recent Gonda lecture). This was the vital piece of information that Davidson was missing in his picture of things. It is also demonstrated by the similarly pervasive appropriation of Śaiva texts by the Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrikas.⁵⁷ Of course Davidson is correct in that all these groups were striving to respond to the volatile political environment, and the interreligious borrowing might be viewed in this light as a case of desperate times calling for desperate measures. Yet it is interesting in this regard that modern academic in such cases attribute to religious actors motives that are solely economic or political. Yet our experience with religious agents in our own period show us that many of

⁵⁶ Indeed, the term was first used in that context. So the Tantric *abhiṣeka* modelled esoteric religious rites on the royal one, and then extended those rites to the king himself, as part of a patronage-winning strategy (Sanderson 2005).

⁵⁷ Sanderson (2001, fn 50): “The ritual systems taught in the Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika Saṃhitās resemble each other so closely in morphology and syntax that they have the appearance of two dialects of a single ‘Tantric’ language.” As he has shown, this is probably due mostly to borrowing; see Table 3.

them are, indeed, religious—that is, pious, in their own terms. Therefore the failure of academic to attribute religious motives to the agents they study is an intellectual failure (as also noted by Wedemeyer in his review of Davidson, 2006: 374), an overcompensation perhaps to distance our field from theology. In this light I propose that we must consider the other obvious but unstated reason that this interreligious borrowing took place: it must have been the case that some of the borrowers believed there was ritual, and sometimes even spiritual, *value* to the texts of the other tradition, and believing further that “All that which is well spoken is spoken by the Buddha,”⁵⁸ they saw their appropriation as entirely valid and indeed compassionate. This, then, is the final piece of evidence for co-functionality, and thereby the proof that in the early medieval period, the notion of a “Hinduism“ over and against “Buddhism“ is misleading and false.

ISAYEVA 55fn58: „Śriharṣa, an Advaitin who lived in the 12th century, could well write in his work *Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khādyā* that he has nothing to say against the Mādhyamika philosophers, since, in his opinion, the Buddhist school of Śūnyavāda is very close to Advaita tenets.“

⁵⁸ *Adhyāśayasañcodana-sūtra, yat kiñcin maitreya subhāṣitaṃ sarvaṃ tadbuddhabhāṣitaṃ*, where of course *subhāṣitaṃ* is carefully defined as inspired, meaningful, principled, bringing about extinction of afflictions, and so on. Cited at Lopez 1996: 30.

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