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‘Terms of art’ in Indian Esoteric Buddhism

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Locating Tantric antinomianism

An essay toward an intellectual history of the
'practices/practice observance' (*caryā/caryāvratā*)*

Christian K. Wedemeyer

The antinomian aspects of the later non-dualist Tantras of the Śaiva and Buddhist traditions have been of exceedingly great interest to modern scholars. However, in interpreting their central scriptures, it seems that several major 'terms of art' have been almost entirely overlooked. Without doubt, this oversight may be attributed precisely to the fact that the words in question are terms of art – rather than technical terms – in esoteric usage. Unlike the latter, which are unique to their particular contexts, terms of art are words that bear primary meanings other than their specialized usages.¹ Many, indeed, are common words in the general vocabulary. Thus, for example, although it would be practically impossible for scholars to overlook such marked terms as *koṭava* (the name of a vital air in the subtle body) in their interpretation of Tantrism, words seemingly more general – such as those that we shall examine below –

* This research was first delivered at the panel “‘Terms of Art’ in Indian Esoteric Buddhism” held at the XVth Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Emory University, Atlanta, 27 June 2008. Thanks to the members in attendance for spirited feedback on the paper. Thanks are also due to my excellent research assistants Karin Meyers and Erin Burke.

¹ 'Term of art' is defined as “a word or phrase having a special meaning in a particular field, different from or more precise than its customary meaning” (Clapp 2000: 427). Compare Garner (ed. 2004: 1511): “A word or phrase having a specific, precise meaning in a given specialty, apart from its general meaning in ordinary contexts;” and Wild (ed. 2006: 254–255): “a word specific to a discipline and having a special meaning within that discipline other than what it is understood to mean in common usage.”

can (and evidently do) evade detection. Understandable though this may be, rectification of such oversights is an urgent desideratum for progress in this field, insofar as failure in this regard creates and sustains broad and systemic misinterpretation of Tantric literature.²

In what follows, I will seek to indicate something of the diversity, yet remarkable consistency, of a crucial ‘term of art’ – or, rather, a cluster of interrelated, largely synonymous terms of art – across a range of treatments in a broad corpus of Buddhist Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantras (and some *śāstras*) as well as a range of Śaiva Tantras. The terms to be analyzed herein involve a pair of words of extremely common usage throughout Indian religious parlance: *caryā* (“practice”) and *vrata* (“[religious] observance”). Their exoteric provenance is certainly well-attested. The former is the most common term for the spiritual undertakings of buddhas and bodhisattvas. The *Mahāvastu Avadāna*, for instance, frames its treatment of the career of the Buddha Śākyamuni by referring to four types of practices of bodhisattvas (*bodhisattvacaryā*).³ Four practices leading to enlightenment – the practice of the [six or ten] transcendent virtues (*pāramitācaryā*), the practice of the [thirty-seven] accessories of enlightenment (*bodhipakṣacaryā*), the practice of the superknowledges (*abhijñācaryā*) and the practice of developing beings (*sattvapariṣkācaryā*) – are mentioned in the Practice Chapter (*caryāpaṭala*) of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.⁴ The same four appear in the culminating chapter of Asaṅga’s *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, called the “Stability in Practice Chapter” (*caryāpratiṣṭhādhikāra*).⁵

² That something of the same is true across the Buddhist traditions is suggested by Peter Masefield, who comments “the sad fact is that much of the basic terminology and symbolism of the Nikāyas is still in need of detailed investigation. Indeed the fact that a good many terms were used with a distinctly technical sense [i.e. were terms of art, CKW] has often escaped most scholars” (Masefield 1986/2008: xv).

³ *Mahāvastu Avadāna*, vol. I, p. 1: *catvārīmāni bodhisattvānām bodhisattvacaryāṇi / katamāni catvāri / prakṛticaryā prañidhānacaryā anulomacaryā anivartanacaryā /*

⁴ See *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 256.

⁵ See *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, p. 175. See also Jamspal, *et al.*, trans. 2004: 333–34.

The famous work of Śāntideva on engaging in the practices of enlightenment is called the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, while chapter sixteen of his *Śikṣāsamuccaya* is devoted to the “good conduct” (*bhadra-caryā*) of high resolve, dedication to the welfare of beings, etc. Similarly, *vrata* appears in a variety of places in Indian Buddhist literature, in even less marked a sense. For instance, again in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the renunciant bodhisattva is said to be superior to the householder bodhisattva on account of his maintenance of *vrata-niyama* (i.e., “celibacy and restraint”).⁶

Thus, encountering the term *caryā* in Tantric literature, certainly the most obvious and natural understanding would be that this term and related passages describe ‘Tantric practice’ *per se* or in general, just as one would interpret the same word in works of exoteric Mahāyāna literature. This is, in fact, how the term has been taken in modern scholarship on esoteric Buddhism.⁷ *Caryā* as a term of art seems to have largely slipped under the radar of contemporary interpreters. There seem to be no more than two or three mere references to this specific phenomenon (insofar as it was abstracted and discussed by commentators) in the modern scholarly literature and there has been no systematic treatment of the topic as a whole.⁸

⁶ *punaḥ pravrajito bodhisattvaḥ pareṣāṃ vratāniyame sthitatvād ādeya-vacano bhavati | na tu tathā gṛhī bodhisattvaḥ*; see *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, p. 213.

⁷ Consider, for instance, Shin’ichi Tsuda who, in speaking of the contents of the *Samvarodayatantra* and its twenty-first chapter on the *caryā*, asserts that “we find mentioned ... characteristics of the teacher (*ācārya*) and the disciple (ch. 18) and their religious practices (ch. 21);” Tsuda 1974: 46.

More recently, Ryugen Tanemura has written, “I would like to point out that ‘practice’ (**caryā*) ... means the post-initiatory practice which an initiate of tantric Buddhism is permitted to perform” (2009: 488). As will be clear from the evidence analyzed below, this practice is by no means *the* post-initiatory practice of Tantric Buddhists, but merely one, very rarified, practice; furthermore, insofar as initiation is prerequisite to *all* Tantric practice, the qualifier ‘post-initiatory’ would seem to be simply redundant.

⁸ I believe the first published piece to address this issue in particular was my own “Antinomianism and Gradualism” (2002). Ronald Davidson makes passing references to the related *vidyāvratā* in his *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (2002: 199 and 326–7). After the present research had been presented at the June 2008 Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies

To date, the only substantial discussion of the topic is my own recently-published study of Āryadeva's *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* (CMP), and that presentation too is inadequate insofar as it is entirely limited to the somewhat idiosyncratic presentation given in that particular *śāstra* and in no way represents a thorough, critical analysis of the phenomenon in the Tantric traditions as a whole.

I hope to begin to rectify this situation here; for close reading in fact reveals quite clearly that this term of art recurs throughout antinomian Tantric literature with a referent that is both quite specific and markedly consistent across a variety of sources, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. In this usage, *caryā* and *vrata* appear to be largely synonymous and often occur in compound one with the other, with either of the two taking the dominant syntactical position. That is, one sees both the terms *caryāvrata* and *vratacaryā*, with identical meanings.⁹ In addition to these forms (which are the most common), the two also frequently occur in compound with qualifiers related to ideas of secrecy or madness, i.e.: *guhyavrata* ("esoteric observance"), *guhyacaryā* ("esoteric practice"), *prachanavrata* ("concealed observance"), *unmattavrata* ("mad/insane observance"), etc. There also exists a set of related terms that appear

and as this article was being finished for publication, I became aware of two contributions by Ryugen Tanemura in this area: a 2008 article, "Justification for and Classification of the Post-initiatory Caryā in Later Indian Tantric Buddhism," and (in 2009) "Superiority of Vajrayāna – Part II." These, like my own previous contribution, are rather brief, but also attempt to lay out some of the key features of the rite. I will make occasional reference to them. As I will indicate, however, there are some significant points on which I believe Tanemura has not interpreted the literature successfully.

⁹ In fact, Tathāgatarakṣita's *Yoginīsaṃcāratantranibandha* glosses *vratacaryā* in the root text (XV.2) with *caryāvrata* (YS, p. 133), indicating that he took them to be synonymous. One might further infer from this that the form *caryāvrata* is more common and readily recognizable as the term of art we are interested in here. This is, I believe, supported by the pattern of occurrence of these expressions across the Buddhist literature. The inverse may be true, however, of the Śaiva literature wherein e.g. the *Brahmayāmala/Picumata* uniformly reads *vratacaryā*, though those usages do not appear to be terms of art. Thanks to Shaman Hatley for his assistance in providing scans of the ms of the BY/PM as well as drawing my attention to occurrences of *vratacaryā* therein.

in the same contexts and which seem to be largely synonymous, which may likely (pending further analysis) turn out to be variant species of the same genus. These may be seen in Figure I, together with the works wherein they occur.¹⁰ Of these, one in particular, *vidyāvratā* (“knowledge observance,” “spell observance,” and/or “consort observance”) – which is treated as essentially equivalent to *caryāvratā/vratācaryā* in both Buddhist and Śaiva sources – is worth noting at this point as its signal significance will become more evident as our analysis proceeds. All of these expressions refer to the same cluster of ritual behaviors; and this usage is consistent across a wide spectrum of texts, from which I conclude that this term of art is central to the ideology of the non-dual Tantras wherein they occur.

The injunctions of the rite include certain very specific things that are proscribed, things prescribed, sites wherein they are to be performed, specifications for the optimal time and duration of their performance, and specific accoutrements which are needed for or beneficial to the ritual acts. In what follows, we will examine each of these aspects of the *caryāvratā*. Though a comprehensive treatment is beyond the scope of the present paper (and would likely require a book-length study, given the quantity and diversity of the relevant sources), I nonetheless hope here to demonstrate the essential parameters of the concept in the Tantric traditions. I will demonstrate that *caryāvratā/vratācaryā* is a) a highly specific

¹⁰ Note that Tanemura, based largely on his reading of the (rather later) works of Abhayākaragupta, considers *samaya* to be a “sometimes a synonym” of *caryā* (2008: 53), though he also confesses that “at this moment, I have no idea about how the word *caryā* came to be seen as synonymous with *samaya*” (ibid.: 65, n. 3). It seems as if Alexis Sanderson shares this view (he translates *samaya* as “post-initiatory disciplines” in 2005: 116). However, to call them synonymous is misleading at best. In fact, Abhayākaragupta himself, in one of the works cited by Tanemura, glosses *caryā* as “relying thus on all those things such as *samaya* and so on” (*Āmnāyamañjarī*, f. 296a⁶: *de ltar dam tshig la sogs pa thams cad la brten pa la sogs pa ni spyod pa ste*). It is clear from this and many other instances that in the context of the *caryāvratā*, *samaya* refers primarily to the polluting substances consumed in the rite, not the rite itself. While *samaya* may occasionally be used in a synecdochic sense, it certainly does not in general directly denote the *caryā/vratā*.

term of art in the literature of the Buddhist Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantras, signifying a very precise undertaking, b) that close attention to the semiology of the rite reveals a very clear ritual intent that is evident throughout the Buddhist literature, and c) that the sources explicitly (if somewhat obliquely) stress that this rite is appropriate only in quite specific and elite ritual contexts with very specific prerequisites. I will also show d) that this term of art is also common to the contemporaneous non-dual Śaiva Tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha, and that the patterns of usage across the two traditions suggest an alternative way of understanding the interaction of these communities. Specifically, I argue that close attention to the available literature suggests that the semiology of the early Śaiva observance differs significantly from that of the early Buddhists as outlined in b), and that the nature of the Buddhist and Śaiva variants further suggests that e) this distinctively Buddhist semiology came ultimately to exert a profound influence on the later Śaiva understanding of the rite (and, indeed, their understanding of Tantric practice in general) after the ninth century. This conclusion further suggests that, *contra* the theories of a ‘substratum’ or a total Buddhist dependence on Śaivism, f) the features of religious observance (*vrata*) shared by these two groups are the product of a *Zeitgeist* of antinomian practice wherein (as is in evidence throughout Indian religious history), groups utilized a common vocabulary of terms and rites to which they gave their own distinctive inflections, and in which the borrowing was mutual.

Overview of *caryā/caryāvrata*

What, then, is the *caryāvrata*? In short, in the non-dualist Tantric literature of the Buddhist Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantras, this term and its equivalents come to encapsulate virtually all those features that have come most strongly to be associated with Tantrism in the modern mind: sex, to be sure, but also eerie places (cemeteries, lonely fearsome forests, etc.), eccentric dress, and ecstatic behavior, including the wholesale rejection of the mainstream practices of exoteric Indian religion. This term is very prominent in the later Tantric literature – so much so that frequently an entire chapter is seen to be dedicated to this observance. This is the

case for the *Guhyasamājatantra* (GST), as well as the *Mahākāla* (MKT), *Buddhakapāla* (BK), *Saṃputodbhava* (ST), *Hevajra* (HT), *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa* (CMT), *Laghusaṃvara/Herukābhīdhāna* (LS/HA), *Saṃvarodaya* (SU), *Yoginīsaṃcāra* (YS), and *Vajrāralli* (VĀ) *Tantras*. The ninth chapter of the *Buddhakapāla Tantra*, for example, is devoted to the topic of *caryā*. It describes a rite that a *yogin* undertakes with an “absolutely excellent woman” (*atyantavarāṅganā*, *bud med shin tu mchog gyur*) presumably for the purpose of engaging in sexual *yogas*. Taking a skull-bowl (*kapāla*) in hand, the *yogin* wanders naked, with hair unbound, begging from house to house and eating whatever is put in the bowl, regarding all things with equanimous delight. The *yogin* is here called, as elsewhere, a *vratin* (*brtul zhugs can*): a practitioner who has taken on a specific religious observance (*vrata*).¹¹

In order to get a handle on this phenomenon as it recurs throughout the literature, I have examined a set of important esoteric works which treat of this observance. My initial approach in gathering these materials was to seek out explicit treatments of this subject: primarily through identifying those *Tantras* (and they are numerous) which feature a special chapter devoted to *caryā*. Thus, I have not dealt here with the much more exegetically messy challenge of evaluating in addition those other *Tantras* which do not so isolate this *vrata* as a special topic and which (it is possible, but improbable) may not in fact construct the antinomian *vrata* in the way it is in the sources analyzed herein. While this approach may well have introduced a bias in my data set, my sense from surveying a number of other scriptural and commentarial sources is that this has

¹¹ See Appendix I for a complete translation of this chapter from the Tibetan and a folio preserved in the Cambridge University Library. This important work of Indian Tantric Buddhism and Abhayākara Gupta’s *Abhayapaddhati* commentary is currently being cooperatively edited by scholars from the China Tibetology Research Centre and the Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies at the University of Hamburg, based on mss from Tibet. Information on this project may be found at: <http://www.tantric-studies.uni-hamburg.de/projects/buddhakapalatantra-abhayapaddhati/>, last accessed 14 March 2013. I am grateful to Harunaga Isaacson for providing me with a scan of this important folio. The *Abhayapaddhati* itself has recently been edited by Chog Dorje (2009).

not had significant consequences. The Tantras represented here include many of the most important and influential scriptures in the Buddhist – and, in the last section, Śaiva – Tantric corpora. At the very worst, the choice of this corpus has allowed me to construct a clear, hypothetical model which can be tested against a larger corpus of literature as scientific research into these works progresses.

Considering the data set in aggregate (esp. Figures II to V), it can easily be seen that the treatments as a whole in these Tantras foreground: a) liminal, isolated spaces, and b) funereal and horrific items of dress. They further consistently c) advocate certain behaviors (sex, wandering, commensality, song and dance, and consumption of meats, alcohols and bodily fluids) and d) proscribe others (recitation, meditation, worship, burnt offerings, textuality, image devotion, and attention to astrological auspiciousness). Let us examine the range of these sites, accoutrements, prescriptions and proscriptions structurally.

