

# Significant Otherness: Reinterpreting Some Well-Known Meetings with the Yoginīs in the Light of Vidyāpīṭha Texts

**Abstract.** This chapter proposes a new interpretation of three well-known stories of meetings with Yoginīs. Some such stories have been translated multiple times from the Sanskrit, beginning in as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. However, with the recent appearance and cataloguing of manuscript materials from Nepal that include the Vidyāpīṭha Tantras (the so-called “Tantras Dealing with the Invocations of the Throne of Female Deities”), a better understanding and thus a new interpretation of these stories is now possible. Behind the strange and cruel actions of the Yoginīs appears a design of exquisite complexity and beauty, affording the reader a better vision of the virtually unknown tantric world.

**Keywords.** Śaiva tantric traditions, Vidyāpīṭha Tantras, Yoginīs, transgression, re-interpretation of Sanskrit literature

## 1 Introduction

Meetings with the Yoginīs—a circle of goddesses that particularly feature in ritual practices associated with the Bhairava Tantras of the Mantramārga branch of Śaivism—are described in Sanskrit literature in terms of awe, fear, or ecstasy, regardless of whether the text belonged to the initiated or was written for the amusement of the laypeople. These meetings constitute the best examples of confronting life-changing significant Otherness. Each encounter may be compared to a leap of faith with uncertain but often diametrically opposed results: either death or the ability to fly, either being devoured alive or meeting a beloved, and so on. The interpretation of such meetings, however, is an issue. The problem is not simply that they are written in Sanskrit but that there is an altogether different, “tantric” logic behind them, hence why it is difficult to understand the precise role of the Yoginīs in these meetings.

To uncover this tantric logic, two kinds of texts will be compared here: (1) the tantras of initiated practitioners, and (2) the stories about meetings with the Yoginīs that belong to texts for the non-initiated. The relevant tantric texts were not widely available until the articles of Alexis Sanderson in the 1990s, even though well-known texts such as the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (*KSS*), or “The Ocean of the Rivers of Stories”, and the *Rājatarānginī* (*RT*), or “The River [of the Lives] of the Kings”, had already been edited and translated, as early as in the first half of the nineteenth century. As such, the meanings behind these stories have remained largely inaccessible until now. This chapter aims to fill this void and offer an analysis of the stories of encounters with the Yoginīs in the light of the tantric texts that have become available in recent years thanks to the efforts of the Nepal–German Manuscript Preservation Project, or NGMPP.<sup>1</sup>

Apropos the texts of the initiated, I shall be referring to the *Tantrasadbhāva* (*TST*), or “The Essence of the Tantras” (ca. eighth century), where there are some hints on meetings with the Yoginīs. The main source, however, shall be the *Jayadrathayāmala* (*JY*), or “The Tantra of Yāmala Kind Revealed to Jayadratha” (ca. tenth century),<sup>2</sup> which was the most probable source of the practices described in the literature for the non-initiated, such as the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (*BKM*), or “A Flower Collection From the Bṛhatkathā”, both written (or rather redacted<sup>3</sup>) in eleventh-century Kashmir.

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1 The NGMPP was founded in 1970 and ran until March 2002. Its successor project is the Nepalese–German Manuscript Cataloguing Project (NGMCP). See <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/forschung/ngmcp/history/about-ngmpp.html>.

2 The *JY* is an encyclopedic tantra, summarising the content and standardising the practices of some 400 earlier texts belonging to various tantric traditions. It is supposed to consist of 24,000 verses, i.e. 4 *ṣaṭkas* each containing 6000 verses (however, in reality, we have slightly around 22,000 as at least 2 chunks from the *ṣaṭka* 2 are lost). The text, which presents itself as a revelation of deepest tantric secrets from Bhairava to the Goddess, and thus having no human author, brings all ancient goddesses under a single roof, calling the supreme Goddess Kālī or Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, “She, Who Devours Time”. The practices described in this text are rather extreme; they include numerous antinomian elements such as the partaking of body-products and human and animal sacrifices.

3 Both texts bring to poetic Sanskrit the same material, likely written in a non-Sanskrit language that has not survived. The content of this “proto-*KSS*” can be reconstructed from the passages where both Somadeva 1889 and Kṣemendra 1982 agree. The discovery of this proto-*KSS* belongs to Sanderson, personal communication with the author, 8 June 2005.

## 2 The *Mahārthamañjarī*: Maheśvarānanda meets a *siddhayoginī*

The *Mahārthamañjarī* (*MM*), or “A Flower Collection of the Krama Tradition”,<sup>4</sup> was written by the Krama-initiated Gorakṣa (alias Maheśvarānanda) in the twelfth century in South India, in a region which the author calls Coḷa. It consists of seventy verses on the recognition of the supreme state written in Mahārāṣṭrī Prākṛit with an auto-commentary in Sanskrit. In the very last part of the auto-commentary, right before the final colophon of the *MM*, Maheśvarānanda relates the story of its composition, provoked by the fact that the author had met a *yoginī*.

This passage was translated into French by Lilian Silburn as early as 1968.<sup>5</sup> And although the translation is correct, considering that so few tantric texts were available in the 1960s and the fact that Silburn was the first to provide translations of the Krama texts in European languages, some key aspects of the encounter demand new interpretation. I retranslate here Silburn’s summary of the story into English:

After a brief account of the Krama system, its origins, and its transmission through Śivānandanātha and then by a series of masters up to his own guru Mahāprakāśa, he [Maheśvarānanda] confides that he used to constantly worship the deity, meditate, and recite formulas. One day, he had just completed a ritual, [making] offerings of flowers, perfumes, [and] drinks to the Supreme Goddess, and was in the company of his partner (*dūtī*) in the sacrificial circle, absorbed in a blissful state, when appeared before him an extraordinary *siddhayoginī* dressed as an ascetic in patched rags (*kanthā*), carrying a trident in one hand and a skull in the other.

Maheśvarānanda offered her a seat, paid her homage, and instructed the *dūtī* to give her money, but the *siddhayoginī*, enraged, said in Mahārāṣṭrī, “What good is all this!” She gestured with her hand the number seven and added: “This *mudrā* must be transmitted and [its] fruit harvested.” With that, she touched Maheśvarānanda’s forehead with the skull and disappeared. The next morning, Maheśvarānanda went to his master and told him of the events of the [previous] night; he [the master] saw in it the sign that he [Maheśvarānanda] had to turn away from the multiplicity of objects of worship and set out the true way in seventy verses in the Mahārāṣṭrī language. He interpreted the ragged clothes of various shades as the symbol of the objective world in its diversity; the trident, as the triple energy: will, knowledge, and activity; and the skull, like the human being, as the expression *kanthāsūlakapālamātravibhāva*, denoting that which manifests the entire universe through the subject limited by the three energies. This is why Maheśvarānanda transcribed this revelation in seventy verses and in Prākṛit

4 Mahārtha, “The Supreme Aim,” here refers to the Krama. All translations of sources in this chapter are mine unless stated otherwise.

5 For the original French, see Silburn 1968: 10.

Mahārāṣṭrī; he entitled it the *Mahārthamañjarī*, “Flower Wreath of the Supreme Sense”; he then translated it into Sanskrit and glossed it himself in a long commentary called *Parimala*, “Perfume”.

This short description of the encounter leaves us with a lot of open questions: What is the *mudrā* the *siddhayoginī* gestures? Why did she touch Maheśvarānanda’s head with a skull? When and how does Maheśvarānanda realise the identity of the *yoginī*? How is the number seven related to her? To clarify those questions, I shall retranslate the main lines of the story into English from the Trivandrum edition of 1919, commenting on the parts of text that have an important—yet hitherto unexplained—meaning if one reads the passage in the light of the *Jayadrathayāmala* (*JY*).

He [Maheśvarānanda], the student of the illustrious Guru Mahāprakāśa, was doing regular worship of gods, mantra recitation (*japa*), and visualisations (*dhyāna*). One day, having satisfied the Supreme Goddess with the offerings of perfumes, flowers, juices, and so on, and having entered a special state between wakefulness and sleep, he experienced the intensely joyful state consisting in the supreme light of his own consciousness (*svasamrambhaparāmarśa*), at the same time being in a close embrace with his partner (*dūtī*), smiling in a state of bliss and with the eyes bulging in pleasure.

At this moment, he perceived an unknown woman wearing [a] *kanthā* (a sort of cloth made of rugs), and holding a trident and a human skull, decorated with vermilion (*sindūra*). Having seen this accomplished woman [*siddhā*, also a term for the Yoginīs in later Krama], he makes the usual rituals consisting in offering his seat, food, and other ritual procedures as well as a (money) gift (*dakṣiṇa*), which he instructed *dūtī* to give to the *yoginī*.

