

Giacomella Orofino, ed. and trans., *The Dawn of Physical Yoga. Dispelling the Hindrances to Immortality.* (*Amṛtasamkaṭanibarhaṇa, Tib. 'Chi med kyi 'phrang sel), Napoli (Università di Napoli l'Orientale, Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo), 2025. 209 pp. [Series Minor CIV]. ISBN 9788-88-6719-314-1. Available as a Creative Commons open access PDF: <http://www.fedoabooks.unina.it/index.php/fedoapress/catalog/book/755> .

Reviewed by John Newman
(New College of Florida – pre-2023 version)

As I write this I am wearing prAna® (“Clothing For Positive Change”) “yoga pants.” I am not a yogi—the pants are just super comfortable. I live in a medium-sized midwestern American city. There are two yoga studios within a twenty minute walk of my home. There are more than a dozen yoga studios within a twenty minute drive. By one count there were 25,280 yoga studios in the United States as of May 5, 2025. A Google “AI Overview” says “there are approximately 48,500 yoga studios worldwide, with the highest numbers found in the United States, India, and Europe.” Where did this come from?!

Of course the readers of this journal know that the Sanskrit word *yoga* has a long history and a vast range of meanings. I gave up trying to count the many senses of *yoga* given in the second edition of Monier Monier-Williams’ *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Among the plethora of concepts Monier-Williams adduces for “*yoga*” we find “abstract meditation,” but—intriguingly—nothing that really corresponds to the physical activities occurring in my local yoga studios. For that we must turn to the Sanskrit compound *haṭhayoga*. In High Victorian fashion Sir Monier somewhat misleadingly defines this as “a kind of forced Yoga or abstract meditation (forcing the mind to withdraw from external objects; treated of in the Haṭha-pradīpikā by Svātmārāma and performed with much self-torture, such as standing on one leg, holding up the arms, inhaling smoke with the head inverted &c.)” I find it remarkable that the term *haṭhayoga* is given in the great *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* of Otto Böhtlingk and Rudolph Roth, and derivatively by Monier-Williams, citing only relatively late Sanskrit works such as the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. (On this text, which “has been translated hundreds of times into many different languages,” see now the impressive project which has manifested online at <https://hathapradipika.online> [accessed 26 Feb 2026] for a new digital

critical edition and translation of what is described as “the most important premodern text on physical yoga,” “composed by Svātmārāma in about 1400 CE.”)

The lexicography cited above suggests that as a term for Indic “self-torture” *haṭhayoga* is a relatively late entry into the Sanskrit lexicon. It also raises the questions of when and how this “self-torture” developed in India, and how it has transmogrified into “the global yoga market.” Google tells me that this is “a multi-billion-dollar industry with various reports placing its current value between approximately USD \$100 billion and over \$370 billion,” which includes the global “yoga apparel market” (cf. my pants), the “yoga equipment market,” the “yoga tourism market,” and the yoga studios in my neighborhood. Again, what is the origin of our [post-]modern “global yoga market”?

The book under review offers new information on and important new insights into the origins and development of “physical yoga” in India and its transmission to Tibet. The author, Giacomella Orofino, is Professor of Tibetan Language and Literature and Indo-Tibetan Civilizations and Religions at the University of Naples “L’Orientale.” Professor Orofino requires no introduction for scholars of Vajrayāna Buddhism in India and Tibet. Her previous contributions to the study of the Kālacakra *tantra*, Ma gcig Lab sgron, Tibetan medicine, and Indo-Tibetan alchemy are especially noteworthy. For a CV including a list of her many and varied publications see: [https://unior.academia.edu/GIACOMELLAOROFINO/Curriculum Vitae](https://unior.academia.edu/GIACOMELLAOROFINO/CurriculumVitae).)