Consulting the chart on sites (Figure II), one can see that the most common are the mountain top, charnel ground, and either a generic uninhabited space (*vijāna*) or varieties of liminal zones (the “suburban” *prānta*, crossroads, confluences of rivers, beaches, etc.). The *Samvarodayatantra* has quite an extensive list: charnel ground, a place with a lone *liṅga* or tree (*ekaliṅga*, *ekavṛkṣa*), forest, mountaintop, riverbank, ocean shore, garden, broken well, empty house, crossroads, city gate, palace gate, house of *mātāṅgī* or cowherd’s wife, house of female artisan, or “concealed places” (*gopita*).¹² Looked at systematically, this represents a list of isolated sites (mountaintop, empty house, concealed place), ritually polluting places (houses of female artisans, cowherds, and outcaste *mātāṅgīs*), and liminal spaces (crossroads, city gate, palace gate, etc.).

Similarly, the dress prescribed for the practice observance demonstrates markedly regular features across the literature.

¹² SU, Chapter XXI “Teaching of the Practice” (*caryānirdeśapaṭala*), vv. 14cd–16cd: *śmaśāne ekaliṅge vā ekavṛkṣe ’the kānane // parvatāgre nadītīre mahodadhūtaṭe ’pi vā / udyāne bhagnakūpe vā prāsāde sūnyaveśmasu // catuṣpathe puradvāre rājadvāre maṭhe ’pi vā / mātāṅgī-ābhirīsthāne śilpikāgrha gopite //*

Occurring most commonly are a set of bone ornaments, funereal shrouds or other funereal items, skulls (*kapāla*, esp. as begging bowls) and skull staves (*khaṭvāṅga*), animal skins (most commonly the tiger), drums, and the like. The *Hevajratantra*, for instance, specifies the following accoutrements for the practitioner of the practices (*caryā*), here also called the “adamantine skull practice” (*vajrakapālacaryā*): tiger skin (*vyāghracarmā*), circlet (*cakrī*), earrings (*kuṇḍala*), necklace (*kaṅṭhamālā*), bracelets (*rucaka*), hip-belt (*mekhalā*),¹³ garland of bones (*asthimālikā*), a headdress with the skulls of the Five Buddhas (*pañcabuddhakapālāni*), ashes (*bhasman*), a sacred thread of hair (*keśapavitra*), hand-drum (*ḍamaru*), and skull-staff (*khaṭvāṅga*).¹⁴ Other sources suggest that the practitioner be naked (BK and LS/HA), have bound-up (or, alternatively, loose) hair (HT, BK), and/or bear shrouds or other funereal items (ST, SU, GS).

Among prescribed behaviors (see Figure IV), sex is the one most commonly advocated, followed closely by wandering. We have seen above that the *Buddhakapālatantra* foregrounds practice with a female consort as characteristic of the *caryā*. One reads further in the *caryāvrata* chapter of the *Laghusaṃvara/Herukābhīdhāna*: “the practitioner will obtain *siddhi* from [sexual] intercourse.”¹⁵ The *Hevajra* is also quite clear: “taking a girl of the vajra [clan] – with a pretty face, wide eyes, with the glow of youth, with a body dark like a blue lotus, self-initiated, and compassionate – employ her in the performance of the practices (*caryā*).”¹⁶ Also high on the

¹³ These last five are said to symbolize the Five Buddhas (see HT I.vi.11–12).

¹⁴ HT I.vi, 2–17.

¹⁵ LS/HA XXVII.3ab: *sādhakaḥ siddhim āpnoti samparkāt*. Here the word I render “intercourse” is *samparka*: pace my friend David Gray’s rendering of this term in his recent translation of this scripture as “association,” I would suggest a stronger reading is apposite here. Bhavabhaṭṭa’s commentary glosses this as *dūtīdarśanādi*, “observing the messenger-girl [i.e. consort] and the like.” See Gray 2007: 271. For commentary, see Pandey, ed. 2002: II 488.

¹⁶ HT I.vi.8: *cāruvaktrām viśālākṣīm rūpayauvanamaṇḍitam / nilotpalaśyāmāṅgīm ca svābhīṣiktām kṛpāvatiṃ / vajrakanyām imām gṛhya caryām kartuṃ vibudhyate //*. Both the *Yogimanoharā* and the *Muktāvalī* gloss *vibudhyate* as *yujyate*.

list are commensality (i.e., eating with those of other, lower-status social groups), eating indiscriminately, or eating things our discrimination would typically cause us to avoid (sometimes strenuously), and (also quite prominently) singing and dancing.

In addition to those prescribed in the literature, there are also a variety of specifically *proscribed* behaviors. Most prominent of these is – in line with the corresponding prescriptions – discriminating with regard to edible/inedible or potable/impotable, and value judgments in general, as well as recitation (*japa*), meditation, fire rituals (*homa*), etc. As the *Hevajratantra* counsels the *vratin*, “Don’t conceive of desirable and undesirable, or edible/inedible, potable/impotable, appropriate or inappropriate.”¹⁷

Interpreting the ‘practice observance:’ Irony and inversion

Of course, the specification of these types of sites, accoutrements and behaviors will not likely surprise anyone considering what we have come to believe we know of the Tantric traditions. What is most notable here is the use of the terms *caryā* and *vrata* to describe them. Such a usage, it seems quite plain, is provocative – presumably, intentionally so. As we have seen above (pp. 350–351), in Buddhist religious contexts *caryā* typically refers to practices such as the six perfections and other conventional, beneficent practices of bodhisattvas. In non-Buddhist contexts as well it signifies similarly mainstream practices of restraint, generosity/offering, etc. *Vrata*, too – a commonplace in Indic religions – involves conventional disciplinary restraint:¹⁸ giving up some thing

¹⁷ HT I.vi.21: *bhakṣyābhakṣyavicāran tu peyāpeyaṃ tathāiva ca / gamyāgamyān tathā mantrī vikalpan naiva kāraṇet ||*. These latter terms – *gamyā* and *agamyā* – presumably (that is, in my interpretation) refer here to the suitability of a sexual partner, a major focus of the *caryāvrata*. That is, though Farrow and Menon render this “what should and should not be done” (1992: 67), it more likely refers (in a manner of speaking) to “whom should and should not be done.” Snellgrove renders this “nor should he ever wonder whether a thing is suitable or unsuitable” (1959: I. 65). Cf. Chapter 11 of Indrabhūti’s *Jñānasiddhi* (p. 127), which treats of this topic.

¹⁸ Cf. p. 351, above, where *vrata* occurs in compound paired with *niyama* (“restraint”) as qualities of ascetical renunciants.

or things, usually for a delimited time period, and typically with the intent of acquiring something else (sons, rain, etc.).¹⁹ The terms that consistently arise in the context of *vrata* are those of renunciation – derivations of the root \sqrt{tyaj} , etc. It should be noted that, in general, this is true of the usage of the term in esoteric, as well as exoteric literatures. Thus, for instance, the great commentary on the *Kālacakratantra*, the *Vimalaprabhā* describes a five-fold *vrata* of renouncing violence, untruth, adultery, wealth, and intoxicants.²⁰ This is tantamount, of course, to the five-vow *pañcaśīla* of mainstream Buddhism, wherein similar sets of vows (frequently involving chastity, such as the eight fasting-day vows or *poṣadha*) are also described as *vrata*.²¹ In another esoteric context, Ratnākaraśānti, in his *Guṇavatī Commentary* on the *Mahāmāyātantra* defines *vrata* quite straightforwardly as “rules of restraint (*niyama*) such as [keeping] silence, bathing, [and regulation of] foods.”²² However, several of our sources (GST, ST, LS/HA, and GS) specify precisely

¹⁹ Cf., e.g., the Newar Buddhist *ahorātravrata* which entails the worship of a *caitya* for a day and a night, for which various results obtained may be kingship, health, good appearance, human birth, etc. See Handurukande, ed. 2000: 9–22 and 104–7.

²⁰ In commenting on *pāda* a of *Kālacakratantra* III.93 “abandon violence, untruth, adultery, wealth of self and others, and drinking mead likewise” (*hiṃsāsatyam parastrīm tyaja svaparadhanaṃ madyapānaṃ tathaiva*), *Vimalaprabhā* remarks “this refers to the restraint [that is] the five observances” (*iti pañcavratāni niyama ity arthaḥ*). See *Vimalaprabhāṭīkā*, vol. II, p. 88. Note that I am reading *madhu* here rather literally; presumably, this refers to fermented beverages in general. See likewise the Mṛgendra passage in note 73, below.

²¹ *Lalitavistarasūtra*, for example, describes the ascetical chastity practice of Queen Mahāmāyā before the conception of the Buddha thus: “she remains stationed in her observance, like an ascetic, attending to [her] observance [yet also remaining the King’s true, albeit chaste,] soul-mate” (*vratasthā sā tiṣṭhati tāpasīva vratānucārī sahadharmacārīṇī*) *Lalitavistara* iii.14ab, p. 20. Virtually all sources (*Jātaka*, *Mahāvastu*, *Lalitavistara*) describe her in more specifically Buddhist terms as either *poṣadhikā* or *poṣadhagṛhītā*, i.e. as taking the eight fasting-day vows. On *poṣadha* and its similarity to Śaiva Siddhāntin *vrata*, see also below, pp. 377–378.

²² *vrataṃ maunasnānabhakṣyādiniyamah*; *Guṇavatīṭīkā* on *Mahāmāyātantra* II.4 (p. 27).

the violation of the five central Buddhist precepts as an element of the practice of the *caryāvrata*. Elsewhere (HT II.iii.41c) as well, conduct such as ritual bathing is prohibited to the practitioner of the *caryāvrata* (*snānaṃ śaucaṃ na kurvīta*).

The usage we are considering here, then, is clearly and markedly ironic: what we see in the Tantric *caryāvrata* is in essence an anti-*vrata*. What, then, may be said about its proper interpretation? What could have driven the non-dual esoteric schools of Buddhism to advocate such a seemingly precise inversion of mainstream practice (both exoteric and esoteric) – much or most of whose fundamental ritual and ethical framework nonetheless remains intact in the later non-dualist traditions?²³ What is at stake in the prescriptions of a *caryāvrata* that takes the form of such an anti-*vrata*?

All the major features of *caryā*, I would argue, reflect the overarching semiosis of Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantra ritual that I essayed to describe in a previous article on the semiology of scriptures and rituals of the Mahāyoga Tantras.²⁴ That is, like (and, in fact, including) the deliberate engagement with the disgusting (*jug-upsā*) I explored in that essay, the *caryāvrata* signifies through instantiation the attainment of non-dual gnosis (*advaya-jñāna*) by the Tantric practitioner. Just as in the case of the ritual consumption of the polluting and repulsive “five meats” and “five ambrosias” (*pañcamāṃsa*, *pañcāmṛta*), the locations, dress, and behaviors of the *caryāvrata* so deliberately invert the purity strictures of orthodox society (including those accepted within the contexts of the dualistic Tantras), and are so consistent in their discursive articulation, that they manifestly constitute a deliberate semiosis. Much as I claimed about the ritual consumption of those sacramental

²³ This is true of both the Buddhist traditions, for whom the *maṇḍala* rites of the Mantranaya continue to form the ritual core of the later Vajrayāna, and of the Śaiva traditions, for whom the basic structures of Siddhāntin ritual continued to provide the essential ritual context for the higher systems. Alexis Sanderson has written: “Both the Sāiddhāntika and the non-Sāiddhāntika scriptures ... taught a single ritual system, both in the ordering of their ceremonies and in the construction of each.” See Sanderson 2007: 237–8.

²⁴ Wedemeyer 2007b: 383–417.

‘pledges,’ the undertaking of the *caryāvrata* is a way of viscerally instantiating and ritually attesting to the attainment of the aim of Buddhist Tantric *yogins*: a non-dual gnosis that sees through (and acts without regard for) the delusive sense that the constructed categories of conceptual thought are real and objective.

This much is clear throughout the literature, which consistently hammers home the theme of non-duality and non-conceptuality. The *Esoteric Community (Guhyasamāja) Tantra* appears to be one of the earliest Buddhist Tantras to advocate the ‘practice’ in a developed form. It does so in two chapters (nos. five and seven) each of which features this term in its title (the *Samantacaryāgrapaṭala* and the *Mantracaryāpaṭala*). Significantly, in the first passage on the *caryā* in GST V.1, the very first descriptive word is *nirvikalpārthasambhūtam*: “born with the aim of non-conceptuality.” The same passage ends as well on the same note, in perfect essay form: “That one of the non-conceptual mind accomplishes buddhahood.”²⁵

The *Samputodbhavantra*, too, explicitly indicates that this rite (which it also calls the “reality-practice,” or *tattva-caryā* – indicating its epistemic/gnostic intent)²⁶ is intended to cultivate a non-dual

²⁵ GST V.1–7: *nirvikalpārthasambhūtam rāgadveṣamahākulām / ... sidhyate tasya buddhatvaṃ nirvikalpasya dhīmataḥ |*.

²⁶ This term is also found in Anaṅgavajrapāda’s *Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi* V.1, which describes it as *saikalpāriniṣūdinī*, “exterminatrix of the enemy conceptions.” Note the similarity of this verse with the one from the *Samputodbhava* cited below in note 27.

Later in the same chapter, Anaṅgavajrapāda equates the *tattva-yoga* with a rite of polluted sexual ritual (another instance in which the inverse injunctions occur in the context of The Practice): “the practitioner will quickly succeed by means of the reality yoga (*tattvayoga*), loving a consort born in a clan (*kula*) such as the brahmin or one born as an outcast, another’s wanton wife, likewise one deformed or crippled, [one’s] mother, mother-in-law, one’s own daughter, or sister.” *Prajñopāyaviniścayasiddhi* V.22-25 (p. 93): *brāhmaṇādikulotpannāṃ mudrāṃ vai antyajodbhavām / duḥśīlāṃ parabhāryāṃ ca vikṛtāṃ vikalāṃ tathā // janayitrīm svasāraṃ ca svaputrīm bhāgineyikāṃ / kāmāyan tattvayogena laghu sidhyeta sādḥakaḥ ||*.

This passage is cited in David Gray’s article on *mudrā* published in this same volume, p. 423). I am convinced that Anaṅgavajra is referring precisely to the

perception with regard to purity and pollution, and similar conceptual dualities.²⁷ It lays great stress repeatedly on non-conceptuality: concepts lead to hell, non-conceptuality leads to liberation. Indeed, a quick look at the charts of prescribed and proscribed behaviors in the *caryāvrata* (Figures IV and V) reveals beyond any doubt that the operative concern across the literature is the judging, valuing conceptuality that diverges from the non-dual, enlightened gnosis that perceives all things as pure (*śuddha*), as divine by nature or *buddhamaya*, “made of buddhas.”

The inversive nature of this rite – wherein the practitioner signifies their attainment of non-dual gnosis by cultivated contact with the conventionally defiling – is entire. Consider the *Samputodbhavantra*: “whatever things are not eaten in the world, those are to be eaten by the best of reality-practitioners. Whatever is unsuitable, is suitable; that not to be done is to be done by him – the *mantrin* should not conceive of suitable/unsuitable, edible/inedible, desirable/undesirable, [or] potable/impotable.”²⁸ Most notably, perhaps, and quite hyperbolically, this same scripture waxes eloquent on food:

Indeed, all is to be regarded with the *yoga* [of recognizing] appearances [as] unoriginated: having drunk dog, donkey, camel, and elephant²⁹ blood, [one should] always³⁰ feed on [their] flesh. Human flesh smeared with the blood of all species [of animals] is beloved. Entirely vile meat full of millions of worms [is] divine. Meat [rendered] putrid

caryāvrata – note in particular the emphasis on the consort and her polluting nature. If I am right, the interpretative debate between Bhattacharyya and Bagchi that Gray so nicely highlights may require some reconsideration.

²⁷ *vikalpārinisūdanī sarvadharmasamudbhūtā tattvacaryā niruttarā*; ST ms 428, f. 37a⁶: “destroyer of the enemy conceptuality, born from all things – the reality-practice is unexcelled.”

²⁸ *ye 'nye loke 'bhakṣyās te bhakṣyās tattvasādhakedrasya / ye 'gamyās te gamyās / ye 'kāryās tasya te kāryāḥ / gamyāgamyaikalpaṃ bhakṣābhakṣaṃ aniṣṭaṃ iṣṭaṃ ca peyāpeyaṃ mantrī na kuryāt /*; ST ms 428, ff. 38b⁶–39a¹; ms 427, ff. 48b⁶–49a¹.