The *yoginī*, who is free from desires (*niḥsprhā*), appeared to be angry (*kruddheva*), saying, “For what?” in Mahārāṣṭrī. With her hand she displayed *mudrā* seven (*saptamudrā*).<sup>6</sup>

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6 *MM*, p. 197–198: “atha kālakramavaśāc coladeśaśiromaṇiḥ / mahāprakāśo nāmāsīd deśiko ḍṛkkriyottaraḥ // tasya śiṣyo’bhavad dhīmān gorakṣo nāma vaśyavāk / maheśvarānanda iti prāptapūjyāhvayo mahān // arcayan devatām nityam japan dhyāyamś ca niścalam / paryatamś ca diśāmantān kālam kañcid avāhayat // athaikadā niśṭhinyām āsīno yāgamaṇḍape / tarpayitvā parām devīm gandhapuṣpākṣatāsavaiḥ // āsvādyānandapātrāṇi tīṇi tīvrāṇi tanmanāḥ / svasamrambhaparāmarśabhavyām anubhavan prathām // jāgarāsvapnayor madhyamadhyāśya mahatīm daśām / dūtyāḥ stanataṭotsaṅgam aparāṅgena pīḍayan // pradīpaiḥ kuśalair eva pradīptair aparokṣitaḥ / āste sma vismayākrāntaḥ kahlārotpullalocanaḥ // atrāntare striyam kāñcit kanthāśūlakapālinīm / sa dadarśa killokkām sindūrālaṅkṛtālikām // ālokya ca sa tāṃ siddhām kurvannāsannam āsanam / upāharad udāraśrīḥ pūjopakaraṇam kramāt // dakṣiṇām ca yathā śakti dātum dūtīm samādiśat / kruddheva yoginī sā ca kim ebhir iti niḥsprhā // mahārāṣṭrabhuvam bhāṣām prayuñjānā smitottaram / saptasamkhyocitām mudrām badhnatī hastapallave // [extract resumes at footnote 11]”.

## Significant Otherness

Silburn interprets the *siddhayoginī*'s gesture as the true hand-gesture meaning of *sapta* as “seven”. However, in light of the *Tantrasadbhāva* and the *Jayadrathayāmala*, another understanding that in fact brings the pieces of the story together becomes possible. Let us follow a few lines of interpretation of this cryptic sign.

First, it might indeed be interpreted as *mudrā* number seven, which supposes that there was a stable sequence of *mudrās*. There is some evidence for this. For example, stable lists of *mudrās* (called *gotramudrā*, i.e. a family of *mudrās*) are linked to the Mātṛkās (a group of usually seven mother goddesses frequently depicted together in Hindu texts) and some kinds of *yoginī* in the *Jayadrathayāmala*:

As for the Yogeśīs, i.e. the Ladies of Yoga, O Fortunate, there are seven kinds at the level of *gocara*. Brahmā (one related to the god Brahmā), Rudra, Skanda, Viṣṇu, Pretapati (i.e. Yama, god of death) [. . .] Indra, [and] Īśvara are [the seven] illustrious clans of the Mātṛs, of which the [following] *gotramudrās* are explained [by order]: *kamaṇḍalu* [ritual water pot], trident, *cakra*, spear, stick, *vajra*, and skull.<sup>7</sup>

This list is reproduced graphically in Table 1. According to this list, we might suggest that the *siddhayoginī* showing Maheśvarānanda a skull signifies that she is likely related to the Seventh Mātṛkā, Cāmuṇḍā/Yogeśī. The skull is, after all, identified in the *Jayadrathayāmala* precisely as *mudrā* number 7.

**TABLE 1** *Mudrās* by Mātṛkā and related gods

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hindu god	Brahmā	Rudra	Skanda	Viṣṇu	Yama	Indra	Īśvara
Corre- sponding Mātṛkā	Brahmī	Raudrī	Kaumārī	Vaiṣṇavī	Vārāhī	Aindrī	Cāmuṇḍā / Yogeśī
<i>Mudrā</i> of the Mātṛkā	<i>kamaṇḍalu</i>	trident	spear	<i>cakra</i>	stick	<i>vajra</i>	skull

One can ask, however, why would this be of any relevance to Maheśvarānanda? He was well aware of the writings of Abhinavagupta,<sup>8</sup> the eleventh-century philosopher and representative of the school of Kashmiri Shaivite monism, to

<sup>7</sup> *JY* 3.32.49–51ab (205vv6–7): “yogeśīnām [MSS: yogesānām] mahātāte gocarāḥ sapta kīrtitāḥ / brahmā rudra kumārāś ca viṣṇu pretapatis tathā // indrasya ī[MSS: i]śvaraś caiva sreṣṭhā mātrigaṇasya tu / [1] kamaṇḍalu [2] triśūlaṃ ca [3] cakkrāṃ [4] śaktis tathaiva ca // [5] daṇḍam [6] vajraṃ [7] kapālaṃ ca gotramudrā prakīrtitā *ṛ*”.

<sup>8</sup> *MM* mentions Abhinavagupta in the commentary after v. 66 and after v. 71.

who found in the *Jayadrathayāmala* not only its Krama elements but also its tantric codes and symbols. Indeed, Maheśvarānanda inherits his understanding of symbols from the Abhinavagupta line of transmission. But why would Maheśvarānanda interpret her level as the being the highest kind of Yoginī, the Sidhhayoginī, a synonym for Yogeśvarī, or “Supreme Lady of Yoga”, having barely seen her? Another text for the initiated, the *Tantrasadbhāva*, especially its chapter 16, is an authoritative manual of how one should communicate with the Yoginīs. The non-verbal communication by means of *mudrās* is considered the best. The *mudrās* are classified into those shown by the Yoginīs and those constituting response *mudrās*, usually demonstrated by tantric practitioners (*sādhakas*). By means of these *mudrās* the Yoginī shows her level of accomplishment, the time and place of the secret meeting, but, most importantly, her clan (*kula* or *gotra*); that is, to which Mātṛkā she is related. If the practitioner is of the same clan (that is defined during the initiation), the Yoginī can make him advance faster. However, if the *sādhaka* makes a mistake in showing *mudrās*, the Yoginīs will laugh at him. Besides, there are different levels and kinds of Yoginī: not all of them are good to meet, some amuse themselves by devouring the disrespectful practitioner, others bring sickness or behave like vampires.<sup>9</sup> The most relevant passage in the *Tantrasadbhāva* for the *Mahārthamañjarī* case runs as follows: “One who has hair standing upwards, and shining like fire, is the Supreme Lady of Yoga (Yogeśī), no doubt. The *mudrā*, which is to be shown in such a case, is a skull and a spear/trident.”<sup>10</sup> These two objects are precisely what she holds in her two hands (see my translation above of the Trivandrum 1919 edition of the *MM*). Thus, this is likely to be the sign of recognition that would make it clear to Maheśvarānanda that she is a *siddhayoginī*.

But what about the hand-gesture meaning of “seven” or holding the skull as an object of *mudrā* seven? My theory is that she shows Maheśvarānanda the skull on the following grounds. Since she refuses to take a seat, she is still standing holding the trident and skull. Holding these two objects would require both her hands, not least because iconographically these objects are typically assigned to two different hands. Moreover, in the continuation of the *MM* story she treats the skull precisely as the *mudrā*:

“All that is useless [lit. “What for?”],” says she who wears rugs as clothes.  
“This *mudrā* is to be given and its fruit received.” While saying that, she,

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9 More on this can be found in my SOAS lecture, “The Yoga of the Yoginīs: Advanced Level”, available via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6chJrE7XBM&t=2757s>.

10 *TST* 16.280: “ūrdhvakeśī jvalābhā tu yogeśī sā na saṁśayaḥ / mudrām tasya pradarśeta kapālam śūlam eva vā //” (Ed. A. Sanderson)

## Significant Otherness

with her hand holding [the] skull, touches his [Maheśvarānanda's] head without hesitation and disappears.<sup>11</sup>

This confirms that the skull is the *mudrā*. However, touching the head with a skull is in fact one of the some twenty variations of tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*), described thusly in the *Jayadrathayāmala*: “Having touched the head [of the initiand] with a skull, [the guru] should assign the *samputā* [the combination of mantra elements, usually placed before and after the mantra] to the heart.”<sup>12</sup> That is, when she touches him with the skull, she not only empowers but also transmits to him the *vidyā* (the mantra of the Goddess) in some form. This clarifies another cryptic passage in Silburn’s translation—“cette *mudrā* doit être transmise et (son) fruit récolté”, in French, or in English, “this *mudrā* should be transmitted and its fruit received”.<sup>13</sup> On its own, this is hard to understand. But now we may interpret it with the help of the last *JY* passage as: “I give you the initiation, let it be fruitful, i.e. may you get full realisation.”