Orofino’s latest book, *The Dawn of Physical Yoga* [henceforth “*Dawn*”], builds upon her previous research and extends it in fascinating new directions. The core of *Dawn* (Parts II & III; pp. 59–184) is a critical edition and translation of the Tibetan text ‘*Chi med kyi ’phrang sel*. Orofino provides a Sanskrit title **Amṛtasamkṣāṇibārhaṇa* [henceforth “*ASN”]. This is presumably a translation of the Tibetan title. This work is ascribed to (an) Amoghavajra (*Dawn* p. 184). The colophon to this text describes it, in Orofino’s translation, as “the writings composed by Yogeśvara Amoghavajra on the thirty-six physical yoga practices (‘*khruḥ* ‘*khor*) for [dispelling] the hindrances of the Attainment of Immortality as transmitted by the great master ‘*Bir wa pa* (Virūpa)” (*Dawn* p. 132; bracketed insertion original). The first part of this colophon reads: *slob dpon chen po ’bir wa pas mdzad pa’i ’chi med grub pa*° (*Dawn* p. 184). Thus Orofino interprets ‘*bir wa pas mdzad pa* as “transmitted by...(Virūpa).” I have the impression that *mdzad pa* in Tibetan translations of Sanskrit text colophons often represents *kṛta* in the sense of “composed,” as in *śāstrakṛt*, “composed a treatise.” However, as we will see there is good reason to follow Orofino’s

understanding of this *mdzad pa* as having a sense of “transmitted by.” Likewise, the context supports taking *‘bir wa pa* (< **bi rwā pa?*) as a somewhat malformed representation of Sanskrit *virūpa* or, perhaps more likely still, as a not-too-bad transliteration of an Indic vernacular version of this name, *biruā*. See *biruā* and *v/biruāpādāḥ* in a Prakrit song found at Kværne 2010[1977]: 82 & 84.

The “Attainment of Immortality” (*‘chi med grub pa*) in the *ASN colophon refers to a broad *tradition of yoga* known as “*amṛtasiddhi*,” a tradition of yoga that is taught in a multitude of texts. Among these is found a particular text extant in Sanskrit that is titled merely “*Amṛtasiddhi*.” Thus it is crucial to distinguish (1) *the generic category of practices called “amṛtasiddhi”* and (2) *the specific text titled “Amṛtasiddhi.”* If this distinction is not kept in mind chaos follows, because *many* of the works in this corpus contain *amṛtasiddhi* / *‘chi med grub pa* in their titles (cf. Dorji 2025: 64).

As its colophon indicates, the *ASN is a work that elaborates upon thirty-six *yantras* (> *‘khrul ‘khor*), which it connects with the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition ascribed—in one way or another—to Virūpa. The Sanskrit of a text actually titled simply “*Amṛtasiddhi*” [henceforth AS] has been marvelously edited and studied by James Mallinson and Péter-Dániel Szántó (2021). Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 3) describe the AS as “the first text to teach a system of yoga whose primary method is physical.” Based upon internal evidence, they consider the AS to have been composed by a master named “Mādhavacandra probably no later than the second half of the 11th century CE, most likely in the Deccan region of India” (*ibid.*). Their argument for ascribing the AS to Mādhavacandra / Avadhūtacandra rather than to Virūpa is convincing. However, AS 1.1a pays homage to “the glorious lord [*nātha*] Virūpa,” (*śrīmadvirūpanāthāya*) (cf. Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 107n94), and in the concluding section of the text AS 36.3d refers to “the lineage of the glorious [*siddha*] called Virūpa” (*śrīvirūpākhyasantatiḥ*) (cf. *ibid.* pp. 103, 150). One assumes that Mādhavacandra / Avadhūtacandra saw the *siddha* Virūpa as the true “author” of the “*amṛtasiddhi*” as a system of *yoga*, whereas Mādhavacandra’s own composition titled *Amṛtasiddhi* is a mere verbal incarnation of this *upadeśa* (> Tib. *man ngag* / *gdams ngag*). The same sort of ascription of the *amṛtasiddhi* as a system of yoga to Virūpa is widespread in Indic and Tibetan sources found in Tibetan. Thus it is clear that the tradition understands this *system of yoga*, at least, to have come down from the semi-mythical *siddha* Virūpa, and so the *ASN colophon apparently reflects this traditional understanding of the term *amṛtasiddhi* / *‘chi med grub pa*.

“Virūpa” / “Biruā” is a *siddha* nickname. It might harken back to a story found in the *Avadānaśataka*, which includes these lines: *yasmād*

ayaṃ jātamātra evaṃ vikṛtarūpaḥ | tasmād bhavatu dāraḥasya virūpa iti nāma || (GRETEL eText, Klaus Wille input); “Since he was so deformed at birth, let the boy be named ‘Virūpa.’” This name literally means “deformed,” “monstrous,” or just plain “Ugly.” In a different sense it could mean “multiform,” “manifold,” “diverse.” Virūpa is sometimes equated with “Virūpākṣa.” That name literally means “having diverse eyes,” and it is found among the many epithets of Śiva, referring in this case to Śiva’s three eyes.