²⁹ *gaja*; Tib. reads “ox” *glang po*; this could be interpreted as “elephant,” although *glang chen* would be preferable in this sense.

³⁰ *nityam*; or, perhaps “daily.”

by shit, seething with hundreds of maggots, mixed with dog and human vomit, with a coating of piss³¹ – mixed with shit³² [it] should be eaten by the *yogin* with gusto.³³

The interpretative key here is, of course, the “yoga [of recognizing] appearances [as] unoriginated” (*anutpādākārayoga*) that the entire rite is predicated upon. This is Buddhist jargon for the view of voidness (*śūnyatā*) – the void nature of all things is frequently indicated by their non-arising or non-creation.³⁴

³¹ *vajrāmbumarjikāyuktam*; Commenting on the irony of this passage, Gary Tubb (email communication, 1 March 2009) notes “*marjikā* is an interesting word. It refers to the dessert now called *shrikhand* (at least in Maharashtra). As you no doubt know, this is a wonderful confection that is in the direction of cake frosting, both in texture and taste. So ‘a coating’ is not a bad translation; a word like ‘glaze’ or ‘icing’ would probably be more precise but might be confusing in this setting. Its use here is quite amusing.” Thanks are due to Prof. Tubb for discussing this and other oddities of this passage with me.

³² *Vairocana-saṃmiśram*; literally, this means “mixed with Vairocana.” Vairocana is a commonly used term for feces in Tantric literature; however, this could alternatively be interpreted as an injunction to consider the mixture to be (the buddha) Vairocana, esp. insofar as this buddha is associated with physical objects (*rūpa*) in this literature (so that comestibles would fall under his purview).

³³ *draṣṭavyāḥ khalu sarve tv anutpādākārayogena śvākharoṣṭragajādyasṛk pītvā māṃsena bhojanam nityam // iṣṭam sarvaviśeṣaraktavilīptamahāmāmsam samastakutsitamāmsam prāṇakaśatalakṣasaṃyuktam divyam / vairocanenātipūṣam kīṭaśataih simisimāyamānam śvānanaraccharditamīśram māṃsaṃ vajrāmbumarjikāyuktam / vairocanasaṃmiśram bhoktavyam yoginotsāhaiḥ /; Saṃpuṭodbhavasarvatantranidānamahākālparāja, ST ms 428 f. 38b⁴⁻⁵. Cf. Tibetan translation (Tōh. 381): sDe dge bKa’ ’gyur, rgyud ga, f. 107b¹⁻³: / khyi dang bong bu rnga mo dang // glang po la sogs khrag ’thungs nas // sha yang rtag tu bza’ ba nyid // sha chen khrag gis bsgos pa ni // thams cad khyad par du ni blta // dman pa’i sha ni thams cad dang // srog chags ’bum phrag brgya ldan bza // rnam snang shin tu rul ba yi // srin bu brgya phrag zi zir ldan // khyi dang mi skyugs bsres nas ni // sha ni rdo rje’i chus gos ldan // rnal ’byor pas ni spro ba yis // rnam snang bsres nas bza’ bar bya /.*

³⁴ The *locus classicus* of this is the dedicatory verses of Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, of which the second word is *anutpāda*. It is worth noting, given what will follow in the discussion below, that this verse celebrates the Buddha’s teaching of dependent co-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*),

Furthermore, just as I argued previously about the meats and ambrosias, the prescriptions for the *caryāvrata* are not only aggressively and thoroughly, but *precisely* inversive. In particular, they can be seen to correspond quite closely to some of the circumstances in Smārta orthodoxy which lead to a state of *anadhyaḥya* – a condition wherein one may not recite the Vedas. The rules concerning the circumstances during which one may or may not recite those most sacred Brahminical scriptures encode a number of central Hindu (or, perhaps, Indian) purity strictures.³⁵

Thus, with regard to the places whose polluting nature makes Vedic recitation prohibited, we find the following that correspond to recommended places for the practice of the *caryāvrata*: charnel grounds, barren land, roads, crossroads, liminal spaces (i.e. *prānta*), cities, and villages. So, it would seem that the very sites in which the *caryāvrata* is to be practiced were chosen due to their association with ritual pollution. However, an attentive reader will note that the sites given above do not exhaust the list of the principal places for the rite. What are we to make of these others: forests, empty houses, lonely places, etc.? I would suggest that these sites may usefully be compared to lists of generic yogic sites found in mainstream Bauddha and Śaiva literature. For instance, the *Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta* specifies its practices should be conducted in a forest (*arañña*), the foot of a tree (*rukhamūla*), or an empty house (*suññāgāra*).³⁶ A transitional list, from an early dualist Śaiva source, specifies the following sites: “a lonely place, or a grove, or in an agreeable mountain cave, or in an earthen hut that is thoroughly secluded, free of insects, draught and damp.”³⁷ Once one

which is said to both stop conceptual construction (*prapañcōpaśama*) and to be (in a quite non-Śaiva sense!) “auspicious” (*śiva*).

³⁵ On *anadhyaḥya*, see Patrick Olivelle’s presidential address originally delivered to the Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society, 19 March 2006 in Seattle (Olivelle 2006: 305–322).

³⁶ DN II 291. See also Śrāvaka bhūmi (I)–A–II–4–b–(10) on *prāvivekya* and (I)–C–III–13–a–(10) on the *dhutagaṇa*.

³⁷ *ekalinge nikuñje vā saumye vā giri-gahvare / bhūgrhe suvibhakte vā kīṭavātodakojjhite //*; *Parākhyatantra* XIV:2; see Goodall, ed. and trans. 2004: 109 and 347. Tanemura (2009: 502) translates *bhugṛha* as “cellar,”

excepts these generic yogic sites, the remaining places correspond much more closely with the *anadhyāya* list.³⁸

Regarding the behaviors enacted in the *caryāvrata*, these too correspond with situations in which one is prohibited from Vedic recitation, due to the impurity involved. Here, the correspondence is practically entire. The following circumstances create a situation of *anadhyāya*: contact with vomit, meat, blood, sex, funerary contexts and materials, urine and faeces (even, it might be noted, having the mere urge to pass them!), fear, dogs, donkeys, camels, music, drums, singing and dancing, and contact or commensality with low-caste persons. A quick consultation of Figures II to V will confirm that these are precisely the situations to be courted by the practitioner of the practice observance (*caryāvrata*).

It is also worth noting that the *caryāvrata* overturns the standard virtues elevated in both exoteric Buddhism and Śaivism. For instance, as I have observed elsewhere, violation of the five basic Buddhist vows is frequently associated with the practice observance, as is the violation of the purity strictures of the dualistic Buddhist Tantras (e.g. *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*). Similarly, the characteristics of the dualistic Śaivasiddhāntin *vrata* are challenged by this rite. Our rite can again be seen to be an anti-*vrata*, insofar as the *vrata* of mainstream esoteric Śaivas is quite conventional in its asceticism, proscribing women, meat, alcohol, singing, dancing, conversation, playing, flowers, commensality with despised castes, etc.³⁹ – all behaviors associated with the non-dualistic *caryāvrata*

though it seems clear that it should be “earthen hut” (as Goodall renders it here) or “cottage” (as I have rendered it in the passage from the CMP that Tanemura re-translates).

³⁸ The Śaiva/Śākta *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* (VI.3) has sites very much like those specified for the *caryāvrata*, but in a seemingly dualistic ritual context. That is, the context is preliminary initiation (*samayadīkṣā*) and the rite involves bathing, fasting, and purity: *ekaliṅge śmaśāne vā nadyor vā saṃgame śubhe | jaladhre vā taṭe ramye parvatāgre 'tha vā punaḥ || sugupte śaraṇe vātha ekavṛkṣe manorame | mātṛgrhe 'tha udyāne yatra vā rocate manaḥ ||*. See Törzsök 1999: 14 and 121.

³⁹ For citation of relevant Siddhāntin scriptural sources, see below, pp. 377–378.

of the non-dual Buddhist and (some) Śaiva Tantric traditions. The inversion is entire and precise.

In fact, our independent analysis of the literature is confirmed by the views articulated by indigenous intellectuals. The “Dispelling the Two Extreme [Views] with regard to the Adamantine Way” attributed in the Tibetan canonical collections to Jñānaśrī⁴⁰ discusses *inter alia* the “practices” (*caryā*). In this context, the author mentions the practice of consuming the meats and ambrosias which is a commonly-prescribed element of the practice observance. The author comments as follows:

The practice of taking [impure] substances is articulated thus:

The five meats and the five ambrosias

Rely on these as appropriate, in order to dispel conceptuality.

Since concepts such as “this is pure, this is impure” are fetters, if one methodically consumes sin-free meat⁴¹ of extremely base sorts such as human, horse, cow, dog, and elephant, and the death-cheating ambrosias such as semen, blood, faeces, urine, and human flesh, considering them void [of intrinsic reality] by the appropriate method and repeatedly considering those very things as if they were the divine ambrosia, if one enjoys them without passion, gradually concepts such as pure and impure will not arise. Then will arise the certain knowledge that different concepts that arise with regard to all things are false, and certain non-human beings will on that account be delighted with that [person] and will protect [him/her] in accordance with the

⁴⁰ *rDo rje theg pa'i mtha' gnyis sel ba* (**Vajrayānāntadvayanirākaraṇa*): sDe dge bstan 'gyur, rGyud 'grel, vol. tsu, ff. 15a⁷–20a² (Tōh. 3714). I am not at present entirely convinced that this is not a Tibetan pseudepigraphon. The Tibetan diction is a little clearer than one might expect in a true translation. (It would be well worth investigating what the canonical catalogs, such as Bu ston's *bsTan 'gyur dkar chag*, have to say about this work, if anything, though I have not had the time to do so myself.) However, even if it turns out to be a ‘grey text’ or something similar, the work nonetheless stands as an unambiguous indigenous expression of this interpretation. In the interests of consistency with prior scholarship, I am adopting here the reconstruction of the name employed by Tanemura (attributed to Alexis Sanderson); there are numerous other possibilities, such as e.g., *-nirghāta[na]*.

⁴¹ *sdig pa med pa'i sha*: i.e. not killed by or for oneself: ‘roadkill,’ etc.

Dharma and receive religious instruction from him/her.⁴²

Meat and ambrosia are only examples: whichever objects are considered impure [like] meat and so on, those should be consumed without passion. When one sees [with] equanimous perception, one no longer needs to consume those for his/her own sake.⁴³

Clearly, this author concurs in my own assessment of the role of the meats and ambrosias in these rituals, adding the interesting observation that the tradition believed that a side-effect of the attainment of non-conceptual thought was charismatic power over (invisible) spirits. Though the passage here is brief, this is likely a kind of ‘familiar’ (albeit presumably not animal) that would serve the needs of this type of advanced practitioner.⁴⁴ Though it may seem at present to be an extraneous element, this point is worth bearing in mind, as it will prove significant when we engage the question of the genealogy of this rite, below.

⁴² or, perhaps, “will uphold his/her religious precepts” (*de’i gdams ngag ’dzin par ’gyur ba*).

⁴³ f. 19a⁴–19b¹: *dn̄gos po ’dzin pa’i spyod pa ni // sha lnga dang ni bdud rtsi lnga // rnam rtog spang phyir ci rigs bsten // zhes br̄jod pa ste // ’di ni gtsang ba’o // ’di ni mi gtsang ba’o zhes rtog pa nyid ’ching ba yin pa’i phyir / sd̄ig pa med pa’i sha shin tu smad pa mi dang rta dang / ba lang dang / khiȳ dang / glang po che dag dang / thabs kyis zin par spyod pa dag gis ’chi ba zlog pa’i bdud rtsi khu ba dang / khrag dang / bshang ba dang / gci ba dang / mi’i sha dag ci rigs pa’i tshul gyis stong par bsam zhing / yang de dag nyid lha’i bdud rtsi ltar bsams nas / chags pa med par spyad na rim gyis mi gtsang ba dang / gtsang ba’i rnam par rtog pa mi ’byung la / de’i tsh̄e chos thams cad la tha dad pa’i rtog pa ’byung ba br̄dzun yin par nges pa’i shes pa ’byung ba dang / mi ma yin pa kha cig de nyid kyis de la yongs su dga’ ba ’byung zhing chos bzhin du skyob pa dang de’i gdams ngag ’dzin par ’gyur ba yod do // sha lnga dang bdud rtsi lnga ni mtshon pa ste / yul gang na sha la sogs pa mi gtsang bar ’dzin pa de dang de nyid la ma chags par spyod do // mnyam pa’i shes pa mthong ba na b̄dag gi don du de dag spyad par bya mi dgos so |.*

⁴⁴ Cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, s.v. familiar: “3. A familiar spirit, a demon or evil spirit supposed to attend at a call.” The usage “familiar angel” is also attested.

Prerequisites/qualifications and temporal frame

Having considered the nature and interpretation/purpose of the rite, let us turn now, for a moment, to the consideration of its intended practitioner, its context(s), and its duration. That the practitioner is necessarily an advanced one is also made clear across a wide spectrum of this literature, such that it would appear that research on the intellectual history of this term of art provides further evidence to broaden and reinforce another argument I have made in the past. In a short essay – little more than a footnoted conference paper – published in 2002 in the *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies*,⁴⁵ I made the case that there was a divergence between the presentation of the ‘practices’ in the Indian sources and their treatment in later Tibetan works. That is, contra the more ‘liberal’ interpretation of Tibetans such as Tsong kha pa who allow (or, even, prescribe) the ‘practices’ in the context of the (Tantrically) propædeutic creation stage (*utpatti-krama*), the authors of their Indian proof texts ([deutero-] Āryadeva and Candrakīrti) on the contrary restrict the ‘practices’ to the most advanced practitioners of the perfection stage (*niṣpanna-krama*). Specifically, I have argued based upon close reading of the literature that the Indian works consider the ‘practices’ to be appropriate only for those who have attained the third of the five stages of the Noble Tradition perfection-stage sequence, the self-consecration (*svādhiṣṭhāna*), which corresponds to the attainment of the eighth bodhisattva stage – rather a rarified sort of person.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Wedemeyer 2002: 181–195.

⁴⁶ Tanemura (2009: 488) takes issue with my interpretation (Wedemeyer 2002: 192ff.) of the ‘initiation’ requisite for practice of *caryā* as the *sarvabuddhābhīṣeka* described in the CMP as taking place after the third of the five stages of the Noble Tradition system. He claims that “the sub-commentary [to the *Pradīpoddyotana* (PU)] ... seems to understand the relevant part differently.” In support of this claim, he merely cites the Tibetan text of the subcommentary, without explanation. The relevant portion, however, reads as follows: *dbang bskur ba thob pas kyang zhes pa ni le’u bzhi pa nas gsungs pa’i rim pas so*; that is, “[the phrase in the PU] ‘by obtaining the initiation,’ [means] by the process described in the Fourth Chapter.” If one consults the Fourth Chapter of the PU, one discovers that it is concerned precise-

The predecessor of Āryadeva and Candrakīrti, Padmavajra, held the same view. The first chapter of his masterwork on the Esoteric Community, the *Esoteric Accomplishment* (*Guhyasiddhi*, GS) is most explicit on this score. In making this point, he employs yet another term of art: one must first “create the superficial” (*saṃvṛtim utpādyā*) – i.e. generate the mind-made body (*mano-mayadeha*) of the self-consecration stage (*svādhiṣṭhānakrama*); then one should undertake the *caryā* (*paścāt caryāṃ prakurvīta*). “Immediately thereafter,” Padmavajra asserts, “the *vrata* is to be done with a consort (*vidyā*).”⁴⁷ Likewise, in *Guhyasiddhi* III, he writes “having obtained a stage like this, the supreme deity yoga, then one should perform the *caryā* in order to accomplish the state of buddhahood.”⁴⁸ The prior context makes clear that “a stage like this” means having obtained a rainbow-like [deity] body (*indrāyudhanibhaṃ kāyaṃ*) – precisely the distinctive characteristic of the self-consecration stage.