Maheśvarānanda receives it as a great wonder (*mahadāścaryam*) and ponders over it for the rest of the night. In the morning he runs to his guru, and, having worshipped him, relates the story. The guru, touched by the meritorious deed of the ritual of his disciple, interprets the words and the mysterious behaviour of the Yoginī as follows: the “*Alam artha*”, “for what?” encompasses the “aim”.<sup>14</sup> Thus, by saying *Alam artha*, “no aim to achieve”, she meant that she is a *siddhayoginī*; that is, a completely realised being.<sup>15</sup>

The guru continues: “The fact that she showed the sign ‘seven’, with her flower-bud hand [. . .].” He is playing here with the words: the “bud-like hand” (*karakuḍmala*) should help Maheśvarānanda gain the “fruit”. It might also hint at the shape of the *mudrā*, which allows us to bring in a description of the “Bud-*mudrā*” from the *Jayadrathayāmala*:

Listen, O friend of the leaders of heroes (*vīras*), to the great *mudrā* called “bud”. By this the hundred million mantras awaken, O Goddess, and all of them becoming facing, that is, turned towards the practitioner, O One Who is Worshipped. Having made the hand like a bud [i.e. with the fingertips joined together], one should place it near the heart. The elbows always

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11 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: “alam arthair iyaṃ kanthā vasordhārāṃ hi varṣati / pradīyatām iyaṃ mudrā phalaṃ ca pratipādyatām // ittham ābhāsamāṇaiva sakapālena pāninā / sprśantī mastakaṃ tasya niśāṅkaṃ sā tirodadhe //”.

12 *JY* 3.31.20ab (200v6): “kapālena śiraḥ [MSS: śira] sprṣtvā samputā hṛdaye nyaset /”.

This passage has been edited by A. Sanderson.

13 Silburn 1968: 10.

14 Artha, or Mahārtha, the supreme aim, is also one of the names of the Krama tradition.

15 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: “alam artha prapañcena piṇḍito'rthaḥ prakāśyate / alam arthair iti prāha yad iyaṃ siddhayoginī // yacca saptocitāṃ samkhyāṃ kurvāṇā karakuḍmale /”.

remain equally placed, forming a slender body.<sup>16</sup> This is what is called “bud”; it gives *siddhis* in the mantra-invocations.<sup>17</sup>

The phrase “*siddhi* in the mantra-invocations” in such a context means precisely “full realisation”, that is, complete success in the practice, and hence the “fruit” referred to by the Yoginī.

This mysterious bud of *mudrā* seven and the ambiguity and fluidity of its nature (a real object, a sign/object of recognition of Mātṛkās and Yoginīs, a secret gesture used in tantric rituals for communication) has flourished into a net of references to the preceding tantric traditions, but in fact, it also contains a hint at the identity of the Yoginī. Maheśvarānanda’s guru says while commenting on the method of achieving the “fruit”:

It would be favourable, having overstepped the “creation”,<sup>18</sup> to concentrate on the worship of that “essence of sound”,<sup>19</sup> by means of the sounds having the essence of the mantras, by which the Supreme Goddess is worshipped.<sup>20</sup>

Here, for the first time, the guru links the appearance and actions of the Yoginī with the mantra. The fact that she gestures “seven”, in his opinion, points not to some general “Yogeśvarī”<sup>21</sup>; he actually gives a name for the tantric goddess who came to Maheśvarānanda. “It is the Lady of the Seven Million Mantras (Saptakoṭīśvarī) that is to be worshipped by you”, says the guru, “otherwise this *mudrā* would not have been given”.<sup>22</sup>

This name is important, and, although the number of mantras is said to be seven million (*saptakoṭī*) in the very early Śaiva texts, the name of the goddess as such only occurs in the *Jayadrathayāmala* 4.67. Not only does the name fit, an

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16 Tentative translation.

17 *JY* 4.2.130–132 (10v3–5): “mukulākhyā mahāmudrā śṛṇu virendravatsale / yayā prabuddhayā devī maṃtrakotoṣātāny api // sādhakābhīmukhāḥ sarvve bhavantiha surārcite / mukulaṃ hastam evādau hr̥tpradeśe niyojayet // tiryak same kūrparake kṛtvā sutanu sarvva-dā / mukulākhyā bhavaty eṣā mantrāvāhanasiddhidā //”.

18 The normal order of things in Krama terminology, *sṛṣṭim ullaṅghya*. *MM*, p. 195: “lokollaṅghanetyādi / tādr̥ṣī hi yoginīnām sthitiḥ sādhakān pratyabhimatamupasthāpaya-ti”. That is, Maheśvarānanda understands the state above or beyond the world as the state of the Yoginīs.

19 The word used here in the original is *śābdī*, which can refer to Sarasvatī herself, goddess of speech and eloquence, but may also be a reference to Śābdakālī in *ṣaṭka* 4 of the *JY*.

20 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: “saphalīkriyatām eṣā bhāvajñenety abhāṣata / tadārthī sṛṣṭim ullaṅghya śābdīm sā kāñcid icchati / yena mantrātmakaiḥ śabdaiḥ parameśvary upāsyate //”.

21 Cf. Yogeśī in footnote 7.

22 *MM*, p. 198, cont.: “saptakoṭīśvarī devī tayā nūnam upāsyate / anyathā tādr̥ṣīm eva mudrām na pratipādayet //”.



extremely rare occurrence (1 in 15,000 probability),<sup>23</sup> but so does its gloss. The *Jayadrathayāmala* describes this goddess as follows: “O Goddess, she is called Saptakoṭeśvarī because the seven million mantras arose from her body, [she is] containing all of them inside.”<sup>24</sup> Maheśvarānanda also refers to this very gloss just before the story of the meeting: “This venerable *vidyā* of the Saptakoṭīśvarī [. . .] seven million great mantras arose from the mouth of Mahākālī.”<sup>25</sup>

There is, of course, a difference between seven and seven million. But this does not undermine the proposition that it was Saptakoṭīśvarī that came to visit Maheśvarānanda in the *Jayadrathayāmala*. The mathematical discrepancy is solved rather easily: her coded *vidyā* contains precisely seven syllables and when decoded runs as: KAḤ SAḤ CAṆḌINI SAḤ KAḤ //.<sup>26</sup> Let me explain the code in detail while translating the passage:

The first of the *yonis* [i.e. consonants] [should be raised and] joined with “creation”. One should raise the “nectar” in the same way. “First of the 3rd” is to be given alone, followed by “the horse” standing on “the vulnerable point”. Having decorated it with “triple *bindu*”, one should raise “*niṣedha*” in the same way. Again, “*soma*” joined with “creation” and “the first of the *yonis*” in the same way. The seven-syllabled very powerful [*vidyā*] of Caṇḍakālī has [thus] been explained.

That is, if we go back to Maheśvarānanda’s story, by showing him the sign referring to “seven”, the Yoginī, at the same time, transmits to him the mantra containing seven syllables, or at least gives a hint thereof, as his way to gaining full realisation. This is the only thing that matters in this mysterious transmission, and it unfolds to englobe the whole tradition of the “Clan of Kālī” (Kālīkula).

In fact, all *vidyās* in the *JY* call forth the forms or aspects of the main goddess of the Kālīkula tradition: Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī. Maheśvarānanda further identifies the

23 I have collected and linked into a searchable RDF (resource description framework) graph more than 15,000 different names of the Goddesses, Mātṛkās, Yoginīs, and other such beings from all major purāṇas and tantric texts available to me. This document shall be available on [kramanet.org](http://kramanet.org) after final cleaning.

24 *JY* 4.67.179cd–180ab (179v1–2): “saptakoṭyas tu mantrāṇām yasyād dehāt samutthitaḥ // prativarṇāntarā devi saptakoṭeśvarī tathā //”.

25 *MM*, p. 194: “tat śrīmatsaptakoṭīśvarīvidyā [. . .] “saptakoṭī mahāmantrā mahākālī-mukhodgatāḥ” //”.

26 *JY* 4.67.163–165ab:

sṛṣṭiyuktaṃ yonipūrvam tadvac cāmṛtam uddharet / [KAḤ SAḤ]  
tripūrvam kevalam deyam hayamarmasthitam punaḥ // [CAṆḌ-]  
tribindulāmcchitam kṛtvā niṣedham ta[th, conj., MSS: va]jam uddharet / [+INI]  
punaḥ somam sṛṣṭiyutaṃ tadvad yonyādyam uddharet // [SAḤ KAḤ]  
saptākṣarā samākhyātā caṇḍakālī mahābalā /

*siddhayoginī* with her.<sup>27</sup> His guru orders him to write a text in seventy verses or *sūtras* glorifying Her, Who is Pregnant with Mantras (Mantragarbhinī; yet another gloss of Saptakoṭīśvarī) in the Krama tradition. That is precisely what Maheśvarānanda did. The purpose of the text echoes closely *JY* 4.67 again.<sup>28</sup>

Let us summarise: Silburn, unfortunately, had no key to the passage describing Maheśvarānanda's meeting with the Yoginī because the *JY* and the *TST* had not yet entered the academic world at the time when she was writing her translation. The “*mudrā* seven”, which she did not clarify, has unfolded into the full initiation for Maheśvarānanda including an empowerment and a mantra transmission. Without access to the tantric texts, specifically the *JY*, many aspects of this story would have remained hidden from the reader.