It may be the case that Buddhist texts typically—although not exclusively—prefer the name *virūpa* whereas Śaiva texts prefer *virūpākṣa*, but I have not seen this question addressed in detail. Mallinson (2019: 2) says “[t]he *Amṛtasiddhi*...attributes its teachings to a renowned Vajrayāna *siddha* called Virūpākṣa (or sometimes Virūpa)...” However, Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 107n94) note: “In Buddhist literature the form Virūpa is much more common than Virūpākṣa.” Also, Mallinson and Szántó’s critical edition of the AS (1.1a, 36.3d) in fact adopted the form *virūpa*^o against “the Southern group” of manuscripts that adduce the reading *virūpākṣa*^o. This shift from *virūpa* to *virūpākṣa* in the manuscript tradition seems to represent Śaiva efforts to superficially ‘Śaiva-ize’ this Buddhist text.

The *siddha* “Virūpa”/“Virūpākṣa” is an historically elusive and protean figure or figures who appear(s) in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist legends and text colophons. Elizabeth English (2002: 8–10, 12–15, 23, 422n206) has studied *sādhana*s ascribed to Virūpa which focus upon the decapitated (*chinnamastā/chinnamuṇḍā*) form of Vajrayoginī. As we will see, this form of Vajrayoginī is closely connected with the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition. For more recent studies of Virūpa/Virūpākṣa see Mallinson 2019: 2–7; Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 3nn1–3; Dorji 2025: 66–69; see *Dawn* pp. 15n1, 16n6 for discussion; see also *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.5cd for Virūpākṣa immediately after Gorakṣa in its Śaiva lineage. See Westin Harris (2025: 6–7 *et seq.*) for a recent discussion of the problem of singular versus multiple Virūpas/Birūās/Virūpākṣas, citing earlier studies.

Mallinson (2019: 5 & nn25, 28; 2024: 9n14) draws attention to a distinction between an apparently Vajrayāna so-called “*vajroḷī/vajraolī*” lineage and a Śaiva Nāth tradition “*amaroḷī/amaraoḷī*” lineage. He notes (2024: 9n14): “In the c. 1280 CE *Līlācaritra* Gorakṣa is said to be of the *amaroḷī* and to defeat Virūpa, who is of the *vajroḷī*, in a battle of supernatural powers.” This refers to Mallinson’s earlier discussion (2019: 5): “In the *Līlācaritra*, Cakradhara tells his disciples how Virūpākṣa broke in two the Bhīmeśvara *śivaliṅga* at Drākṣārāma in modern-day Telangana. Gorakṣa converted Virūpākṣa from *vajraolī*, i.e., the [Buddhist] Vajra lineage, to *amaraoḷī*, the [Śaiva] Amara lineage, and gave him the name Adaṇḍīnātha” (bracketed insertions original).

This legend calls to mind the famous myths of Vajrapāṇi's or Heruka's subjugation of Maheśvara, myths designed to inclusivistically incorporate, subordinate, and sublimate Śaiva elements in Buddhist *tantras*. In this case, however, we might interpret the *Līlācaritra* story as a Śaiva attempt to explain the incorporation of Buddhist ideas and practices into Śaiva tradition. The Śaiva adoption of the Buddhist *Amṛtasiddhi*, noted below, supports this interpretation.

As is typical of *siddhas*, Virūpa takes delight in confounding historically-minded etic scholars. Like so many *siddhas*, he seems to vanish into thin air when we try to establish biographical facts about him. English (2002: 10) says: "Virūpa...may have lived as early as the eighth century...or as late as the eleventh century..." However, some period more toward the middle of this range seems more likely to me. After a careful study of the evidence Mallinson (2024: 6) notes: "...the historical trail left in India by Virūpākṣa goes cold, but he has left enough clues for a tentative identification of the region in which his teachings were transmitted from Vajrayāna Buddhism to Nāth Śaivism. ...Tibetan hagiographies point to south India and the Deccan as being central to his activities and almost all Indian material and textual sources associated with him are from the Konkan and Deccan." Further study may shed additional light on the mysterious Virūpa. All of that being said, it may be at least possible that the Virūpa considered to be the fountainhead of the teachings of the *amṛtasiddhi* is identical to the Virūpa who is considered the Indic conduit of the Sa skya lam 'bras teachings and some of the teachings of the Shang pa bKa' brgyud pa tradition. See *Dawn* p. 18n9 for references to recent studies and discussion; add Sobisch 2008, index p. 243 s.v. "Virūpa," especially pp. 2–3, 30–32, 76–80 for further relevant information.