Though this specific qualification is characteristic only of the *Guhyasamāja śāstras*, throughout the corpus on *caryā*, such a concern for prior qualifications (*adhikāra-bheda*) is pervasive. The literature surveyed here consistently stresses a variety of qualifications or prerequisites necessary for the practice of the *caryāvratā*. Most common of these (as can be seen in Figure VI) are the attainment of “heat” (*ūṣman*) or “power” (*sāmārthya*), or some attainment of meditative absorption (*samāpatti*). *Ūṣman* is a Buddhist term of art for an advanced meditative experience of voidness (*śūnyatā*) associated with the first stage of the second of the five paths, the

ly with an initiation process into a sand maṇḍala (*rajomaṇḍalābhiṣeka*) for “students who are distinguished in their mastery of meditation on the subtle yoga” (*sūkṣmayogabhāvanāsādhitaviśeṣāṇām śiṣyāṇām*; PU, p. 41). In CMP III (f. A:16a), subtle yoga is used as a synonym for the yogas of the perfection stage; so, a student who had already mastered that/those would at least have attained the second (mind-isolation, *cittaviveka*) stage, if not necessarily the third (self-consecration, *svādhiṣṭhāna*) stage. Pace Tanemura, this is hardly “understand[ing] the relevant part differently.”

⁴⁷ GS I.24cd: *tadanantaram tu vai kāryaṃ vrataṃ vidyāsamanvitam*.

⁴⁸ GS III.83: *īdṛśam tu kramaṃ prāpya devatā-yogam uttamam / tatas caryāṃ prakurvīta buddhatva-pada-siddhaye /*

Path of Application (*prayogamārga*).⁴⁹ In describing the realization of this *uṣman* in his *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Asaṅga says that it is “a *samādhi* that has obtained illumination (*āloka*) with regard to the Truth[s of the Nobles] internally, conjoined with critical wisdom.”⁵⁰ Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* also specifies that the heat arises when the practitioner, having focused on the mindfulness of things, sees them as impermanent, suffering, void and non-self; it is described as a “root of virtue” (*kuśalamūla*) and an element of the certain penetration of the Path of the Nobles (*nirvedhabhāgīya*). It is produced by [meditative] cultivation (*bhāvanā*), not learning or reflection (*śruticintā*); and is so-called on account of its being an intimation of the imminent attainment of the ‘fire’ of the Path of the Nobles that burns the fuel of the defilements.⁵¹ Thus, in a Buddhist context, to specify that a rite is for those with *uṣman*, is manifestly to restrict it to a meditative elite, who are on the verge of attaining the Path of the Nobles (*āryamārga*), which is the Path of Seeing (*darśanamārga*). This latter, significantly, is said to be *anāsravaḥ* – a key Buddhist term that refers to the purity of enlightenment and is often used to describe buddhas and arhats.⁵²

This type of specification of prerequisites occurs in almost all of the works in our corpus. Thus, the *Buddhakaṭṭhaka* stresses that the practitioner already have attained all eight worldly powers (*siddhi*); the *Samputa* and *Hevajra* that one have meditative heat and ability to sacrifice one’s own body; the *Catuṣpīṭhākhyaṭamantrāṃśa* (CPAMA)⁵³ stresses meditative absorption and freedom from pas-

⁴⁹ The association of *uṣman* with the *prayogamārga* is found in Sarvāstivāda works that predate Vasubandhu. See Robert Buswell, “The ‘aids to penetration’ (*nirvedhabhāgīya*) according to the Vaibhāṣika school,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25 (1997) 589-611. Thanks to Birgit Kellner for bringing this to my attention.

⁵⁰ *uṣmagataṃ katamat | pratyātmaṃ satye ’py ālokalabdhaḥ samādhiḥ prajñāsamyoḡaś ca |; Abhidharmasamuccaya*, p. 65.

⁵¹ See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* vi.17, pp. 343: *kleśendhanadahanasyārya mārgāgneḥ pūrvarūpatvāt |*.

⁵² *Abhidharmakośa* vi.1 (p. 327): *darśanākhyaṣ tv anāsravaḥ ||*.

⁵³ Péter-Dániel Szántó seems to suggest in a recent, short article, that this alleged ‘explanatory Tantra’ of the *Catuṣpīṭha* is actually a supplemented ver-

sion; and so on. *Samvarodaya*, interestingly, is most stringent, requiring not only yogic heat, and ability to sacrifice one's own body, but great knowledge (*bahuśruta*) and abandonment of wealth, life, and wife. For its part, the *Caṇḍamahāroṣana* emphasizes that the *vrata* is to be undertaken after significant prior practice (*and* – further confirming our prior semiological analysis – refers to the rite as constitutively inverse): “having exhausted all sin, one will [then] succeed by means of inversion.”⁵⁴ Presumably aware of the scriptural sources on this question, an influential early Tibetan narrative of the life of the Tantric *yogin* Kṛṣṇācārya revolves precisely around his quest for the power (*nus pa*, **sāmārthya*) prerequisite to his undertaking the practice observance.⁵⁵

On this basis, I would suggest that – somewhat like the cultivation of the realization of the so-called ‘emptiness of emptiness’ in the exoteric context, which is used to refine an advanced understanding and prevent reification of the ultimate void – the inverted cultivation of a *vrata* of impurity is characterized in the Buddhist Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantras as an advanced, post-purification refinement of what we must consider an ongoing base-line esoteric Buddhist ‘fastidiousness-in-quest-of-power’ such as is evidenced in the earlier, dualistic Buddhist Tantras, and which constitutes the

sion of what was originally the fourth chapter of a *Catuṣpīṭhamaṇḍalopāyikā* written by Āryadeva. See Szánto 2008: 8–10.

⁵⁴ *sarvapaṅkṣayaṃ kṛtvā viparītenaiva sidhyati* /, CMT ms 63, f. 49a⁴ (p. 50 of 94); cf. ms 64, f. 51a⁴. Tibetan translation in sDe bKa', vol. nga, f. 325a⁴: *sdig pa thams cad zad byas nas / phyin ci log gyis 'di nyid 'grub* /. The Sanskrit verse is unmetrical, but that just seems to be how it is; cf. the comments of Dominik Goodall concerning the *Parākhyatantra*, to wit, “this particular type of hypermetry, in which the first two syllables are probably intended to be read rapidly together and must count for one, appears to be not uncommon in this sort of writing.” (Goodall, ed. and trans. 2004: 143, n. 18)

⁵⁵ See Sa-chen Kun-dga' snying-po 1968: 214–216. It is worth noting that the character of Kṛṣṇācārya is so closely associated with the *caryā/caryāvrata* that the Tibetan traditions came to translate his name not with the expected *Nag po slob dpon*, but as *Nag po spyod pa*: i.e. as if the name were actually Kṛṣṇa-carya! In this work, Kṛṣṇapāda is also referred to as **Vratacaryāpāda* (*brtul zhugs spyod pa ba*).

common denominator of Tantric practice as a whole.⁵⁶ It was meant for elite practitioners alone and was not (as many have taken it to be) the ‘post-initiatory practice’ of the Buddhist Tantric communities *tout court*.⁵⁷

Of further note is the fact that nowhere is the *caryāvṛata* characterized as daily (*nitya*) or quotidian Tantric practice. Rather, it is consistently represented as a time-delimited, segregated practice generally performed in seclusion or in the virtual ‘seclusion’ of a wandering lifestyle.⁵⁸ That is, the *vṛata* is set apart in time as well as in space.

As can be seen in Figure VII, there is less stress laid in these works on the duration of this ritual in the Tantric Buddhist contexts than on other aspects of the rite, but those that do weigh in on this point are quite clear about the occasional and time-delimited nature of this observance. Most (e.g. *Mahāvairocana* [MVT], *Guhyasamāja*, *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*, etc.) specify six months as the proper (or maximum) duration of the rite. Furthermore, such stress would seem to be somewhat redundant, given the fact that all Indic *vṛatas* are considered to be time-delimited and supererog-

⁵⁶ See above, note 23.

⁵⁷ This understanding carries forward into the later commentators. For instance Abhayākara Gupta, in his eponymous commentary on the *Buddhakaṭāla*, notes that the mention of the eight powers in this context means that “the practices (*caryā*) are permitted ... for the one who has thereby obtained potency” (*anena labdha-sāmarthyasya ... caryānujñātā* |; *Abhayapaddhati*, p. 65; see also sDe bTan, vol. ra, ff. 211b⁵⁻⁶). Saraha’s *Gnostic* [*Jñānavatī*] *Commentary* on the *Buddhakaṭāla* is also explicit that the achievement of the eight *siddhis* is a prerequisite for practice of the *caryā*, commenting, “to unpack the half-line ‘endowed with the eight powers,’ [it means] ‘when a *yogin* is endowed with the eight superhuman powers [*aṣṭaguṇaiśvarya* – a synonym for the eight *siddhis*] then he should commence the practices (*caryā*)” (*l dngos grub brgyad dang yang dag ldan / / zhes pa ni gang gi tshe rnal ’byor pa yon tan gyi dbang phyug brgyad dang ldan pa de’i tshe / spyod pa yang dag par brtsam par bya zhes pa’i tha tshig go* |; sDe bTan, vol. ra, ff. 138b⁷–139a¹).

⁵⁸ We have seen above that isolated places (*vijana*) and other lonely spots are preferred for its practice. Padmavajra’s *Guhyasiddhi* describes it as the concealed observance (*prachannavṛata*) and the sites prescribed for its practice are “secret regions” (*guhyaśeṣa*); GS I.12 and IV.56.

atory effectively by definition.⁵⁹ I don't think it is too great a leap to assume that by calling this conduct (*caryā*) a *vrata*, the authors of these traditions were indicating by implication that it was to be a temporary undertaking, restricted to a definite length (typically, six months). In fact, from the earliest appearances of this rite in Buddhist literature (whether one takes that to be the *Guhyasamāja* or the *Mahāvairocanatantra* [see below, pp. 388–389]), the question of duration was prominent.⁶⁰

History with reference to Śaiva parallels

In the foregoing, we have observed that a cluster of related terms, centered on *caryāvrata*, functions as an important term of art in non-dualist Buddhist Tantric traditions. We have noted its chief characteristics, its intended practitioners including their qualifications, and the duration of its undertaking. Now, perhaps a word or two should be said about what we can trace of the history and development of this concept, particularly with reference to the manner in which its appearance in Buddhist sources tracks closely its usage in Śaiva and Śākta Tantric contexts. A look at the semiology of this rite in the two contexts over time reveals interesting aspects of its development and its role in various esoteric systems in the two confessions. The perspective granted by this approach will clarify the earlier history of the rite in Buddhism and Śaivism and suggest a model for understanding their interrelationship which is at variance from that which has been popularized in recent years.

In his important 1972 work on the Kāpālīka and Kālāmukha sects of Śaivism, David N. Lorenzen noted that there were sig-

⁵⁹ There are some cases in which the duration of the adoption of a *vrata* may be 'for life,' but this is an exceptional case and, given the subtending notion of continuous rebirth, may also be taken to imply a limited duration.

⁶⁰ In the opening passage of the "Vidyāvrata Chapter" of the *Mahāvairocanatantra*, several questions about this observance are asked of the Lord Vairocana by Vajrapāṇi: how does one do it, where, etc. Not neglected is the question of duration; Vajrapāṇi asked "on the passage of how much time will the observance be complete?" (*dus ni ci srid lon gyur na / brtul zhugs yongs su rdzogs par 'gyur /*; MVT XV.2ab; sDe dge bKa' 'gyur, rGyud, vol. tha, f. 215b).

nificant correspondences in several of the antinomian rites of the Buddhists and the Śaivas. He restricted himself, however, to the claim that, “the Buddhist parallels [to Śaiva Kāpālika practices] indicate that they must have also had some connection with Buddhist tantrism [*sic*], but, in absence of additional evidence, it is useless to speculate about what this might have been.”⁶¹ More recently, among authors working on the Hindu Tantras in particular, there has been a marked tendency to return to the early Orientalist view that the Buddhist Tantras are merely Śaiva Tantrism “in Buddhist garb”⁶² – that is to say, that practically every element of Buddhist Tantrism may be accounted for as having been borrowed from the Śaiva traditions with merely a slight overcoding of Buddhist thought. Until quite recently, this view seems to have been based on the mere over-generalization of a specific argument made by Alexis Sanderson about a degree of intertextuality that he maintains demonstrates that one influential Buddhist Yoginī Tantra incorporated textual material from a Śaiva source.⁶³ Non-specialists,

⁶¹ Lorenzen 1991: 4.

⁶² La Vallée Poussin 1921: 193: “Buddhist Tantrism is practically Buddhist Hinduism, Hinduism or Śaivism in Buddhist garb.”

⁶³ Sanderson points to parallelism between the Buddhist *Laghusaṃvara* and the Śaiva *Yoginīsaṃcāra*. The textual correspondences are certainly noteworthy. The issue of the direction (or source) of the borrowing has created some ongoing (and arguably unresolved) controversy, however. While Sanderson has consistently maintained the position that the Śaiva sources are primary, his arguments for this view have shifted over time. At first, he was inclined to credit a thirteenth-century Śaiva myth that claims that Buddhist Tantrism was invented by the gods in order to make heretics of competing demons, thereby decreasing their Śiva-mojo, so that they might be defeated (see 1994: 93). Presumably perceiving the limitations of this argument (the myth is, after all, transparently a latter-day calque on the “Buddha is an avatar of Viṣṇu” motif, and hardly credible historically), he later shifted the basis for his claim to philological interpretation (2001). More recently, Sanderson has revised his assertion somewhat, maintaining that the source for both the extant Buddhist and Śaiva materials is likely some no-longer-extant third source, which Sanderson nonetheless continues to maintain was Śaiva (2009: 191). Other perspectives have been articulated by, e.g. David S. Ruegg (1964, 2001 and esp. 2008), Ronald M. Davidson (2002), and David B. Gray (2007).

ignorant of the fact that Sanderson was analyzing a rather late and distinctive stratum of esoteric Buddhist literature (exemplified by the Yoginī Tantra, the *Laghusaṃvara*), took this to mean that all Buddhist Tantrism was derived from Śaivism. More recently, however, Sanderson himself has published an extensive piece in which he extends this argument to make much the same expansive claim himself.⁶⁴

Most relevant to our own concern here, Ryugen Tanemura, in line with Sanderson's views, makes the claim that "probably the model of the [Buddhist] *unmattavrata* is the Śaiva post-initiatory observance [i.e. *caryā/vrata*]."⁶⁵ This claim is made somewhat offhandedly and is not well argued, merely referring to the existence of an *unmattavrata* in the Śaiva Vidyāpīṭha *Brahmayāmala/Picumata* (BY/PM). Such a reference, of course, merely indicates the parallelism with which we must deal, and does not in itself resolve the question.

Looking at the literature as a whole, both Buddhist and Śaiva, it appears that there certainly has been interaction and exchange between the Buddhist and Śaiva Tantric traditions – no one could or would deny that.⁶⁶ However, it seems that in the case of the *caryāvrata* what one sees is a fairly clear example of a Tantric feature which has developed, not in a Śaiva vacuum, nor even necessarily from a Śaiva prototype, but which gestated in a shared ascetical Zeitgeist in which a number of similar ascetical regimens (*vrata*) were in circulation, and in which forms and features of the

⁶⁴ See Sanderson 2009: 124–243. In doing so, he resurrects his argument based on the thirteenth-century myth mentioned above in note 63.

⁶⁵ Tanemura 2008: 56 and note 26, p. 67. Given that Tanemura does not advance any real argument for this claim. Presumably, he is following Sanderson who has maintained that antinomian consumption of meat, alcohol, and so forth, and sexual intercourse with polluting women "originated as part of the magical technology of certain extremist orders of Śaiva ascetics" (1988: 661).

⁶⁶ Sanderson himself cannot but acknowledge that the Śaiva traditions adopted elements from the Buddhist traditions. However, in line with his marked tendency to use connotatively derogatory terms with regard to Buddhism and Buddhists (language strikingly absent elsewhere in his writings), Sanderson refers to this as a "reflux" from Buddhism (2009: 240).