This was an example of reinterpreting one tantric text (the *Mahārthamañjarī*) in the light of another (the *Jayadrathayāmala*) belonging to the same line of transmission. Let us now consider some examples of encounters with the Yoginīs from the literature written for the non-initiated public.

### 3 The *Rājatarāṅginī*: King Baka meets Bhaṭṭā Yogeśvarī

The *Rājatarāṅginī* (*RT*), or “The River [of the Lives] of the Kings”, a historical text from Kashmir incorporating some fascinating tantric elements, describes at 1.22.331–334 how a King Baka was sacrificed by a Yoginī:

There the king passed sixty-three years and thirteen days as ruler of the earth. Then a certain sorceress [*yogeśvarī*], Bhaṭṭā by name, having assumed the appearance of a lovely woman, approached the king one evening. Losing his sense over her various captivating words, he joyfully accepted an invitation to view the wonders of [her] sacrificial feast [*yāgotsavamāhātmyam*]. Then when in the morning the sovereign came to that place followed by his hundred sons and grandsons, she made of him a sacrificial offering to the “circle of the goddesses” [*devīcakropahāratām*]. To this day there is seen on a rock the double impression of her knees, showing [where], on attaining by that act supernatural power, she has risen to the sky. Even to this day the recollection of this story is kept alive in the Maṭhas of Kherī by [the image of] the god Śatakopāleśa, the “circle of the Mothers”, and by that rock.<sup>29</sup>

27 *MM*, p. 192 explicitly calls her “Yoginī having a form of Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī” (śrīkālasaṃkarṣiṇīrūpām yoginīm).

28 *MM*, p. 199–200: “imām eva ca saṃgrāme bandhuhatyā parānīmukham / mukundo bodhayāmāsa syandanasthaṃ dhanañjayam // kṣaṇam ālocitā'py eṣā jīvanmuktiṃ prayacchati /”. *JY* 4.67 consists of a long list of *prayogas*, including those for war, but the main purpose of the practice remains the goddess Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī in her various forms and mantras.

29 Stein 2009: 49–50, *RT* vol. 1: 29, 1.22.330–335: “tatra triṣaṣṭir varṣāṅgāṃ satrayodaśavāsarā / atyavāhyata bhūpena tena pṛthvīm praśāsata // atha yogīśvarī kācid

## Significant Otherness

This passage had been translated into French by Anthony Troyer in 1840,<sup>30</sup> and provides a rather misleading interpretation of the actions of a Yoginī. The reader sees her as a sort of witty shape-shifting psychopath, killing people in public and flying away like some kind of UFO. However, shocking as it might appear, this passage speaks not about the luck of the Yoginī, but about that of the king.

The king is most likely to be a “special victim”, a notion described in detail in various Vidyāpīṭha tantras,<sup>31</sup> because he is high-born, accomplished, has a family, and also because upon killing him, the Yoginī achieves immediate *siddhis*. In the tantric texts of the Vidyāpīṭha, such a victim would be called an “N-*janmapaśu*”, a victim (*paśu*) reborn *n* number of times to be sacrificed by the Yoginīs.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the king comes there out of his own free will, fitting the image of the N-*janmapaśu* perfectly. But what internal tantric textual proofs do we have?

The closest tantric passage that would put together Kapālīśa (“Lord of Skulls”, or in the *RT*: “Lord of a Hundred Skulls”), Yogeśvarī, and a sacrificial victim is a passage in the *Brahmayāmala*, also known as the *Picumata*,<sup>33</sup> edited and translated by Sanderson, which bestows on those who can perform it the ability to fly:

With the fluid of the body he should gratify the god [Kapālīśabhairava] who resides beyond the five voids [along the central channel]. This worship is the highest secret of the Yogeśvarīs. [I have taught it] to you so that Mantra adepts that seek to master the state of the Khecara may succeed.<sup>34</sup>

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bhaṭṭākhyā rajanīmukhe / kṛtvā kāntākṛtiṃ kāmyām upataste viśāṃ patim // tayā manoharais taistair vanair glapitasmr̥tiḥ / sa yāgotsavamāhātmyaṃ draṣṭuṃ hr̥ṣṭo nyamantryata // putrapautraśatopetaḥ prātas ca tatra tato gataḥ / cakravartī tayā ninye devīcakropahāratām // karmaṇā tena siddhāyā vyomākramaṇasūcakam / jānumudrādayaṃ tasyā dṛṣadyadyāpi dṛṣyate // devaḥ śatakapāleṣo mātṛcakraṃ śilā ca sā / khīre maṭheṣu tadvarttā smṛtim adyāpi gacchati //”.

30 Troyer 1840, vol. 2: 36–37, vv. 332–337: “Le règne de ce souverain de la terre dura soixante-trois ans et treize jours. Pendant ce temps, une magicienne, appelée Bhaṭṭa, ayant pris une forme belle et attrayante, aborda le roi à la chute du jour. Alors le roi, dont la mémoire était ravie par mille discours séduisants, fut invité à venir voir joyeux une grande solennité de dévotion. Quand cet empereur y vint le matin, entouré de cent fils et petit-fils, il fut présenté, par la magicienne, en sacrifice au cercle de la déesse. En conséquence de l’accomplissement de cette action, on voit encore aujourd’hui la double empreinte de ses genoux sur la pierre qui témoigne de son ascension au ciel. Le dieu, maître de cent crânes, le cercle de la déesse, la pierre même, et la mémoire de cet événement se conservent encore aujourd’hui dans les collèges de Khīra.”

31 For a brief introduction to the Vidyāpīṭha Tantras, see Sanderson 1990.

32 A full explanation shall be given in Serbaeva, forthcoming. See also Serbaeva 2010.

33 This is a Vidyāpīṭha tantra of the Yāmala subclass, and the earliest survivor of that class of texts can be dated to a period between the sixth and eighth century because it features a very early form of the tantric pantheon. See Sanderson 1990; Serbaeva 2006.

34 Sanderson 2009: 184, n. 444, *Brahmayāmala* 3.198c–207.

The god with the name Kapālīśa even had his own tantra, mentioned in the lists of tantras in the opening chapters of the *Yoginīsaṃcārāprakāraṇam*, a part of the *JY*, where the procedures written for the Yoginīs on how to find and kill the “special victim” are described.<sup>35</sup>

The next most relevant is the *Tantrasadbhāva*, which develops the concept of the “seven-times-born victim” (*saptajanmapaśu*) in its chapter 7, at verses 98 to 126. This passage is translated below almost in full. The coded mantra, which is also given in chapter 7 (though not included in the passage below), bestows upon the tantric practitioner the miraculous results, one of which is *saptajanmapaśu*, of a magic and transformative substance called *caru*:

O attentive one, once he is purified [by that *japa*, “mantra recitation”], *devīs* [goddesses] bestow him the supreme victim. O Goddess, by burning that which is obtained from the seven-times-born, or, which also constitutes the best of *caru*, he will obtain the equality with that [state of *devīs*]. He will go together with the deities and that very moment he will become the sky-goer.<sup>36</sup>

The Goddess says: “If it is so, what you have said in [the] *Mahāghora* [likely a lost text] differs. By [the] ripening of which *karma* [does] one obtain the state of victim, O Lord? What are the external and the internal signs of recognition of him?”

Bhairava says: “What you have [previously] asked has already been explained by me. Now I shall explain the signs of the victims for those who desire *siddhis*. He is born in the body purified by mantras, devoted to Śiva, and holds his observances firmly, but his mind is averted from the practice aiming at the supernatural effects [*siddhis*].<sup>37</sup> He should be known as the traitor of the guru, a wicked soul, and a sinner.<sup>38</sup> He cannot obtain liberation;

35 *JY* 3.24.39ab (171r1): “kapālīśamatam nāma meghanādīśvaraṃ tathā /”. This half-*śloka* has first been edited by Alexis Sanderson, 2004. It is worth noting that Kapālīśa or Kapāl-*śvara* is also one of *rudras* in the pre-Vidyāpīṭha texts. For example: “kapālīśo hyajo bud-dhaḥ vajradehaḥ pramardanaḥ /” (*NTS* 5.7.82.2).

36 *TST* 7.98cd–101 (A69r6–69v6, whole passage; B unnumbered folio (file 39), starting upper part, line 4): “devyā śuddhasya suśroṇi yacchanti paśum uttamam // saptajanmodbhava caiva tajjuṣṭacarukothavā / tena jugvena deveśi tattulyas tu prajāyate // vicared devatais sārddham kṣaṇād gaganago bhavet / devy uvāca: yady eva syāt mahāghore tvayā prokto vilakṣaṇaḥ // kena karma vipākena paśutvaṃ jāyate vibho / kiṃ tasya lakṣaṇaṃ proktaṃ bāhya[? conj., MSS: vahṛ]madhyātmakaṃ ca yat /”. Other texts, such as the *JY*, propose a list of external, i.e. physical, signs of recognition, as well as internal ones, those that are seen in visualisations (*dhyāna*).