Buddhist and Śaiva idioms, as well as of the overarching orthodox Smārta traditions, were mutually emulated.⁶⁷ In fact, though the adoption of a funerary and transgressive idiom by the Śaivas *may* predate its adoption by the Buddhists (though this is by no means established, see below, pp. 391–392), it seems clear that – while the interpretation and purpose of such observances by the Buddhists remained remarkably consistent – its representation in Śaiva literature shifted significantly over time, progressively approximating that found in the Buddhist sources. Consequently, it would seem that the later Śaiva practice of this rite (ca. late ninth century and after) reflects a remarkable degree of influence from the Buddhist traditions with whom they rubbed shoulders throughout the ascetical milieu of the Tantric Age.⁶⁸

It is worth recalling that funerary and transgressive, anti-nomian elements were never the exclusive province of the Śaiva traditions. In fact, the transgressive *mahāvṛata* or *kapāla-vṛata* – which comes to be characteristic of the Śaiva *kāpālika* practices – is not itself specifically Śaiva. The earliest reference appears in *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (ca. 100–300 C.E.) iii.243 as a penance for one who has killed a brahmin.⁶⁹ This work on the understanding of

⁶⁷ As I will indicate further, this position is not to be confused with Rugg’s substratum theory that implies some *tertium quid*. Rather, I believe that the continuities between the traditions may be accounted for on the basis of their shared civic space/time in the midst of an eclectic ritual culture. Phyllis Granoff (2000) likewise speaks of an “eclectic ritual culture” in late-first-millennium India in which sectarian boundaries were remarkably porous. Similarly, Francesco Sferra (2003: 61) speaks of a “common *Weltanschauung*, which has necessarily resulted in the development of a massive literary output and conceptual re-elaboration, as can be seen in other areas of Indian (and not only Indian) culture.” Thus, I believe a consensus is forming around a developing model of a shared culture/*Weltanschauung*/Zeitgeist which is more subtle (and more sociologically cogent) than either the “substratum” or “borrowing” hypotheses.

⁶⁸ Sanderson has suggested this late-first-millennium period of Indian religions be referred to as the “Śaiva Age.” However, I believe that Benoytosh Bhattacharyya’s “Tantric Age” better describes the character of the period.

⁶⁹ Lorenzen 1991: 13. This penance also appears in other *dharmaśāstras*; the commentary of Aparārka cites Gautama, Manu, Saṃvarta, Vasiṣṭha on this topic; see Ānandāśrama, ed. 1903-04: 1053f.

dharma was composed right around the period in which esoteric Śaiva sects began to emerge, and thus was one religious praxis among many available to the nascent Pāsupatas and Lākulas of the Śaiva Atimārga. In the adoption of this observance as a feature of regular practice by these ascetical traditions, one can detect a clear semiological intent: the rite is the “great observance” (*mahāvratā*) for the expiation of the greatest sin imaginable (by brahmins, of course)⁷⁰ – killing a brahmin. If it were considered capable of such potent purificatory power, it would certainly recommend itself to be adapted to other mythological and ritual contexts as a trope for supreme asceticism and yogic purification. In the case of Śaiva mythology, in order to reinforce the reputation of Śiva as the supreme ascetic (while specifically invoked to account for the aftermath of his slaying of Brahmā, the Ur-brahmin), Śaiva communities began to represent Maheśvara himself as undertaking this rite as a part of his virtuoso ascetical regimen. And, when nascent Śaiva esoteric communities undertook the imitation of Śiva with the goal of eliminating the stain of considering oneself as separate from the Great God (*bheda-mala*), the rite further recommended itself as a means for Śaiva ascetics themselves to identify quite publicly with Śiva’s arduous practice of challenging religious observances (*duṣkara-vratā*).

It is also important to note that, as in Buddhist circles, so too in early Śaiva esoterism, the terms *caryā* and *vratā* referred to (relatively) mundane ascetical exercises before they were gradually transformed in the later, non-dualist Tantric contexts. When the terms *vratā* or *caryā* appear in the works of the dualistic Śaiva Siddhānta, for example, rather mainstream, pro-nomian definitions are regularly given. For example, the *Mataṅgapārameśvarāgama* defines *caryāpāda* as “the character of our own tradition, constancy in vows, conduct, and truth-telling.”⁷¹ Similarly, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha’s commentary on the passage in the *Mṛgendratāntra* that discusses

⁷⁰ The killing of a brahmin serves in some Dharma literature as a metonym for the worst class of crimes, e.g. *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* ii.206–233. On this issue in general, see Kane 1973: 10–12, 17–20, and 87–96.

⁷¹ *samayācārasadvādasthitiḥ svāmnāyalakṣaṇaḥ / caryāpādaḥ; Mataṅgapārameśvarāgama (Vidyāpāda)*, p. 30.

the mouth-washing of the student on entering the *maṇḍala*, glosses *vrata* as “eating the five cow-products and [sacramental] porridge, and so on”⁷² – an entirely pro-nomian, exoteric, dualistic purity rite. Similarly, the *caryāpāda* of the *Mṛgendra* itself prescribes taking food only from non-despised castes (eschewing commensality), and characterizes those who undertake observances (*vratin*) as “those who abandon meat, women, and mead.”⁷³ They are to shun women, song, dance, conversation, and play, as well as garlands and ointments (i.19). One might usefully compare Figure IV for an indication again of how closely this tracks the prescribed behaviors of the *caryāvratā*. It is also noteworthy how closely this corresponds to the discipline of the Buddhist monk (not only fully-ordained *bhikṣus*, but novice monks as well), and the regular (frequently semi-monthly) ascetical behavior of lay Buddhists during the ancient practice of *poṣadha* (Pāli *uposatha*), perhaps the most popular supererogatory practice of Buddhists around the world.⁷⁴ Here, again, the ascetical regimes of the various Indian traditions were quite similar both in terminology and in practice.

Some have pointed to the famous Pāśupata *vrata* as one source for a shift in later Tantric communities toward a non-dualist, antinomian observance.⁷⁵ The existence of Pāśupata communities is attested in the early-mid first millennium (fourth century), so its practices would certainly be prior to any fully-formed Buddhist or Śaiva esoterism of which we are aware at present. Its *vrata* is

⁷² *Mṛgendra*, p. 114: *pañcaḡavyacaruprāśanādi*. It may be noted in this regard that this term *caruprāśana* is another example of one that is carried over from dualist to non-dualist Tantrism. In the later works of the Krama, *caruprāśana* is the key element of their (abbreviated) initiatory ceremony; however the *caru* comes to mean the sexual fluids of the Krama ritual. See Sanderson 2007: 260; and 2005: 110–114, n. 63.

⁷³ *māṃsayoṣinmadhutyāḡa* |; *Mṛgendra caryāpāda* i.18; p. 213.

⁷⁴ This practice, keyed to the lunar month, entails observance of eight vows of the ten required of a novice monk or nun: the five vows (including strict chastity) as well as eschewing artistic performances, wearing of perfume or jewelry, or sleeping on a high or fancy bed. In addition, the *poṣadha* involved observance of fasting after noon (as the clergy are enjoined to do). On the practice of *poṣadha* in Burma, see Spiro 1970: 46 and 214–219.

⁷⁵ This is suggested by e.g. Davidson 2002: 177–186 and 326.

known to us through such sources as *Atharvaveda Pariśiṣṭa* 40 (ca. late first millennium) and the better-known *Pāśupatasūtra* (ca. fourth century?). In one short phase of this *vrata* as it is explained by Kauṇḍinya's late-first millennium commentary on the *Pāśupatasūtra*, the practitioner courts scorn by means of acting crazily – as advocated in the later non-dualist prescriptions for the *unmatta-vrata*. There are also some few correspondences with regard to site and dress: the *Pāśupatavrata* is to be kept at a confluence of rivers, mountain cave, or near water, one is to bathe in ash, is to make offering to the image (*liṅga*) with laughter, song and music, is to have only one garment or go naked. Also, the observance is in general to be kept for a delimited number of months or years (AVP 40 1.3).

However, the pious comportment of this ritual overall is so thoroughly contrary to the *caryāvrata* of the Mahā- and Yoginī Tantra Buddhists (and, as we shall see in a moment, the similarly later and non-dualistic Vidyāpīṭha and Trika Hindu Tantrists), that the Pāśupata *vrata* is better considered a conditioning type rather than a true cause (cf. the *vidyāvrata* of the Buddhist *Mahāvairocanatantra* which we shall consider shortly). For in the Pāśupata *vrata*, except for a handful of token contrarian accoutrements and actions (*khaṭvāṅga*, singing and dancing, etc.), the central behaviors are entirely dualistic and the practitioner must be a (pure) brahmin.⁷⁶

The sites that correspond are generic sites of religious practice (*yogasthāna*) or auspicious sites (e.g. mountain caves, confluence of rivers); and singing and dancing are elsewhere attested as exoteric offerings to images. Indeed, only the *khaṭvāṅga* seems to have any connection to the non-dualist *vrata* (a consideration that may suggest caution in over-interpreting this element in this regard). Images are worshipped, fire sacrifices (*homa*) are performed, pure altar ashes (rather than funereal ash) are used for bathing, the *vratin* fasts, observes chastity, avoids women and śūdras, and astrologically auspicious days are to be chosen for the rites. It is worth noting that the goal of this *vrata* is not a gnostic transcendence of conceptuality, but either nearness to Rudra or union with [Śiva]

⁷⁶ On this latter point, see Bisschop and Griffiths 2003: 325, n. 49.

Paśupati in the afterlife.⁷⁷

A more probable link – one that also serves as a bridge between the dualistic Śaivas and their non-dualistic brethren – is the practice of the later division of the Śaiva Atimārga, the Lākula ascetics also known as the Kālamukhas.⁷⁸ Consider the testimony of the *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā* on what is called therein the skull observance (*kapāla-vrata*), the world-transcending observance (*lokātīta-vrata*), or great Pāśupata observance (*mahāpāśupata-vrata*):

Touched by the five secret [Brahmamantra]s and initiated, he should wander, carrying a skull-staff (*khaṭvāṅga*) and skull bowl (*kapāla*), either shaven or with dreadlocks, [wearing] a sacred thread [made of] hair⁷⁹ and adorned with a skull-pieces,⁸⁰ wearing [nothing but] a cod-piece, smeared with ashes, ornamented with divine decorations, considering the world [to be] made of Rudra, [he is] a devotee of Rudra; firm in his vow, [he] takes all [food and drink] and does all, devoted to meditation on Rudra. Knowing that ‘there is no other to protect me than Rudra, the supreme divinity,’ the fearless one should perform the [ascension through] the eleven levels.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Pāśupatasūtra* 19 mentions nearness to Rudra (*anena vidhinā rudrasamīpam gatvā*); *Pāśupatasūtra* 33 and AVP 40 vi.14 both specify union with Paśupati (*paśupati-sāyujya*) as the result/goal.

⁷⁸ On this group and their relationship to other Śaiva groups, see Sanderson 2006: 229–300.

⁷⁹ *vālayajñopavīta*; Sanderson (2006: 164) reads this as “hair [of the dead],” though elsewhere (1988: 665) he rendered it “made from snake skins.”

⁸⁰ The text reads *śiromuṇḍaiś ca maṇḍitaḥ*, lit. “adorned with bald skulls.” Sanderson interprets this as either “a chaplet fashioned from human skull-bones” (2006: 165) or “a necklace of human bone” (1988: 665).

⁸¹ *ālabdhah pañcabhīr guhyair ddīkṣitaś caiva so bhramet | khaṭvāṅgī ca kapālī ca sa jaṭī muṇḍa-m eva vā || vālayajñopavīti ca śiromuṇḍaiś ca maṇḍitaḥ | kaupīnavāso bhasmāṅgī divyābharaṇabhūṣitaḥ || jagad rudramayam matvā rudrabhaktō dṛḍhavrataḥ | sarvādas sarvaceṣṭaś ca rudradhyānaparāyaṇaḥ || rudraṃ muktivā na cānyo ’sti trātā me devataṃ param | viditvaikadaśādhvānaṃ nirviśankaḥ samācaret ||; Niśvāsamukha f. 17b2–5 edited in Sanderson 2006: 163–164. My translation differs significantly from the two (divergent) translations provided by Sanderson (1988: 665–66; and 2006: 164–165).*

Here we see more of the characteristics of the later *vrata*, though on the whole it is not a big advance beyond the Pāśupata *vrata*, which is described just previously in this section of the *Niśvāsa*.⁸² As we have seen, the *khaṭvāṅga* appears in the dualist Pāśupata *vrata* (and is probably a stylized representation of the *mahāvratīn*'s banner-topped skull).⁸³ The 'great' Pāśupata *vrata* articulated here does add a skull-bowl (*kapāla*) and funerary ornamentation (hair thread and skull-ornaments), but largely this is identical to the Pāśupata rite.⁸⁴

⁸² *Niśvāsamukha* verses 4:69cd–4:87 describe the mainstream Pāśupata observance involving courting social censure in order to transfer demerit to the critic and rob them of their merit.

⁸³ Cf. *Yājñavalkyaśmṛti* iii.243: *śiraḥkapālī dhvajavān*. Aparārka's commentary on this verse indicates that this verse means that the brahmin-murderer should carry precisely a *khaṭvāṅga* ("a skull placed on the peak of a banner[-pole]," *dhvajāgrōpitakapāla*), and gives a "hermeneutical etymology" for the term: since it is torn (*khadvā*, perhaps for *khaḍvā*?) from a corpse [it is *khaṭvā*-], its body (*-aṅga*) is indicated by the word banner (*khadvā cātra śavanīrharāṅārthā, tadaṅgam eva dhvajadabdena vivakṣitam* /). He also cites the *Samvartasmṛti* which indicates that the keeper of this penance should beg from all four castes (a gesture toward commensality), carrying a *khaṭvāṅga* and then retire back to the forest (*cāturvarṇyaṃ cared bhaikṣaṃ khaṭvāṅgī niyataḥ pumān / bhikṣās tv evaṃ samādāya vanaṃ gacchet tataḥ punaḥ* /). See Ānandāśrama, ed. 1903–04: II 1053.

⁸⁴ There may be some dispute over this point, so a few further remarks are in order. It is worth stressing this point that the flamboyantly antinomian practice of the *caryāvratā* is not clearly in evidence in the Lākula rite described here. Sanderson seems to infer such a thoroughgoing antinomianism from the half-verse *sarvādas sarvaceṣṭaś ca rudradhyānaparāyaṇaḥ* (*Niśvāsamukha* 4:90cd), which he translates "He may eat and drink anything. No action is forbidden him. He should remain immersed in contemplation of Rudra, thinking ..." However, the clause about 'thinking' (4:91ab) is grammatically linked with the subject *nirviśaṅkaḥ* ("the fearless one") in the following verse where they are both found; and the content of this thought is related to this fearless attitude. The "immersion" (*parāyaṇa*), on the other hand, belongs to the series of appositional terms in the preceding three verses that describe the practitioner of the *vrata*. The final characteristic of the practitioner is that he is or should be (as I translate it) "devoted to meditation on Rudra" (or "visualization of Rudra," *rudra-dhyāna-parāyaṇaḥ*). Just previously, the text laconically specifies that the practitioner "takes all [food and drink] and does all" (*sarvādas sarvaceṣṭaś ca*), presumably

It is not until the next phase of the development of Śaiva Tantrism that truly antinomian behaviors are found in the *caryāvrata/vrat-acaryā*. Alexis Sanderson has described the skull observance of these higher Śaiva traditions as follows:

wearing earrings, armlets, anklets and girdle [of human bone] with a sacred thread (*upavīta*) made of twisted corpse hair, smeared with ashes from the cremation-pyres, carrying the skull-bowl, the skull-staff and rattle-drum (*ḍamaru*), intoxicated with alcohol, he alternated periods of night wandering (*niśāṭana*) with worship (*pūjā*) in which

(i.e. as I take it) meaning that this *vrata* does not (as most do) include restrictions (*niyama*) on food, drink, or other activities (song, dance, etc.). Sanderson attempts to buttress his antinomian reading by translating *nir-viśaṅkaḥ* as “without inhibition,” but this interpretation cannot be sustained. While *śaṅka* does occur in (later) Kaula sources with the meaning of inhibition with regard to engaging in prohibited behaviors, the straightforward meaning is one who is fearless or dauntless and there is no reason to take it otherwise in this context. The Śaiva *yogin* is here being told to master the eleven levels of reality (*ekādaśādhvānam*) – to ascend through them free of timidity, in the knowledge that Śiva is his supreme protector. In short, any notion of transcending gnostic inhibitions with regard to purity and pollution strictures is not in evidence in this passage, although both the worldly (*laukika*) and transcendent (*lokottara*) Pāśupata observances described do involve some transgressive behaviors and attitudes.

Hence, I conclude, one does not see the dramatically deliberate antinomian elements of the *caryāvrata* in the Lākula observance. What one sees therein is still a (perhaps somewhat more edgy, but nonetheless) dualistic rite centered on one-pointed, constant devotion to a savior god. It may advance or enhance the funerary features of the earlier *pāśupatavrata*, but it does not move significantly beyond the basic framework of the ascetical and funerary elements of the (non-sectarian) *mahāvrata* of the Dharmaśāstras. Hence, the Lākula *mahāpāśupatavrata* described in the *Niśvāsasamukha* is not yet the transgressive, antinomian rite of the later Bauddha and Śaiva *caryāvrata*.

It seems that Sanderson’s interpretation of this passage has evolved somewhat, such that his recent views appear to be closer to my own. According to his most recent contribution, this section of the *Niśvāsa* shows that the Lākula ascetics “stood apart from the Pāñcārthikas by taking on, like the Kāpālikas, the *visible attributes* of the brahmin-slayer” (emphasis mine); he concludes that they constitute a transitional point between these two other groups, evincing “a more radical disregard for conventional notions of ritual purity and intensifying the power of their inauspiciousness, but without, it seems, transcending the convention of celibacy” (2006: 165–166).

he invoked and gratified the deities of the *maṇḍala* into which he had been initiated. This gratification required the participation of a...consecrated consort with whom he was to copulate.⁸⁵

Here, quite clearly, in the eighth-century⁸⁶ Vidyāpīṭha traditions, is the Śaiva correlate of the Buddhist *caryāvrata* we have explored above. It is not, however, referred to as *caryāvrata* in the influential *Brahmayāmala/Picumata*. Though the term *vratacaryā* does occur a number of times therein, it does not appear to function as a term of art.⁸⁷ Rather, *Picumata* XXI, the *vrata* chapter (*vrata-paṭala*), treats of nine variant *vratas* available to practitioners of this tradition, including the *unmattaka-* and *kapāla-* *vratas* as nos. four and five.⁸⁸ These latter are, of course, part of the cluster of interrelated *vratas* under consideration here and in this scripture clearly advocate the deliberate cultivation of antinomian behaviors.

Interestingly, the term *vrata-caryā* does appear in the Trika Tantra (*yathālabdha*) *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* (SYM), whose tenth chapter is devoted to the *vidyāvrata* or *vratacaryā*. Here, however, the *vrata* presented corresponds to the more dualistic vision of the Lākulas, rather than the more transgressive idiom of the *Picumata*.⁸⁹ The practice involves the anticipated ash-smearing, but is a thoroughly pro-nomian rite described in four iterations, evidently corresponding to the four powers (*siddhi*: purification, prosperity, domination, and destruction). One wears either a white, yellow, red or black garment, respectively, with ashes and a sacred thread of the same color, and is generally restrained and disciplined. The observances are to be kept for five days (SYM X.16). The only elements corresponding to the non-dualist *vrata* are wandering and

⁸⁵ Sanderson 1988: 670–1. Sanderson does not give sources here for this précis, but it would seem to reflect the *kapālavrata* as described in *Picumata* XXI and elsewhere.

⁸⁶ On the dating of these materials (always a vexed task), see the discussion in Hatley 2007: 211–228. Bagchi (1939: 102) also considered it “probably ... a compilation of the 8th century.”

⁸⁷ Thanks to Shaman Hatley for assistance with references to *caryāvrata* in the PM (email communication, 16 February 2009).

⁸⁸ BY/PM XXI.1–3, ff. 98r⁴⁻⁵.

⁸⁹ It is, in fact, called the *pāśūpatavrata* in SYM X.15.

laughing, but these too are found in the dualistic Pāsupata *vrata*.⁹⁰ On the whole, the (*yathālabdha*) *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* – though considered one of the major scriptures of non-dual Śaiva/Sāktism – does not display a marked antinomianism or non-dualism.

The *vidyāvratā* also appears in the Trika *Tantrasadbhāva*, from whence it was later incorporated into the *Kubjikāmatatantra* (KMT) xxv.29–171. Here we see all the key elements that we know from the Buddhist materials: dreadlocked or bald, ash-smearing, bearing the five signs (*mudrā*), naked or wearing strips of bark, wearing ornaments, clean or dirty, wandering with a *khaṭvāṅga*.⁹¹ The sites, too, are essentially the same (xxv.46–48): charnel ground, grove, cave, empty capital, crossroads, mountain peak, sea shore, confluence of rivers, etc.⁹² Yet again, as in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, the practitioner of the *Tantrasadbhāva*/*Kubjikāmata* observance is chaste and bathed (*brahmacarī tu snātakah*, KMT xxv.30d) and is to engage in meditation, worship, recitation and fire-offerings (xxv.41–42) – all elements prohibited in the Bauddha non-dualistic *vrata*. Like *vratas* in general, it is delimited by time: six months, a year, or any number of years up to twelve (KMT xxv.54–55). The connection to the prototype dharmaśāstric *mahāvratā* is also explicit: “if a mantrin should practice [the *vrata*] twelve years, even a brahmin-killer will succeed.”⁹³ It is worth noting that, in line with what we have seen above (and will see below) both the *Tantrasadbhāva*/*Kubjikāmata* and the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* clearly take the terms *vidyāvratā* and *vratacaryā* to be synonymous.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Edition and (preliminary) translation of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* found in Törzsök 1999: 28–29 and 143–145.

⁹¹ The *khaṭvāṅga* is here interpreted (via classical hermeneutical etymology [*nirukti*]) as a levitation device (KMT xxv.124b: *khaṭvāṅgaṃ kathayīṣyāmi khagatīkaraṇaṃ param* /).

⁹² Interestingly, these are all given an ‘esoteric,’ internal interpretation in KMT xxv.65–95.

⁹³ *dvādaśābdaṃ caren mantrī brahmaghno 'pi sa sidhyati* /; KMT xxv.55d.

⁹⁴ KMT xxv.23 Kubjikā asks Bhairava to teach her the *vidyāvratā*; when explaining their internal, esoteric meaning in xxv.123, Bhairava refers to it as *vratacaryā*. In SYM x.2 Devī asks Bhairava to teach her the *vratacaryā*; in x.3 Bhairava refers to it as the *vidyāvratā*.

The *vidyāvratā* appears as well in the ‘left-current’ *Vīṇāśikhā-tantra*, albeit incidentally. However, even its brief attestation therein does allow us some further confirmation of one other aspect of the *vratā* we have been considering here: its elite status. *Vīṇāśikhā* 180, in praising the effectiveness of a murderous rite it teaches, claims that “hence, [even] one who is renowned [as accomplished in] the *vidyāvratā* [and] adorned with fame and so on, is affected by this procedure and dies without further ado.”⁹⁵ This kind of self-promoting hyperbole might profitably be compared to statements in the Buddhist Tantras that e.g. such-and-such a ritual will “kill even a buddha” (see, for example, GST XIII.66). In both instances, the rite in question is being praised as capable of even such remarkable power as killing a being of outstanding power: in one case a buddha, in the other a practitioner of the *vidyāvratā*.

What, then, of its history in the Buddhist context? As I have already stated, this rite appears exclusively in the later, non-dualist Tantras classified as Mahāyoga or Yoginī Tantras. The usage of the term *vratā* or *caryā* for the aggressively transgressive rite we have identified above is not found in any of the early, dualistic Tantras such as the *Susiddhikara*, *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, or the like, up to and including the so-called Yoga Tantra, the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*.

⁹⁵ *tato vidyāvratāślāghī kīrtyādibhir alamkṛtaḥ / sādhyate 'nena prayogeṇa mriyate cāvikalpataḥ //*; Goudriaan (ed. and trans. 1985: 116) renders this “even a person who is proficient in the observance of wisdom and is adorned with fame and glory is victimized by such a practice and dies without delay;” he comments (note 55, p. 142) that “the *vidyāvratā* (‘observance of wisdom’) is a practice or way of life described in some Tantras in which a yogin is constantly aware of the symbolic meaning of his attributes or aspects of his behaviour. It is only meant for those who have transcended the ritual level.” Given what we see of the *vidyāvratā* in both Bauddha and Śaiva sources in this paper, one suspects that Goudriaan is here relying overmuch on the presentation in the *Kubjikāmatatantra*, which he also collaborated in editing. Sanderson (2001: 13n11) also describes a very different rite when he speaks of *vidyāvratā* as an “initial period of ascetic japaḥ, etc., to be undertaken after one has received a Mantra,” i.e., he takes it to be a kind of *pūrvaseva* or *puraścaryā*.

Among its earliest appearances as a term of art, then, would seem to be the famed *Guhyasamājantra* in its fifth and seventh chapters. These two, called the “Foremost of Total Practices” (*samanta-caryāgra*) and “Mantra Practices” (*mantra-caryā*), are explicitly concerned with this issue and are, notably, among the most antinomian of the entire scripture. The *vidyā-vrata* (which, here too, is essentially synonymous) is itself explicitly treated in Chapter Sixteen.⁹⁶

As noted above, the entire antinomian discourse in Chapter Five – ‘advocating’ violating the basic, five-fold Buddhist ethic (*pañcaśīla*), commensality with impure castes, incest and other transgressions, and (most telling) contempt for the guru – is framed by the notion of transcendence of conceptuality (*vikalpa*). Likewise, Chapter Seven is devoted to sexual yogas (which, we have seen, are a central element of the *caryāvrata*) that involve perceiving the world and its contents as divine transformations of buddhas. It ‘climaxes’ near the following verse on the transcendence of dualities to be attained through “meditation on mindfulness of non-origination” (*anutpādānusmṛtibhāvanā*):

All is brilliant by nature, signless, without syllables,

Not dual, not non-dual, peaceful, like space, thoroughly stainless.⁹⁷

Chapter Sixteen elaborates specifically a consort observance (*vidyāvrata*) in which sexuality features prominently (although the consort may be a dryad or similar non-human being), is to be carried out in a forest, involves begging, is associated with antinomianism of the sort advocated in Chapter Five, and is to be performed for six months. Thus, in the GST one sees the development of an idea of *caryā* and [*vidyā*]vrata that is very similar to the form found in the Yoginī Tantras, albeit less explicitly involving funerary elements, *kāpālika* insignia, etc.

There is, however, an important exception to the rule that these terms do not appear in the earlier Tantras and which is essential

⁹⁶ See esp. GST XVI.91–103.

⁹⁷ GST vii.35: *prakṛtiprabhāsvaraṃ sarvaṃ nirnimittaṃ nirakṣaram / na dvayaṃ nādvayaṃ śāntaṃ khasadṛśaṃ sunirmalam ||*

to a proper understanding of the connotation of *vidyāvrata* in the *Guhyasamāja* and subsequent Buddhist literature. This is the intriguing use of the term *vidyāvrata* found in the *Mahāvairocanatantra*. The entire fifteenth chapter of this important early Buddhist Tantra is devoted to the *vidyāvrata* (*rig sngags brtul zhugs*). Its usage in this context contains many of the features associated with the later non-dualist *vidyāvrata*, minus the sexual sense of *vidyā*-qua-consort (in the MVT *vidyā* seems to have its more general meaning of ‘knowledge’ or ‘spell’). It is notable that it uses the terms *caryā* and *vrata* as interrelated concepts: Vajrapāṇi specifically requests instruction on the *vidyāvrata*, “for the sake of those who engage in the practices (*caryā*) of the bodhisattvas by means of mantra.”⁹⁸ This special observance in the MVT also pointedly contains some prototypical features that are central to the later practice of the rite, such as a focus on non-conceptuality and non-discrimination in eating. It involves non-dual perception of good and bad (“gold and gravel becoming equal,” *gser dang bong rdo mnyam gyur*) and involves special eating and breathing rites, including (at one point) eating food without selectivity (*ma blangs pa yi zas*). Here, too, as in the *Guhyasamāja* and elsewhere, the *vidyāvrata* is a special, six month practice that is said to yield no less than buddhahood.⁹⁹

I would suggest that this usage, functioning in the shared cultural and religious idiom, was a further component of the ironic resonance of its new usage in *Guhyasamāja* and subsequent Tantras. Given the evident dependence of the *Guhyasamāja* on the earlier dispensations such as the *Mahāvairocana*, it is virtually certain that the authors of the GST rite intended this to be a commentary of sorts on the rite appearing in the MVT. That is, in addition to the semiological changes being played on the baseline, traditional sense of *vrata*, there is a certain Tantric intertextuality evident here as well in which proto- or semi-non-dualism is challenged to go

⁹⁸ MVT xv: *phyag na rdo rjes gsang sngags kyi sgo nas byang chub sems dpa'i spyad pa spyod pa rnams kyi don du tshigs su bcad pa'i dbyangs kyis rig sngags kyi brtul zhugs zhus so /; sDe bKa' rGyud tha, f. 215b².*

⁹⁹ This might also be considered noteworthy, given the common, mistaken notion that the early Buddhist Tantras were not soteriologically oriented. This view was most recently articulated by Anthony Tribe (2000: 208).

to its logical conclusion. I have earlier made the case that the antinomian inversions of the Mahāyoga and later Tantras are in part directed at the dualistic purity/pollution obsession of many earlier esoteric traditions and this would seem to be another notable case in point.¹⁰⁰

The continuity between the prototype MVT *vidyāvrata* and the later, fully-non-dualist *vrata/caryā* of the Mahāyoga and Yoginī Tantras is further confirmed by a purported side-effect of these practices. The MVT says that:

Gods such as Śakra, Brahmā and the like, *piśācas*, and *mahorāgas*,
Paying homage from afar, will also protect all [associated with the
mantrin].

They will all pay heed and do what they are commanded.

[Divine] physicians, men, gods, *vidyādharas* and *mantradharas*

Will come before [him] and say “what shall we do?”

Obstructers (*vighna*), evil gremlins (*vināyaka*),
demons (*rākṣasa*) and demonesses (*mātrkā*) –

When they see the one who upholds the mantras – pay homage from
afar.¹⁰¹

This passage may profitably be compared with the results promised the practitioner of the *caryā* in the **Vajrayānāntadvayanirākarāṇa* noted above, to wit: “certain non-human beings will on that account be delighted with that [person] and will protect [him/her] in accordance with the Dharma and receive religious instruction from him/her.”¹⁰² Tanemura seems to have considered this merely a curiosity of Jñānaśrī’s presentation. However, it seems clear that the

¹⁰⁰ See Wedemeyer 2007b: 408 and 412–13.

¹⁰¹ MVT, sDe bKa’, rGyud, vol. tha, ff. 216a⁷–216b²: *brgya byin tshangs la sogs pa’i lha // sha za lto ’phye srin po rnams // rgyang ring nas ni phyag ’tshal zhing // thams cad srung ba’ang byed par ’gyur/ // de dag thams cad bka’ nyan cing/ // de yi bka’ bzhin byed par ’gyur/ // sman dang mi dang lha rnams dang/ // rig sngags rnams dang gsang sngags kun/ // ci dag bgyi zhes tshig smra zhing // de yi drung na ’khod par ’gyur // bgegs dang log ’dren ma rungs dang/ // srin po dang ni ma mo rnams/ // gsang sngags ’dzin pa mthong ba’i tshel/ // rgyang ring nas ni phyag ’tshal ’gyur/.*

¹⁰² See above, note 43.

idea of non-human protection following upon a properly non-dualistic perception of reality has deep roots in esoteric Buddhist ideology (if not Buddhist ideology as a whole).¹⁰³

Thus, one can see real continuity between the earliest Buddhist attestation of a *vidyāvrata*, the transgressive *caryā* of the *Guhyasamāja*, and the fully-developed *caryāvrata/vratacaryā* of the Buddhist Yoginī Tantras. They all focus on the attainment of non-dual gnosis, which is the key soteriological virtue in these Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions. The development we see corresponds to a) the adoption of sexual yogas in the case of the GST, and b) a progressively more aggressive semiology of transcendence of purity/pollution dualities in the Yoginī Tantras. While the latter (especially employment of the five polluting meats and ambrosias) is a major element of the GST, it does not appear directly in its treatment of the *vidyāvrata*, so interpretative caution would urge making this distinction, though in so doing we may be exaggerating the difference. Further, the funereal focus is clearly more marked in the Yoginī sources than in the Mahāyoga scriptures, though (again) charnel ground imagery and practice is by no means absent and appears throughout even early Buddhist ascetical literature.