37 *Siddhi*, besides meaning the supernatural effects possessed by a *siddha*, also simply means success. That is, the person, having received initiation, is no longer motivated to achieve the main aim of the practice.

38 *TST* 7.102–109ab: “bhairava uvāca: yat tvayā kathitaṃ pūrvvaṃ tat sarvvaṃ kathitaṃ mayā / sāṃpratam paśum [MSS: paśur] ākhyāmi lakṣaṇaṃ siddhim icchataḥ [MSS: tā] // mantrasaṃskṛtadehas tu śivabhakto dṛḍhavrataḥ / sādhanē siddhikāme ca yasya cittam parāṇmukham // gurudrohī sa vijñeyo durātmā pāpakarmaṇaḥ / na tasya bhavate muktir nīruddhas saṃbhavann api // janme janme punar bhakto dīkṣāmantrārthasevanāt [MSS:

## Significant Otherness

[it is] as if Śiva himself holds him back. He is born again and again as devotee because of his service to initiation, mantras, and so forth. “Joined upwards” [*udyukto*], he drops it [the practice] again. If the mantric purification fruits manifest in their full power then he [corrupted, tentatively] can be made liberated from the treason of the guru by means of sacrifice. He can be once born, twice born, thrice born, or four times, [or] five, six, seven times, such are these victims, no doubt. By offering that [i.e. the victim] into fire one obtains the power of flying, O beautiful, the invisibility, the power to find and enter the doors of [the] Underworld, the ability to change form, and so forth. And he [the *sādhaka*] will also get the state that is common to the *cakra*.<sup>39</sup>

If we skip the long list of recognition signs of such victims as explained in the *JY*, the means of their killing and the extracting of various parts as drafted by the Buddhist text the *Abhidhānottaratantra* (in chapter 66), and the rationale for the above written by Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka*,<sup>40</sup> we should still understand that we have here a historical trace of the description of the extreme tantric practice in which the Yoginī upgraded her level by sacrificing a king, and the king was liberated by the Yoginī as she accomplished a prescribed procedure for the *paśu*, a sacrificial victim, of his kind. The story makes no sense if the reader does not know about the tantric logical elements behind the apparently strange and cruel actions of the Yoginī.

### 4 The *Kathāsaritsāgara*: The king meets an *asurī* in the Underworld

The next passage we shall examine that includes a meeting with a Yoginī belongs to the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, a text recompiled by both Somadeva and Kṣemendra from probably an earlier non-Sanskrit source text that already contained a number of important tantric elements in eleventh-century Kashmir.<sup>41</sup> Such is the amount of described tantric elements in the *KSS* that one wonders if Somadeva was writing

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-nā] / udyukto jāyate so hi punaś caiva parityajet // mantrasaṃskārajaṃ yaddhi phala[+ṃ] syād [bala]cānyadi / nā[conj. o]pahr̥tyaya karmaṇa gurudrohādṛte sati // ekajanmā dvijanmā ca trijanmā caturōthavā / pañcaśaṣṭasaptajanmā ca paśavas tu na saṃśayaḥ // tena j[u]gvena siddhyeta khecaratvaṃ varānane / antarddhānaṃ [A: anarddānaṃ] bilottīṣṭhaṃ rūpādirivartanaṃ // cakrasāmānyam evaṃ ca tataḥ prabhṛti jāyate /<sup>39</sup>.

39 *Cakra* here is the circle of the goddesses, i.e. the Yoginīs. Thus, the *sādhaka* will achieve the same state as the Yoginīs.

40 Serbaeva, forthcoming; Serbaeva 2010.

41 Kṣemendra's variant is called the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*. The existence of a common text for both the *KSS* and the *BKM* is suggested in a yet unpublished article by Sanderson, personal communication with the author.

for the initiated in court or if he was himself initiated. However, these elements are not something that he takes seriously; they bring *rasas* (feelings) of fear, disgust, and mostly laughter. Although the story is rather well translated, its tantric roots demand additional elucidation to grasp its juicy detail.

The passage is a part of a very long story,<sup>42</sup> full of tantric elements, in which a king, having encountered a special divine girl, in fact an *asurī*, falls in love with her. When she disappears, he tries to find her again by going into Pātāla (the subterranean paradise or Underworld). He does not go there alone but is accompanied by a tantric practitioner, who uses exactly those tricks, mantras, and places, and invokes the same gods as is prescribed for such a journey in the tantric texts of the Vidyāpīṭha.

Let us linger on some of the tantric elements of the journey to Pātāla, based on KSS 12.6, vv. 79–146. Verses 79–94 describe how King Bhūnandana in Kashmir<sup>43</sup> meets his beloved in a special state of consciousness; that is, in a dream after completing a ritual for the god Viṣṇu.<sup>44</sup> The meeting affects him so much that he abdicates, leaving his kingdom to his younger brother, and performs *tapas* on Lake Kramasaras (v. 95) for twelve years. Then, suddenly, an ascetic appears before the king and tells him that his beloved is a *daityakanyā*, or a “divine girl”, and lives in Pātāla.<sup>45</sup> The ascetic presents himself as a guru of the *yogins*, the knower of the lore of Pātāla, learned in the mantra and tantra of Hāṭakeśa.<sup>46</sup> The *Pātālasāstra*, or “The Lore of Entry into Underground Paradise”, is a very popular motif in tantric texts, some of which contain detailed procedures with *vidyās* that allow one to find entry (*bila* or *śrīmukha*) and keep in check the killing mechanisms (*yantrāṇi*) preserving Pātāla from unwanted visitors. All major *vidyās* of the *Jayadrathayāmala* can open up Pātāla (some 110 occurrences). However, in the KSS we have a very precise name: Hāṭakeśa or Hāṭakeśvara. This form of Śiva was linked to entering subterranean paradise already in relatively early texts such as the ca. seventh-century *Svacchandabhairavatantra* (The Text of the Terrible God embodying Free Will),<sup>47</sup> which places Hāṭakeśa as a leading figure of one of the worlds, vertically arranged in the Śaiva universe described in chapter 10:

42 Tawney 1926, vol. 6: 106–113, KSS 12.6.79–178.

43 KSS 12.6.79cd: “kaśmīrā iti maṇḍalam”.

44 KSS 12.6.88cd: “svapne kāmāpy upāyātām apaśyad daityakanyakām //”.

45 KSS 12.6.102ab: “rājan sādāityakanyā te priyā pātālavāsinī //”.

46 KSS 12.6.104: “so’haṃ saṃkramitajñānaḥ pitrā pātālasāstrataḥ / śikṣitvā haṭakeśānamantratantravidhikramam //”. Haṭakeśa is written here with a short “a”, whereas the spelling in the tantric texts is Hāṭakeśa.

47 SVT 9.43ab (vol. 4: 49) and SVT 9.109cd (vol. 4: 78): “kālāgnir narakāś caiva pātālā hāṭakeśvaraḥ”; SVT 11.20cd–21ab (vol. 6: 21) and TST 11.20cd–21ab: “vyāpakaś ca punar devī hāṭakaḥ parameśvaraḥ // vidyāmantragaṇair yuktaḥ saptapātālanāyakaḥ //”; SVT 11.238 (vol. 6: 129): “rudralokādhīpatayaḥ pātālapatayaś ca ye / kūṣmāṇḍahāṭakādyaś tu te tiṣṭhanti atinirmalāḥ //”.

## Significant Otherness

Higher than that is said to be a Golden Pātāla; there lives the supreme lord, [the] god Hāṭaka. He is completely surrounded by thousands of millions of beings: *siddhas*, *rudra*-, and divine *gaṇas*, *bhaginīs*, *mātrikās*, Yoginīs, and yoga-girls (*yogakanyābhir*), *rudras*, and *rudra*-girls, magical substances (*siddhadravayas*), mantras, precious stones, and elixirs. The Temple of Hāṭakeśa one can only enter by perfecting the *vidyā* of *siddhas*, [namely], one enters that world by force (*haṭhat*), when the mind becomes stable in a proper state of contemplation (*bhāva*). That is why this God of Gods, Maheśvara, is called Hāṭaka.<sup>48</sup>

However, only the *Jayadrathayāmala* refers to the tantra of Hāṭakeśa, linking him to Atimārga; that is, the most ancient, pre-tantric Śaiva tradition;<sup>49</sup> he is worshipped upon entering Pātāla and conversing with divine women;<sup>50</sup> he is superseded later by Kālī, but he is still worshipped upon entry in Pātāla in the Pātālakālī chapter.<sup>51</sup> There are at least four chapters (and many more incomplete references) that fully map the ritual to enter Pātāla.<sup>52</sup>

Let us present this material on the entry to Pātāla shared by the *KSS* and the tantric understanding in four main steps, which can be found in both the *KSS* and the *JY*.

### 5 Step 1: Preliminaries, and finding entry to Pātāla

In *KSS* (vv. 109–146) the ritual to be performed to find entry (*bila*, *vivara*) to Pātāla includes purification, a ritual of “binding the directions” and scattering mustard seeds.<sup>53</sup> In *JY* 2.17, mustard is also used, and one can employ the *vidyā* of the Goddess of Gods, Kṛṣṇodārī, to enter Pātāla:

Having recited it for 300,000 times on the top of the mountain, the master of mantras should make one tenth of that number in fire offerings, consisting

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48 *SVT*, vol. 5: 53–55, *SVT* 10.116–120ab: “yadūrdhve caiva sauvarṇampātālaṃ parikīrtitam / tatra vasatyaśau devo hāṭakaḥ parameśvaraḥ // purakoṭisahasraḥ tu samantāt parivāritaḥ / siddhairudragāṇair divyair bhaginīmātrbhir vṛtaḥ // yoginīyogakanyābhī rudraś caiva sakanyakaiḥ / siddhadravayasamair mantraiś cintāmaṇirasāyānaiḥ // siddhavidyāsamṛddham vai hāṭakeśasya mandiram / haṭhat praveśayet lokāṃ stadbhāvagamānaśān // tenāśau hāṭakaḥ prokto devadevo maheśvaraḥ /.” Cf. *TST* 10.137–140.

49 *JY* 1.45.143cd (191r9–191v1): “atimārgam anantattvam hāṭakeśam vyavasthitam //.” See also *JY* 3.24.39cd (171r1): “hamsayāmalanāmānaṃ caṇḍogṛaṃ hāṭakeśvaram //”.

50 *JY* 2.9.29cd (24r7): “praviṣṭaḥ pūjayet tatra hāṭakeśam maheśvaram //”.

51 *JY* 4.40.36ab (141r4): “hāṭakasya” [marked lacuna, 1 syllable] subhage pātālākārāmantravit //”.

52 See *JY* 2.17.832–843, *JY* 2.25.663–681, *JY* 3.10.49–58, *JY* 3.22.7–23.

53 *KSS* 12.6.116cd–117: “sāmpūjya śārikām devīm digbandhādīpuraḥśaram // vidhivat sarśapakṣapād-dharānurahaśālinā / mahātapasvinā tena vivare prakāṭikṛte //”.

of fish and sheep flesh and alcohol. After that, he should go to *bila* and perform a ritual there. Having worshipped the Great Goddess and burned the mustard seeds of *rāja*-kind, having done a special ritual at night, whereupon he reaches 1,000 [repetitions], then there the earth trembles, [and the entry manifests].<sup>54</sup>

In *JY* 2.25, the door is opened with a human flesh offering, mastery of mantras, and mantra-empowered ashes:

O Goddess, he should go to a choice mountain, wearing red and black, he should make 300,000 recitations by following a proper procedure. He should offer into fire human flesh and such 30,000 times, O Parameśvari, i.e. one tenth [of the number of repetitions]. Then he should go to a Pātāla entry (*vivara*), famous in the world, and, standing in front of it, the master of mantras should burn *āsurī* poison (some plant), and having entered the enraged state by [the] proper raising up [of] the mantras [within his subtle body], by the flow of the *śaktimantras*, resounding like a thunder cloud of the end of the world, O Goddess of Gods, he will fully experience the ocean of pleasures in Pātāla. With the terrible mantras destroying *yantras* he should generously smear the entry with ashes.<sup>55</sup>

*JY* 3.10 suggests that the practitioner should have the *siddhis* in the Goddess's mantra prior to entry:

Having gone near the mountain where a famous Pātāla entry (*vivara*) is located, he should perform a ritual there on the fourteenth night of the dark half of the month. He should make a fire pit and burn there some *guggulu* (plant resin) mixed with ghee, 1,008 times. Then immediately the earth will tremble with its high and low places.<sup>56</sup>

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54 *JY* 2.17.832–835ab (87r2–7, whole passage): “pātālasādhane yojyā devadevī kṛśodarī / japtvā lakṣatrayaṃ mantrī parvatāgre daśāmsataḥ // juhuyān mīnacchāgonthaṃ [tya] ktaṃ tatsuradāruṇaṃ / paścād gacched biladvāraṃ tatra sādhanam ārabhet // sampūjya parameśānī juhuyād rājasarṣapāḥ / [ . . . ] // sahasraṃ yāvad evātra tadā kampati medinī /”.

55 *JY* 2.25.663–667 (123v3–124r1, whole passage): “gatvā girivaraṃ devi raktakṛṣṇāmbarānviṭaḥ / trayoyutāṃ japed devi vidhidṛṣṭena karmaṇā / juhuyān naramāmsādyāṃ triḥ[ghra]taṃ parameśvari / daśāmsena tatogacched vivaraṃ lokaviśrutam // tatra sthitvāgrago mantrī juhuyād viṣam āsurīm / uccaiḥ krodhānviṭo mantrī dhyāyen mantraṃ pradīptavat // śaktimantrapravāhena pralayāmbudanisvanam / pūrayed devadeveśi pātālaṃ bhogasāgaram // yantrāśanirmāna mantraś caṇḍograsurapūjitaḥ / eṣa pātālamukhyānāṃ bhasmasāṃ kurute bhṛśam /”.

56 *JY* 3.10.49–51ab (74r4–74v3, whole passage): “atha gatvā giripṛṣṭhe vivaraṃ yatra viśrutam / tatra kṛṣṇacaturdaśyām mahārātraupoṣitaḥ // jvālayed vahnikuṃḍam tu juhuyāt tatra sādhaḥ / gugguḷuṃ ghṛtasammiśraṃ yāvad aṣṭasahasrakam // tadāśu kampate bhūmiṃ saśailavanakānānām /”.



A similar entry is described in *JY* 3.22:

Having made 1,000 repetitions and having made one tenth of offerings into fire of that number, the *sādhaka* holding firmly his *vratas* (practices), should go to the door of Pātāla (*biladvāra*). There at night he performs *homa* (fire ritual) with flesh, and when he reaches one hundred, the earth trembles, O Goddess.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, in both the *Jayadrathayāmala* and the *Kathāsaritsāgara* the door to the Underworld is opened by a master of mantras<sup>58</sup> by burning and scattering or smearing various substances. Mustard seeds seem to be used rather for protection. If in the *KSS* we have a brief description of the ritual as seen by a non-initiated king, who does not understand what is going on, in the *JY* we are presented with an internal view of this procedure, which is, in fact, a part of the *sādhana* or practice of the mantra of the Goddess. The necessary power to open the door is the power that the Goddess bestows upon a practitioner once she is pleased with his offerings of mantras and (human) flesh. Nothing is said about this in the *KSS*, which is unsurprising: such practices were to be kept secret. The yogic guru in the *KSS* outlines his abilities but does not explain which rituals he did to obtain them.

## 6 Step 2: From entry to the Temple of *Hāṭakeśvara*

Having opened the door to the Underworld, visitors are to deactivate or, better, destroy the protective mechanisms, often presented as some kind of attacking mechanical robot. In the *KSS* the passage describing this part of the process is short: the ascetic is ordered to worship *Hāṭakeśvara* after five days and nights of going through Pātāla.<sup>59</sup> In *JY* 2.17 “one dries up [i.e. destroys], the door mechanisms, and, when he [the practitioner] laughs terribly, the Pātāla is set in flames. Then, on a special day, he together with friends can enter there, like into his own house, without fear. There he should worship powerful Mahādeva *Hāṭakeśvara*”.<sup>60</sup> *JY* 2.25 is

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57 *JY* 3.22.7–9ab (158r4–158v5, whole passage): “japtvā ekasahasrāṇi sādhakemdrā dṛḍhavrataḥ / hutvā daśmāśato mantrī biladvāraṃ vrajet tataḥ // tatra rātrau vadā homaṃ kartavyaṃ sādhakena hi / mahākaṭuka saṃmiśrāṃ rājikāṃ māṃsam āśritāt // śataṃ yāvaj juhed devī tāvat kṛṣṇā medinīm //”.

58 See the description of the “guru of the *yogins*” in *KSS* above.

59 *KSS* 12.6.124: “ayaṃ sa devaḥ pātākanilayo hāṭakeśvaraḥ / gīyate triṣu lokeṣu tadasau pūjyatām iti //”.

60 *JY* 2.17.835cd–837: “śuśyate dvārajovāri yantrābhasmī bhavanti hi // hāhārāvaṃ pravarttēna pātāle jvalate khilam / tataḥ sahāyairḥ sahitāḥ pātālam dīpaparvaṇi // praveṣṭhavyaṃ narendrena svaṃ geham iva nirbhayaḥ [MSS: nirbhavaḥ] / tatra pūjya mahādevaṃ hāṭakeśaṃ mahābalaṃ //”.

more elaborate: special women appear first, they are afraid of the *sādhaka*, and they invite him to enter Pātāla with them and enjoy pleasures. Having heard a particular formula, “O Hero. . .” (Ehi Vīra. . .), he enters and performs a mantra with them.<sup>61</sup> By the power of that mantra, the *yantras* (i.e. the protective mechanisms) are destroyed, and the *sādhaka* can freely worship Hāṭakeśvara.<sup>62</sup> Two other passages of the *JY* place more emphasis on interactions with divine women and shall be discussed in step 3 below. The appearance of the divine women marks in this case a “true” entry into the Underworld, and this “true” entry can only happen with their help.