What, then, is the relationship of this rite to the very similar practices of the Śaiva traditions? Albeit, as Lorenzen and others have noted, there is clearly a relationship, from what we have seen in the case of the *caryāvrata* that relationship would seem to have been rather more complex than has been acknowledged by many recent interpreters and the influence would seem clearly to have been mutual. There is a lot of evidence to support the notion that the various Tantric communities interacted frequently if not constantly, sharing ideas and practices, often in an environment of mutual (if, at times, begrudging) recognition.¹⁰⁴ The communi-

¹⁰³ Consider, e.g. *Milindapañha* VI, pp. 351 and 353, wherein observance of the *dhutaṅgas* (including living in a charnel ground) both provides protection (*ārakkhā* – presumably from non-human beings – is listed as one of twenty-eight qualities of keeping these vows) and is considered essential to the attainment of sainthood (*arahatta*) in one life (*na mahārāja dhutaṅgeṣu pubbāsevaṇaṃ vinā ekissā yeva jātiyā arahattaṃ sacchikiriyaṃ hoti*).

¹⁰⁴ Ronald M. Davidson makes a cogent and detailed case for the sustained

ties shared the same civic space, and were generally patronized by the same royal or aristocratic donors.¹⁰⁵ In these circumstances, in India of the Tantric period, there flourished what Phyllis Granoff has called a culture of ‘ritual eclecticism’ in which “rituals [were] a form of religious practice that was essentially non-sectarian or trans-sectarian.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, as Sanderson has indicated, the *Guhyasiddhi* of Padmavajra suggests that Buddhist communities practicing the Mahāyoga Tantras were likely familiar with (able, at least, to simulate) the Śaiva tradition of the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhita*.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, among some Śaiva communities, Buddhist Tantrism was considered a perfectly valid (if less elevated) Tantric revelation. The Kaula *Matasāra*, for instance, reckons Buddhist Tantra one of the five streams (*pañcasrotas*) of lower Tantric initiation, along with Śaiva Siddhānta, Vaiṣṇava, Saura and Gāruḍa.¹⁰⁸

Thus, in these shared ascetical contexts – in which an eclectic ritual culture was widespread (if not universal¹⁰⁹) – deities, rituals and observances were practiced and propagated across traditions. It is certainly possible (as some have suggested) that as part of this process, the Buddhist communities emulated the funereally-oriented ascetical practices of Śaiva Tantrikas. It is not clear, however, that they needed to turn to specifically Śaiva prototypes. This is not to say that they may have taken the practices from an “Indic substratum” as suggested by David Seyfort Rugg – Davidson, Sanderson and others have succinctly indicated the problems of this model, insofar as it seems to postulate an otherwise-unattested *tertium quid* as the source of inter-tradition commonalities.¹¹⁰

interaction and mutual influence of the various Tantric traditions in *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (2002: e.g. 171–235).

¹⁰⁵ See Sanderson 2009: 70–123.

¹⁰⁶ Granoff 2000: 400–401.

¹⁰⁷ See Sanderson 2001: 6 (n. 3) and 23.

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Hatley 2007: 217, n. 72.

¹⁰⁹ Granoff also notes instances in which ritual eclecticism was rejected or proscribed. See Granoff 2000 (esp. 409) and 2001.

¹¹⁰ See Rugg 1964 and 2008; for critical responses, see Sanderson 1994: 92–3, and Davidson 2002: 171–73. Though I also disagree with Rugg on the usefulness of the concept of a substratum, his *Symbiosis* (2008) makes a

However, I think it is clear that the adoption of some version of the Dharmasāstric *mahāvratā* skull-rite as a virtuoso ascetical observance is not an exclusively or distinctively Śaiva phenomenon, but was available as an option for a variety of ascetical groups.¹¹¹

Furthermore, as is also well-known, funereal practice in charnel grounds was nothing new to Buddhist communities. In the (ca. late-fourth/early-fifth century)¹¹² *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, for instance, charnel ground ascetics (*śmaśānika*) are listed as one of many types of Buddhist *yogins*.¹¹³ The *yogin* is therein said to live in “an empty house, a charnel ground, the foot of a tree, a cave, on straw, or in the open air”¹¹⁴ – very similar *yogasthānas* to those one sees in the *caryāvratā*. Also, by the time of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the Buddhist communities were already well along in developing a discourse of transcendence of purity and pollution:

As all things are unreal, there is neither defilement nor purity.¹¹⁵

They also boasted a well-developed critique of the conceptual representation of reality (*vikalpa*) that the Buddhist *caryāvratā* was intended to overcome, to wit:

There is no truly existent thing as conceived by the [epistemically] naive;

useful contribution insofar as it highlights how essential it is to have a strong grasp of pre-Tantric Buddhist literature in order to successfully interpret the Buddhist Tantras.

¹¹¹ Sanderson himself suggests as much, noting that the notion of “taking on, like the Kāpālikas, the visible attributes of the brahmin-slayer,” was available to the Pāñcārthikas as well from “the Dharmasūtras and other orthodox sources” (2006: 165). That is, both Śaiva groups were drawing on Smārta sources, not Śaiva.

¹¹² See Takasaki 1982: 545–46.

¹¹³ See Vaidya, ed. 1963: 103.

¹¹⁴ *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtra* X.335: *sūnyāgāre śmaśāne vā vṛkṣamūle guhāsu vā / palāle ’bhyavakāṣe ca yogī vāsaṃ prakalpayet //*

¹¹⁵ *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtra* III.37ab: *abhāvāt sarvadharmāṇāṃ saṃkleśo nāsti śuddhiś ca /*

Liberation [is] precisely [predicated] on unreality – why don't sophists accept this?¹¹⁶

Thus, on entering the Tantric Age, the Buddhist communities had long since developed the institutional base and the intellectual apparatus to adapt elements of the shared Indian ascetical *Zeitgeist* into the rite of non-dual transcendence of conceptuality that found place in the *Mahāvairocanatantra* and developed through the *Guhyasamāja* and into the *Yoginī Tantras*.

The Śaiva communities also shared the charnel ground ascetical milieu and they were inspired by the skull-bearing *mahāvratā* of the Paurānic Śiva. In the early period, however – pre-tenth century – the Śaiva Tantric traditions did not have an epistemology or soteriology that would support the idea that deliberate transgression of conventional norms would generate a gnosis that would occasion liberation. Rather, the literature we have examined would seem to indicate that, as the *caryāvratā* took shape among Tantric communities, the later Śaiva traditions (or, rather, some of them) gradually adopted this distinctively Buddhist gnostic orientation to the observance. For, in the earliest forms of Śaiva *vratā* up to and including the *Picumata*, the rationale for the adoption of the polluted status of the (anti-)vratin has virtually no epistemic or gnostic focus. It seems to represent merely an attempt to mimic the ascetical behavior of their god Śiva, reflecting a devotion to his worship, a desire for identification or union with Him, and a trend toward publicly marking their sectarian allegiance with funereal accoutrements. Lorenzen has noted this in his work on the Kāpālikas:

The ultimate aim of the Kāpālika observance was a mystical identification or communion with Śiva. Through their imitative repetition of Śiva's performance of the Mahāvratā, the ascetics became ritually 'homologized' with the god and partook of, or were granted, some of his divine attributes, especially the eight magical powers (*siddhis*).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *Saddharmalaṅkāvatārasūtra* III.16: *na bhāvo vidyate satyaṃ yathā bālair vikalpyate | abhāvena tu vai mokṣaṃ kathaṃ necchanti tārīkākāḥ ||*. These sophists (*tārīkika*), incidentally, are precisely the *bête noire* of the Tantrika communities (a usage also found in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, for example).

¹¹⁷ Lorenzen 1991: 80.

The Pāśupata observance is predicated on much the same idea. Its ritual mimesis is articulated thus in AVP 40:

I shall take a bath in ash, which destroys all evils, because Rudra,
when bathed in a bath of ash, became purified by himself.¹¹⁸

The early Śaiva Tantric paradigm for the transgressive *vrata*, then, was merely one of *imitatio dei* – mimicking the activity of the god in the interest of eliding the (presumably mistaken) sense of a gulf between Him/Her and the devotee. In none of these rites is there mention of transcendence of conceptuality or attainment of any epistemic non-duality – the concern seems entirely to be one of non-duality in the sense of union with the god Śiva.¹¹⁹

Consider, too, the items carried by the Śaiva *vrata*s. These are described in the [*Tantrasadbhāva*]/*Kubjikāmata* XXV.51–52 as *āyudha* – literally “weapons,” but in this context (as another term of art) more pointedly referring to the various ‘trademark’ items carried by the gods – that is, the trident of Śiva, the discus of Viṣṇu, etc. This usage reinforces the notion that these items are employed for their mimetic – rather than their gnostic – value.

Nor do the formative scriptures of the Āgamic Śaivas represent the transgressive *vrata* as involved in a gnostic, liberative transcendence of conceptuality. Even the internal, esoteric interpretation of the *vrata*caryā given in *Tantrasadbhāva* and the *Kubjikāmata*, for example, does not mention non-duality at all.¹²⁰ In the

¹¹⁸ AVP40, 4.1: *bhasmasnānam [tāvad] grahīṣyāmi sarvapāpaprāṇāśanam / bhasmasnānena rudro hi snāto 'bhūt pūta ātmanā //*; text and translation from Bisschop and Griffiths 2003: 335.

¹¹⁹ Note the duality (*dvandva*) overcome by e.g. the *rudra*-*vrata* in Śaiva works such as the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* (*caryāpāda*) is not a species of (mental) conceptual duality, but rather contrasts (such as cold/hot) experienced by the *body*. Describing the result of that *vrata*, that scripture states that “after a year, one may conquer all dualities that vex the body” (*saṃvatsarāj jayet sarvān dvandvān deha-prabādhakān*: see *Mataṅgapārameśvarāgama caryāpāda*, p. 410). Cf. *Niśvāsamukha* 4:76.

¹²⁰ KMT xxv.123–155. Interestingly, though, the evidence of the *Tantrasadbhāva*'s esoteric, internal interpretation of the *vrata*caryā and the varieties of consorts described (mother, sister, etc.; KMT xxv.123–167) demonstrates that, just as in the case of the *Guhyasamāja*'s transgressive idiom, in

Brahmayāmala, the *vrata* “from village to village” is characterized merely as “appearing in the form/appearance of the divinity.”¹²¹ Likewise, the *Jayadrathayāmala* – in its Fourth Ṣatka where the similar *vīra-melāpa* ritual is detailed, the focus is merely on “personifying [the] Aghora [form of Śiva]” and so on.¹²² Here, again, the rite is a dramatic enactment of the practitioner’s ultimate unity or identity with Śiva, not of his attainment of a specifically liberative non-dual gnosis. It is the former (or rather the excitement by the former of the potential planted during *dīkṣā* [initiation]) that yields liberation, not gnostic realization as in the case of the Buddhists.

It is only in the later Śaiva sources, those posterior to the (late) eighth century – and thus subsequent to the Buddhist *Guhyasamājatantra* – that transcendence of conceptuality or attainment of non-dual gnosis figures in their discourses about the *caryāvratas*. It would seem evident that *vikalpas* are good in the Pāsupata and Lākula *vratas* (or even the SYM *vidyāvratas*), for the authoritative Śaiva map(s) of the universe, which are to be navigated until one reaches union with Śiva, are precisely conceptual formulations of reality (*vikalpa*). This is even true of the later Āgamic Śaivas, who simply elaborated a more complex and ramified vision of the universe, subsuming the earlier revelations within their new vision. It is only with the more developed Śaiva thought of the Krama and Trika traditions of Kashmir (quite obviously formed under the influence and challenge of Buddhist philosophical and ritual discourses)¹²³ that the Śaiva systems begin move beyond an ontolog-

the Śaiva context as well, the allegedly later, “bowdlerized” interpretation is in fact integral to the earliest stratum of this type of literature.

¹²¹ BY/PM LXXXV.10ab: *grāme grāme vrataṃ tasya devatā-rūpa-lakṣaṇam*; note that the following pāda mentions the *unmatta-vrata* as one option here.

¹²² *Jayadrathayāmala*, ṣatka 4, ff. 206b³–207b⁵; cited in Sanderson 2007: 287. Note that such *melāpas* are precisely where the transgressive rituals are also to be found in the Buddhist Vajrayāna.

¹²³ See Rastogi 1979/1996: 58–63. Sanderson (2007: 369) has likewise noted that “the Krama authors...may well have been the first to adopt and adapt [the concept of the inseparability of cognition and its objects] from Buddhist circles” – precisely the epistemological orientation that would underlie a transgressive, gnostic rite.

ical non-dualism to adopt an epistemological non-dualism.¹²⁴ The earlier Śaiva sources cited by Abhinavagupta in discussing transgressive observance merely refer to overcoming a sense of difference from Śiva (*bhedamala*) or an aim of entering into the heart of Bhairava (*bhairavaḥṛdayānupraveśa*) as a result of antinomian observance.¹²⁵ It was only the Krama scriptures that began to speak of liberation through a non-dual practice of gnostic insight; and, in doing so, they employed characteristically Buddhist terminology, speaking of eliminating concepts (*vikalpa*) and conceptual elaboration (*prapañca*).¹²⁶ Eventually, the Kashmiri Śaiva thinkers of the tenth century and subsequently (i.e. Somānanda [ca. 900–950], Utpaladeva [ca. 925–75] and Abhinavagupta [ca. 975–1025]) began to conceive of a system wherein “the only impurity ... [was] a state of ignorant self-bondage through the illusion that purity and impurity, prohibitedness and enjoinedness were objective qualities residing in things, persons and actions.”¹²⁷ If developing such a view within an otherwise epistemologically realist Śaiva context is not enough to earn one the label “crypto-Buddhist” (*prachanna-bauddha* – as Śaṅkara is said to have been called), it is hard to imagine what would be.

The discourse of the Buddhists, as we noted above, and as we have seen throughout this discussion, is suffused from the very outset with a discourse of epistemic non-duality and transcendence of conceptuality – even, as we have seen, in its earliest form in the *Mahāvairocanatantra* (which well predates the Krama scriptures), as well as in the *Guhyasamāja* (which was probably roughly contemporary). Thus, the only reasonable conclusion would seem to be that the scholar-practitioners of the later Śaiva Tantric traditions – particularly the Krama and the scholastic authors of Trika of the

¹²⁴ Lorenzen (1991: 77) suggests that the Kāpālikas were guided by a quasi-epistemological model of coincidence of opposites, such that “they were at the same time the holiest of all ascetics and the lowest of all criminals” – but the passages he refers to (*loc. cit.*, and on p. 70) deal with Buddhist materials.

¹²⁵ See, e.g., Sanderson 2005: 111.

¹²⁶ See, e.g. KKP ii.65–66.

¹²⁷ Sanderson 1985: 198.

tenth century and subsequently¹²⁸ – while maintaining an established practice of various antinomian *vratas* that were commonly practiced in the diverse ascetic communities of the Indian charnel grounds (and other major *yogasthānas*), gradually transformed their understanding of the place and purpose of the transgressive rites in line with the more epistemological, gnostic focus articulated in Buddhist circles (who, for their part, were not shy about adapting congenial aspects of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Tantric ritual traditions and pantheons).¹²⁹

Conclusion

I have essayed herein to articulate the very specific sense in which *caryā*, *vrata*, and a cluster of related terms function as terms of art in the discourses of Indian esoteric Buddhism. I hope as well to have provoked some further reflection on the palpable irony of this usage, the semiology of the inversions characteristic of this observance, and the prerequisites and proper contexts advocated throughout the Indian literature that treats of it. I also hope to have made some beginning toward a more complete discussion of its intellectual history in Buddhist and Śaiva esoteric circles, noting the thoroughgoing focus on gnostic transcendence of conceptuality in the Buddhist context, an orientation that became normative for later Śaiva esoterism as well. The analysis here has, unfortunately, only

¹²⁸ It may be worth noting that these authors were likely younger contemporaries of the Noble [i.e. Tantric] Āryadeva, whose *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* is already at this time organizing a broad range of Mahāyoga and proto-Yoginī Tanta materials into a new, systematic treatment of the *caryāvrata* as a phenomenon. See Wedemeyer 2007a: esp. 112–120 and 277–328.