In between steps 2 and 3, the *KSS* elaborates on poisonous fruits that are forbidden to eat in Pātāla<sup>63</sup> and describes in detail the golden splendour of that magical place. The mechanical *yantras* here also appear after Hāṭakeśvara.<sup>64</sup> That is, all elements of a tantric Pātāla-ritual are present in the *KSS*; however, their order and the importance given to them differ slightly from the *JY*.

## 7 Step 3: “True entry” and the hierarchy of women of the Underworld

The majority of chosen sources agree here that it is women that lead the hero to the “main” city, where the main woman/goddess usually resides.<sup>65</sup> The *KSS* does not elaborate much on this point, but there is a prescription given by the yogic guru to King Bhūnandana that: “Having entered, it is forbidden not to follow the order of his beloved Lady.”<sup>66</sup>

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61 *JY* 2.25.668–673: “yavat tatra prayojyeta tāvad āyānti yoṣitaḥ / vepamānā bhayatrastā madanānalapīditāḥ // trāhi trāhīti jalpantya sādhakendraṃ mahābalaṃ / patanti pādayor bhītām [na]ṇamanti muhur muhuḥ // vadanti bhītabhītās te sādhaḥkaṃ mantrajāyakaḥ / ehi vīra sadāsmākaṃ praviśasva purottamam // svargācchataguṇaṃ samyañ nirmitaṃ padmayoginā / sānuḡaḥ sapaṛivāro mantrahamsarasādhakaḥ // dahyāmo vīra vīrendra mādhināśaya sāmpratam / evam ākarṇya vacanaṃ sānuḡaḥ praviśet tataḥ / tāta sārddham ḡrṇṇan mantram kālāḡnyayutavarcaṣam /”.

62 *JY* 2.25.673cd–675: “vivikṣu sādhaḡo yāvat tavad yojanasaptake // niryantrāvivarāḥ sarve bhavantāha na saṃśayaḥ / vinaśyaṃti mahāyantrā mayā [marked lacuna; two syllables] prakalitāḥ // tena yantrād [unreadable; one syllable] nirmāna mantroyaṃ surapūjitaḥ / praviśya tatra sampūjya hāṭakeśaṃ viśet tataḥ /”.

63 *KSS* 12.6.126–129.

64 *KSS* 12.6.131–132; see also the door-keepers in vv. 134–136.

65 Divine women appear, and lead the *sādhaka* to the main city: *JY* 2.17.841ab: “svāntaḥ puraṃ nayaty etāḥ svaputitve narottamam /”. *JY* 2.25.676ab calls it the “matrix” city: “svayaṃ garbhapure mantrī parivāraṃ yathecchataḥ /”.

66 *KSS* 12.6.139ab: “antaḥpraviśṭair yuṣmābhir nollaḡghyaṃ svapriyāvacaḥ /”.

*JY* 3.10 provides a version in which beautiful, young shape-shifting women appear. They are afraid of the *sādhaka* and address him using a stable formula, inviting him to enter Pātāla and enjoy pleasures with them until the destruction of the world.<sup>67</sup> *JY* 3.22 provides us with a clear hierarchy of divine women, in which those who appear at the onset are not divine enough: they should not be spoken to, nothing should be taken from them (9cd–12), the *sādhaka* should continue his ritual until the supreme women come, and even these are rejected again, until the very most divine appears (vv. 13–17). Each group of women is more beautiful than the last.

The *KSS* inserts after step 3 a poetic description of the meeting of the *asurī* and her human lover (vv. 140–146). Having put together the passages from the *JY* and the *KSS* we can conclude that Somadeva, or the compiler that preceded him, closely follows the logic of the tantric ritual; that is, the *KSS* follows the very same steps and stages as the *JY* would. These include finding and opening the door to Pātāla, destroying the *yantras*, worshipping Hātakeśvara, conversing with divine women, and entering the main city. Any deviation from that formula appears to be due to the need to describe the shiny palace or temple or include details of the love story into which the tantric material is framed. Thus the main line of the *KSS* story describes the tantric understanding of entry into Pātāla, and for the understanding of the tantric elements mentioned in the *KSS*, the *JY* appears to be particularly relevant.

## 8 Step 4: The magical drink that allows one to stay in Pātāla forever

Most selected passages mention some sort of magical drink that serves as a “confirmation” that one can stay in the paradise-like Underworld forever. The motif of drink does not seem to occur in *JY* 2.17, and *JY* 2.25 provides only: “Having entered and drank the excellent drink, by that, the man will live very long.”<sup>68</sup> *JY* 3.10 also presents the magical drink as the only way to obtain the promised pleasures of paradise: “You will obtain all that by partaking the supreme drink” (*sāttvikam*

67 *JY* 3.10.51cd–55ab: “nirgacchaṃti tataḥ kāṃtāś caruhāsāmanoharāḥ // nānārūpadharāḥ sarvās sarvābharaṇabhūṣitāḥ / mantakuṃjaragāminyaḥ ṣoḍaśābdasamāḥ sadā // vipuladrośisāṃdohāḥ pīnonnatapayodharāḥ / praṇatāvepamānāsrā sādhakasyāgragāḥ priye // vijñāpayanti taṃ bhītāḥ sādhakam devavaṃditam / ehy ehi vīranātheśa pātālam bhogasāgaram // sahāsmākam ramaś cātra yāvadbhūmisamplavam //”.

68 *JY* 2.25.677: “praviśyaivaṃ svayaṃ tatra pītvā sāttvikasāttvikam / pānaṃ nārāyaṇākāro jīved [dhaṣṭ]jāyuṣaṃ naraḥ //”. The drink is called *nārāyaṇa*, i.e. wine.

pānam uttamam).<sup>69</sup> It only becomes clear why the drink is so called in *JY* 3.22. In fact, the supreme divine women, appearing at the very end, are called *sāttvikas*<sup>70</sup> and offer the supreme *sāttvic* drink to the *sādhaka*, having bowed to him. Thus with them and joined with his entourage, the hero should enter *śrīmukha*, and destroy all *yantras*. There, having worshipped the lord of Gods, Hātakaśa, he will acquire divine vision and partake of the supreme drink, which should also be given to the guru and to the *sādhaka*'s own women as well.<sup>71</sup>

None of the tantric passages makes clear what this drink consists of, but the *KSS* does, somewhat surprisingly, provide the composition, and Somadeva clearly enjoys the *rasa* that it provokes in the reader. Let us reproduce Charles Henry Tawney's translation of the passage describing the receipt of the magical drink offered to the hero in the *KSS*:

And after he had rested a little while he bathed, and the Asura maiden had him adorned with robes and jewels, and let him out to the garden to drink. Then she sat down with him on the brink of a tank filled with wine, and with the blood and fat of corpses, that hung from trees on its banks, and she offered that king a goblet, full of that fat and wine, to drink, but he would not accept the loathsome compound. And she kept earnestly saying to the king: "You will not prosper if you reject my beverage." But he answered: "I certainly will not drink that undrinkable compound, whatever may happen." Then she emptied the goblet on his head and departed.<sup>72</sup>

69 *JY* 3.10.55cd–56ab: "sva[rga]ddeśaguṇe[śva]tre sāttvikam pānam uttamam // pivasva tatra vīreṃdra prayacchānyeṣu vā vibho //".

70 From *sattva*, variously translated as "truth", "purity", "the only true thing", etc. Likely the appellation of women comes from this.

71 *JY* 3.22.18–22ab: "sāttvikas tāḥ samākhyātāḥ sāttvikam pānam uttamam / sādhakāya prayacchanti praṇāmya ca muhur muhuḥ // evaṃ tābhis saha tadā parivāreṇa saṃyutaḥ / praviśec chrīmukham vīraḥ sarvayamtrāṇi mardayat //tatram sa pūjya deveśam hātakaśam mahāprabham / divyacakṣupradam cādau tataḥ pānam samāharet // gurur deyam svayam peyam sāttvikam pānam uttamam / sakhinām rājasam deyam rājasyaś ca varāṅganāḥ // hīneṣutām asaṃ deyam tām asyo varayoṣitaḥ //".

72 Tawney 1926, vol. 6: 112–113, *KSS* 12.6.152–156: "kṣaṇamātram ca viśrāntam snātam vastrādyaḥkṛtam / sā nināya tamusyānamāpānāyāsuraṅganā // tatra tīratarullambiśavaraktavasāsavaiḥ / pūrṇayā sā taṭe vāpyāstena sākamupāviśat // tadva sā savapūrṇam ca pātram tasmai nrpāya sā / dadau pānaya sa ca tanna jagrāha jugupsitam // na te kṣemaṃ bhaved etad asmat pānam niṣedhataḥ / iti nirbandhatastām ca bruvāṇāṃ so'bravīn nrpaḥ // apeyam niścitam naiva pāsyāmy etad yadas tv iti / tataḥ sā tasya tanmūrghni pātram kṣiptvānyato yayau //". A shorter version can be found in *BKM* 268, vv. 683–685: "tatrāpaśyat tarulatālambimartyakalevaraiḥ / vāpīm rudhirasampūrṇam vasāvīpulakardamām // ratnapātreṇa tatpānam sā grhītvā punaḥ punaḥ / nrpaṃ piba pibety āha na papau sa va kūṇitaḥ // tyajatodbhavam aśreyo bhavaḥtī tayārthitaḥ / nādade sā ca tatpātram tasya mūrghni nyapātayat //".

## Significant Otherness

What the king was supposed to drink is actually called *caru* in the tantric texts—a test drink that, while a magic transformative substance, consists of ingredients that are undrinkable in a normal state of consciousness.<sup>73</sup> In the context of tantric initiation (*dīkṣā*) the mixture is said to consist of various products of the body, often belonging to the guru. Human fat, blood, and flesh are included in the mixture if those who give *caru* are the Yoginīs—and these substances are considered the most potent. In both variants, however, the practitioner should show no aversion to such a mixture and swallow it without hesitation. If he fails to do so, it is considered an important transgression. The tantric texts repeatedly use the expression *na nindet*, meaning “he should not despise” those substances.

The king’s refusal to partake equals to his non-understanding of the nature of his beloved; moreover, he breaches the instruction given to him earlier by his guru that he should obey her once he enters Pātāla. The threat of the *asurī* or rather yogin that “you will not prosper . . .” refers here to the state of the being who has betrayed the tantric tradition. If we recall that in the *Rājatarāṅginī* King Baka was sacrificed by a Yoginī to be liberated, such a violent solution would also be required for King Bhūnandana to return to the state that he has just failed to understand, according to the Vidyāpīṭha logic. His pondering about what has just happened, after he finds himself suddenly back at Lake Kramasaras, includes understanding that he has broken his promise to his guru and that the drink was the test. Interestingly, he uses the same tantric term mentioned above: “that despised drink” (*tanninditaṃ pānaṃ*):

But what other explanation can there be than this, that undoubtedly this has befallen me because, though I heard the warning of the ascetics, I disobeyed the injunction of that fair one. After all the beverage was not loathsome; she was only making trial of me; for the liquor, which fell upon my head, has bestowed on it heavenly fragrance. So it is indubitable that, in the case of the unfortunate, even great hardships endured bring no reward, for Destiny is opposed to them.<sup>74</sup>

His body odour now attracts bees which sting him, but even that has a tantric meaning:<sup>75</sup> chapter 66 of the Buddhist *Abhidhānottaratantra* lists this as a sign of

73 On the hierarchy of *caru*, see Sanderson 2009: 212, n. 488.

74 Tawney 1926, vol. 6: 112–113, KSS 12.6.161–163: “kim anyad vā dhruvaṃ tasyā yan mayollaṅghitaṃ vacaḥ / tapasvivākyam śrutvāpi tasyedaṃ me vijmbhitam // na ca tanninditaṃ pānaṃ sā mamaiva parīkṣiṇī / mūrdhni cyutena yattena divyam ayāti saurabham // tatsarvathā hy abhavyānām kṛtaḥ śleṣo mahān api / na phalāya vidhis teṣu tathā vāmo hi vartate //”.

75 KSS 12.6.164–166: “ity evaṃ cintayannetya bhṛṅgair bhūnandano’tra saḥ / aveṣṭyatāsurasutā-pānasiktāṅgagandhataḥ // kaṣṭamiṣṭaphalo mā bhūjjāto’niṣṭaphalastu me / parikleṣo’lpasattvasya vetālotthāpanaṃ yathā // iti tairdaṣyamānaśca bhṛṅgaiḥ sa bimṛśamstadā / jātodvego matiṃ cakre dehatyāgaya bhūpatih //” See also *BKM* 268, v. 689:

recognition of a person who is a *saptajanmapaśu*, a “seven-times-born victim”: “The sweat of his body is eaten by the bees, the limbs are fragrant, with divine smell or that of camphor, the excrement and urine smell musky”;<sup>76</sup> that is, he became a person who made some mistakes in practice and can only recover from those by being sacrificed by the Yoginīs. This is probably what the *yoginī/asurī* hinted at in saying to the king that “you will not prosper. . .”.

Fortunately for Bhūnandana, he resorted again to his practice and after many years won back his beloved, and thus we can bring in here the last step: eternal pleasure ending in liberation, understood in the *JY* as unity with the goddess. In *JY* 2.17 the *sādhaka* remains with the divine women in this ocean of pleasure for the duration of the great *kalpa* (cosmic period), and obtains *nirvāṇa* (understood as liberation) after that.<sup>77</sup> In *JY* 2.25, at the end, the man, in the body of a *devatā* (divine being), will reach the state of union.<sup>78</sup> *JY* 3.10 is wonderfully poetic and summarises steps 2 to 4 in just two verses:

Having heard that [the formula “O hero. . .”], the master of tantras should enter with them [the divine women] there. [He becomes] endowed with great supernatural powers and drives golden flying chariots (*vimānas*), having worshipped the leader of Gods, Maheśvara Hātakeśa, there and having partaken of the supreme drink (*sātvikaṃ pāna[m]*) which is the essence [lit. “bone marrow”] of the moon and stars. He will live for a *kalpa*, o Fortunate, and [after that] will enter the body of the Goddess.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, *JY* 3.22 promises that “there he will thrive, and he will live for a *kalpa*. The violent (*haṭha*) entry into Pātāla has been explained, O Divine Beauty”.<sup>80</sup>

The story of King Bhūnandana brings together multiple tantric practices that are transformed into colourful ornamentations to the main love story in the *KSS*: the entry into the Underworld (Pātāla), the motif of tantric initiation by means of *caru*, and even the hints on how to recognise the person who falls out of favour with the Yoginīs. All these motifs would be impossible to bring together with-

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“kāmāgnimalināṅgarair iva vyāpta sa ṣaṭpadaiḥ / dhūtāgrapāṇirno lebhe śarma marmāhato yathā //”.

76 *AUT* ch. 66, vv. 4–5a; f. 303, ll. 6–7: “prasvedan tasya kāyeṣu bhramarair bhakṣate tathā / divyagandhasugandhāṅgo athavā pūragandhikā // viṇmutragandhakasturyā”.

77 *JY* 2.17.841cd–842ab: “tatra tābhiḥ samam tiṣṭhe mahābhogabharālasaḥ // mahākālpaṃ sādhakendra pāścān nirvāṇam arhati //”.

78 *JY* 2.25.678ab: “paryante devatā dehe yānti sāyojyatām naraḥ //”.

79 *JY* 3.10.56cd–58: “evam śrutvā tatas tasām sarddham tatra viśen naraḥ // mahāvibhūtisaṃyukto vimānaiḥ kāmcanesthitaḥ / tatrārcayitvā deveṃdraṃ hātakeśam maheśvaram // pītvā tu sātvikaṃ pāna ramed ācamdratāarakam / kalpāvasāne subhage viśet tām aiśvarītanum //”.

80 *JY* 3.22.22cd–23ab: “evam vibhajya suciraṃ mahākālpaṃ sa jīvati // haṭhapraveśam ākhyātam pātāle surasumḍari //”.

out the important Other—the passages written for the initiated in the *Jayadrathayāmala*—and thus the full set of associations that Somadeva put in his text would have remained undiscovered.

## 9 Conclusion

The magical tantric world populated with ambivalent Yoginīs would have been familiar to readers in eleventh- and twelfth-century India. Passages containing meetings with these divines goddesses are well known in scholarship thanks to the work of nineteenth- and twentieth-century translators of Sanskrit literature. However, these translators lacked many of the original sources and thus the full meaning of the tantric imagery and allusion contained in these stories has remained largely hidden until recent years when many of these manuscripts have been made available by the NGMPP. To the author’s knowledge, the current chapter represents the first attempt to analyse these passages in light of the emergence of the Vidyāpīṭha texts.

Reading these texts together not only allows us to reinterpret the stories written for non-practitioners but also to revise the degree of importance that was attributed to tantric practices in the context of medieval India. The tantric world was not hidden behind an impenetrable wall with almost no influence on everyday life, but, on the contrary, the main concepts of the secret tantric traditions were definitely understandable to the public.

Despite the fact the Vidyāpīṭha manuscripts are now accessible, these tantric texts remain, to play with the words of this volume’s title, the “Significant Others” in our understanding of the stories about Yoginī meetings in classical Indology. Let us hope that these preliminary bridges between traditions will attract further research that might throw light on the fascinating interconnections of tantric practices and reflections in medieval Sanskrit literature for the non-initiated.

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