¹²⁹ The word ‘adapting’ is worth stressing here. While Sanderson goes to great length to demonstrate the common heritage of Śaiva and Bauddha communities – stressing those elements that seem to him to have Śaiva provenance – he rather downplays the fact that all of these accoutrements (deity clusters, observances, etc.) are in the service of radically divergent soteriological models in the different traditions. In such a circumstance, it makes little sense to speak of ‘overcoding’ of one tradition on another. Rather, whatever exchanges took place, they involved considerable ‘re-coding’ into distinctive (and, occasionally irreconcilable) models of the path to liberation.

scratched the surface of a widely ramified and critically important aspect of Indian esoteric religion in the late first millennium.

To make such a beginning, however flawed, is nonetheless important to progress in the field of Tantric Studies. As a ‘term of art,’ *caryāvrata* (and the many terms largely synonymous with it, such as *tattvayoga*, *unmattavrata*, *vidyāvrata*, etc.) has been widely misconstrued – if not overlooked entirely. The reasons are readily comprehensible, insofar as the terms *caryā* and *vrata* have wide currency as generic terms in both Śaiva and Buddhist Tantric contexts. However, the failure of modern scholars to notice that what seemed to be descriptions to quotidian Tantric ‘practice’ were in fact references to a very special observance has resulted in widespread misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the tradition. This was not just generic practice, or a practice, but “The Practice” extraordinaire: an occasional, time-delimited practice to be undertaken by elite practitioners. Having identified this distinctive usage, and given the fact that it is pervasive in the literature, the contours of scholarly interpretation of Tantric works will necessarily change dramatically.¹³⁰

This transformed understanding does not however mean that the *caryāvrata* is of any less importance to our study of the literature, history, and practices of these traditions. Rather, it opens

¹³⁰ I would further suggest that, when the transgressive elements of the *caryāvrata* appear elsewhere in Tantric ritual and scripture (and they do), they are largely (perhaps entirely) limited to the occasions of initiation (*abhiṣeka*) and special community “feasts” or “gatherings” (*gaṇa*, *melāpa*). Outside of these three contexts (initiation, feasts, *caryā/vrata*) – with the partial exception of the consumption of meats and ambrosias that constitutes an element of daily ritual (*sādhana*) – the cluster of distinctively antinomian elements we have observed are not elsewhere evident in the literature or practices of the Buddhist Tantras. Establishing this is a larger project than possible here; however, the ritual logic is consistent. As we have seen the practice observance is an elite undertaking insofar as it semiotically indicates and instantiates the divine identity of the esoteric practitioner in concrete, lived, social space. It is precisely in initiation (when this identity is first simulated) and in the occasional feasts (when this identity is simulated corporately) that this semiology is most essential. This, it is not surprising that it is precisely in these contexts that the Tantras describe the antinomian practices.

up new questions and provides a powerful new lens with which to understand aspects of the South Asian traditions that had not previously been known to relate to this specific observance. The early ‘proto-Bengali’ Caryāpādas are an important case in point. While it has been clear for some time that these sources are important documents for the study of Bengali Tantrism, they have been taken by a number of authors as reflective of ‘Tantric thought and practice’ broadly construed. However, a moment’s reflection may now suggest to those familiar with their antinomian contents that the famous literature of the *Caryā Songs* (*caryāgīti*) should not thus be construed as representations of a generic Tantrism, but should rather be carefully interpreted with particular and pointed reference to the valences of this distinctive observance.¹³¹

Likewise, I think it is clear that a more critical understanding of the *caryāvrata* is essential to any successful interpretation of the so-called *caryā* dances (*caryānr̥tya*) of Nepal’s Newar Buddhist communities. To date, there has been a woeful lack of modern research on this phenomenon – and what little exists is largely derived from its twentieth-century artistic transmutation at Kalamandapa/Hotel Vajra.¹³² However, the fact that *caryānr̥tya* is traditionally (and still) performed “as a part of [Vajrayāna] ritual especially on the occasion of tantric initiations, great festivals and important pujas”¹³³ – taken together with the conclusions we have reached above about the ritual contexts for the *caryā* in the Vajrayāna Tantras – would suggest the further conclusion that Newar *caryā* dance is a contemporary, attenuated enactment of the Tantric rite of *caryāvrata*.

Likewise, the study of the Tibetan Tantric traditions cannot but be refined by taking cognizance of *caryā* and *vrata* as terms of art. Indeed, as in the case of Sa chen Kun dga’ snying po’s narrative

¹³¹ For instance, the ‘drinking song’ of Virūpa cited by Davidson (2002: 258–262) as evidence for widespread alcoholic libertinism in esoteric Buddhism is found precisely in such a collection of Practice Songs (*caryāgīti*).

¹³² See, for example, Kalamandapa’s *Buddhist Ritual Dance* (1986), and Ahmed 2003.

¹³³ Kalamandapa 1986: 6.

of Kṛṣṇapāda,¹³⁴ the early Tibetans were well aware of the very specific referents of these terms, and their usage was taken over into Tibetan religious discourses.¹³⁵ Even outside Tibetan exegesis of Indian Tantric sources, were one for example to attempt to interpret the Tibetan “Crazy” Movement (*smyon pa*) – featuring such renowned authors as Heruka, the Madman from Tsang (gTsang smyon He ru ka, 1452–1507) – without a firm understanding of the role played in their self-imagination and practice by such concepts as *spyod pa* (*caryā*) and *brtul zhugs* (*vrata*), one would certainly miss a major component of the semiotics of this tradition.¹³⁶ Clearly, the importance of a better grasp of the phenomenon of *caryāvrata* extends beyond India.

The cluster of terms we have examined here is, of course, merely one among many important terms of art that demand close, critical engagement as scholarship on the esoteric traditions proceeds. That we have been able to make the advances we have in our interpretation of this literature and its terminology is largely due to the unremitting labors of those who have preceded us. We count on the dedicated labor of those who follow to clarify, refine, and correct the limited and preliminary understanding we have been able to communicate here.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ See above note 55.

¹³⁵ One might consider 'Gos Khug pa Lhas btsas's *Survey of the Esoteric Community* (*gsang 'dus stong thun*) as a major, early Tibetan work detailing *caryā* as a term of art.

¹³⁶ This was, in fact, the case during an initial presentation on gTsang smyon by a graduate student at the 2005 IABS Conference in London. The rewards of an improved grasp of these concepts may be thoroughly enjoyed in the excellent doctoral dissertation that resulted: see Larsson 2009.

¹³⁷ Limitations of space and cogency have made it impossible in the foregoing to explore in detail the postscriptural understanding of the *caryāvrata*. It would appear for example that the sexual aspect of the rite was foregrounded among a variety of later commentators, including Noble Āryadeva (ca. 875–925; see chapters IX–XI of his *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*) and Abhinavagupta (ca. 975–1025; see chapter XXIX of his *Tantrāloka*).

Appendix I: Chapter nine of the *Buddhakapālatantra*, “The Practice” (*caryāpaṭala*)

Now, henceforth I will explain
The ‘Practice Chapter,’ which is extremely rare.
The *yogin* always performs the practices
With an extremely good woman. 1.

One endowed with the eight powers (*siddhi*)
May then undertake the practices.
Whatever powers beings desire
Those [powers] it always grants. 2.

Taking a skull-bowl in hand
The performer of the observance (*vratin*)
Wanders, [performing the] practices (*caryā*),
Naked, hair loose, everywhere at all times.
Thus should the practices be performed. 3.

Free of all ornamentation,
Like space,
Without doubt, the wise one wanders
From house to house [begging] for food. 4.

All must be considered as pleasing to the mind.
[This is] without a doubt the very foundation of meditation.
Whenever the *yogin* requests alms,
He regards it with a delighted mind. 5.

[If the donor says] ‘no,’ [the *yogin*] gives the empty state.¹³⁸
[If the donor says] ‘sure,’ [the *yogin* gives] meditation.
[If the donor says] ‘go,’ [the *yogin* gives] the unexcelled gnosis.
That is called the Great Seal. 6.

Merely hearing ‘quit,’ the *yogin* devoted to the Dharma
Should eat [whatever] substance [is] placed in¹³⁹ the skull-bowl.
Immediately upon eating the substance,
The wise one falls asleep. 7.

¹³⁸ The quatrain starting with this line through the beginning of the next quatrain (“Merely hearing ‘quit’...”) is not found in the Tibetan translation (neither in Sde dge, Snar thang, Peking, Urga, or Stog). I have based my interpretation on that given in the *Abhayapaddhati* commentary.

¹³⁹ Literally “on.”

In the house, in the yard, on a heap of ashes, at the foot of a tree,
Wherever, whenever, there and then,
Whoever with a delighted mind,
Performs this sort of practice-yoga (*caryāyoga*)
Will certainly attain the Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*).

As is said in the Tantra:

However, wherever, and by whatever, [one] becomes a buddha.
Whatever objects¹⁴⁰ are experienced, all are pure by nature.

Of the *Buddha Skull Tantra*, the Unexcelled Secret of Secrets of the Yoginīs: Chapter the Ninth, on The Practice.

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¹⁴⁰ Skt (or, rather, Pkt) reads *viaya* (*viṣaya*); Tib suggests *vikalpa* (*rnam rtog*).

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Figures

Figure 1

Central terms (and scriptures wherein attested)

caryā (“practice”): GST, CPAMA, BK, ST, HT, SU, YS, CMT, VĀ, GS, CMP, YRM, KMT

vrata (“[ascetical] observance”): AVP40, (MVT), CPAMA, BK, KMT

caryā-vrata (“practice observance”): ST, LS/HA, CMP

vrata-caryā (“observance practice”): CPAMA, ST, HT, YS, YRM, KMT

guhya-vrata (“esoteric observance”): ST, GS

guhya-caryā (“esoteric practice”): GS

tattva-caryā (“reality practice”): ST

vīra-caryāvrata (“heroic practice observance”): LS/HA

trividhā caryā (“three-fold practice”): CMP, YRM

prachanna-vrata (“concealed observance”): GS

Related terms (Probably synonymous, or closely so)

vidyā-vrata (“consort observance”): GST, KMT, (MVT)

unmatta-vrata (“mad/intoxicated observance”): ST, SU, GS, TD

bhusuku-vrata (“observance of eating, sleeping, and defecating”): CMP

yoga-caryā (“yoga practice”): ST, SU

samantabhadra-caryā (“universally good practice”): SU

**avadhūti-caryā* (*kun ’dar gyi spyod pa*) (“central channel practice”): ST

dig-vijaya-caryā (*phyogs las rgyal ba’i spyod pa*) (“practice victorious in all directions”): ST

**ālīngana-caryā* (*’khyud pa’i spyod pa*) (“embracing practice”): ST

paricaryā (“entertainment”?): MKT

Figure II – Sites

	Cross- road	Mountain or moun- tain peak	Charnel ground (<i>śmaśāna</i>)	Place with one tree (<i>ekavṛkṣa</i>)	One <i>līṅgam</i> (<i>eka- līṅga</i>)	Isolated place (<i>vijana</i>)	Liminal zone / “suburb” (<i>prānta</i>)	
AVP40		X						
GST		X		X	X	X		
CPAMA			X			X	X	
MKT							X	
ST	X	X	X	X		X	X	
HT		X	X			X	X	
LS/HA								
SU		X	X	X	X	X		
GS		X	X			X		
CMP		X				X		
KMT	X	X	X	X	X			
total	2	7 or 8	6	4	3	7	4	

	Wandering / homeless	Confluence of rivers	cave	Village / town (empty?)	Forest or garden	Ocean beach	House (of low-caste, empty)
		X	X			near water	
		X					
	X						
				X	X		
		X	X		X	X	
			X	X			
	X						
				X		X	X
	X			X	<i>jīrṇodyāna</i>		X
		X			X		X
	X	X		X	X	X	X
	4	4 or 5	3	5	4 or 5	3 or 4	4

Figure III – Dress/accoutrements

	Ragged monks' robes (3)	Naked	Loose hair	Hide/skin (tiger)	Five ornaments / bone ornaments	Shroud or funereal items	
AVP40							
CPAMA	X				X	X	
MKT					X		
BK		X	X				
ST				X	X	X	
HT				X	X	X	
CMT					X		
LS/HA		X		X			
SU				X	X	X	
YS				X	X		
VĀ					X		
GS					X	X	
CMP							
KMT					X		
Total	1	2	1	5	10	5	

	Hair-thread / sacred thread	Ashes	Cremation ashes	<i>khatvaṅga</i>	<i>ḍamaru</i>	Skulls	Five inch skull pieces in coif
				X or staff			
				staff			
					X		
						X	
	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	X		X		X		X
	X			X	X	X	
	X						
	X			X	X	X	
				X	X		
	5	1	2	5 or 6	6	4	2

Figure IV – Behaviors (prescribed)

	Wandering	Sex/ pleasure	Eat <i>caru</i> or <i>pañcāmṛta</i>	Eat whatever	begging	Commensality	
MVT				X			
GST	X	X	X	X	X	X	
CPAMA	X	X		X	X	X	
MKT		X					
BK	X	X		X	X		
ST				X			
HT		X	X	X		X	
CMT		X					
LS/HA	X	X	X			X	
SU	X			X	X		
YS	X	X				X	
VĀ		X					
GS	X	X	X			X	
CMP	X	X	X	X	X	X	
TD	X						
KMT	X	X				X	
	10	12	5	8	5	8	

	Eat from skull	Songs / music	Dance	Play or like a child	Lion-like	Drink alcohol	Eat meat, drink blood	Break 5-vows
						X	semen	X
		X						
		X	X			X	X	
	X							
		X	X	X	X		X	X
	X	X	X		X	X	X	
				X		X		X
					X			
					X			
		X	X					
		X	X		X		X	X
		X	X		X			
					X			
	2	7	6	2	7	4	4-5	4

Figure V – Behaviors (proscribed)

	Recitation (japa)	<i>mālā / akṣamālā</i>	Meditation (dhyāna)	Worship (pūjā)	Fire- offering (homa)	Astrology	
MVT							
GST	X						
CPAMA							
BK							
ST	X		X	X	X		
HT	X		X		X		
CMT							
LS/HA	X		X	X			
SU	X	X		X	X	X	
YS	X						
GS						X	
CMP	X		X		X	X	
	7	1	4	3	4	3	

	Penance / austerity (<i>duṣkara</i>)	Discriminating w/regard to in/edible	Value judgments / con- ceptuality	<i>maṇḍala</i> rites	<i>mudrā</i>	Texts	Bathing	Homage to deities or stūpas
			X					
	X		X					
		X				X		
			X					
	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
		X	X				X	X
			X					
		X	X					
			X		X			
			X	X	X	X		X
				X		X		X
	2	6	10	3	3	4	1	4

Figure VI – Qualifications/prerequisites

	A little “heat” (<i>ūṣma</i>) or power (<i>sāmarthya</i>)	After giving body	Self- consecration	(Tantric) learning (<i>bahūsruta</i>)	
CPAMA					
BK					
ST	X	X			
HT	X	X			
CMT					
SU	X	X		X	
YS	X				
VĀ					
GS			X		
CMP			X		
TD			X		

Figure VII – Duration

	1 Month	2 months	3 months	4 months	
AVP40	X	X	X	X	
MVT					
GST					
CPAMA					
CMP	X (or fortnight)				
KMT	X or (12 days/fortnight)				

	Abandon wealth, life, wife	Endowed with the 8 (worldly) siddhis	After sin has been con- quered	Passionless body	Meditative absorption / realization
				X	X
		X			
			X		
	X				
					X
					X
					X

	5 months	6 months	1 year	12 years	lifetime
	X		X	X	X
		X			
		X			
		X			
		X (max)			
		X	X (1–12 years)		