It is no exaggeration to say that our understanding of the history and characteristics of *haṭhayoga* has grown by leaps and bounds over the last twenty years. The bibliography of "Studies" in *Dawn* (pp. 188–197) demonstrates this, with recent studies by, e.g., Jason Birch, Gudrun Bühnemann, David G. White, and, as already mentioned, Mallinson and Szántó especially noteworthy.

Orofino significantly adds to this progress with the four introductory chapters that constitute Part I of *Dawn* (pp. 13–56). Chapter 1 introduces the *amṛtasiddhi* and its associated literature (pp. 15–16); as mentioned, it treats the thorny problem of the quasi-mythical founder of the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition, Virūpa (pp. 16–18); and it surveys our knowledge of later masters in the Buddhist stream of the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition: Eṇadeva, Amoghavajra, and Vanaratna (pp. 17–28).

The last-named master, Vanaratna (ca. 1384–1468), born somewhere in the vicinity of present-day Chattogram, Bangladesh, is noteworthy

for having translated Tibetan *'chi med grub pa* (i.e., *amṛtasiddhi*) teachings into Sanskrit, as revealed by the discoveries of Harunaga Isaacson and Martin Delhey (surveyed in *Dawn* pp. 26–27). Delhey (2021: 396) reports that three of these translations from Tibetan have “*amarasiddhiyantra*” embedded in their titles. He suggests that “Vanaratna has, of course, received the text names in Tibetan and has, in terms of historical truth, chosen the wrong back-translation to Sanskrit.” From Vanaratna’s employment of “*amara*” instead of “*amṛta*” in these titles Delhey infers that “[o]bviously, Vanaratna never encountered a copy of the Buddhist Sanskrit text called *Amṛtasiddhi* or other texts belonging to the same text cycle” (*ibid.* p. 389). This may be the case. If confirmed it might suggest that the Buddhist *amṛtasiddhi* tradition was effectively extinct in the regions of South Asia Vanaratna had visited prior to his time in Tibet. It hardly needs saying that Vanaratna’s Tibetan to Sanskrit translations warrant detailed investigation.

Particularly important for the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and particularly difficult to identify, is Amoghavajra, the named author of the *ASN. It may be worth noting that—according to Abhayākaragupta’s *Vajrāvalī* (Mori ed. p. 426)—during the Vajrayāna “name initiation” (*nāmābhiṣeka*; *ming gi dbang*) the name “Amoghavajra” is first among the names given to male Vajrayāna initiands being inducted into the *kula* of the *jina/tathāgata* Amoghasiddhi. This means that we can assume that there were multiple individuals given this initiate name. (For a possible example of this see the famous 8th century master Amoghavajra who promoted Mantrayāna in China.) This in turn means that disambiguating the individuals bearing this name presents severe difficulties. Orofino surveys the extremely complex evidence found in text colophons and Tibetan chronicles, and suggests that the author of the *ASN is an Amoghavajra who was “a *yogin* from the eastern regions of India” for whom “undeniable evidence attests to his significant activity in Tibet during the second half of the 11th century, where he was also known as Don yod Rdo rje [*< amoghavajra*] or Rdo rje ldan pa chung ba (Vajrāsana the Younger)” (*Dawn* p. 23; bracketed insertion added). Thus, if this identification can be securely established, this Amoghavajra would be an Indian who played a major role in the transmission of Buddhism from India to Tibet during the 11th–12th centuries, a remarkable period in the history of Buddhism as a whole. Orofino refers to the large mass of texts ascribed in one way or another to an Amoghavajra / Don yod rdo rje in the Tibetan *Tangyurs* (especially the ‘Peking branch’ of these collections), and she observes that “a systematic study of this material would greatly enhance our understanding” of both these texts and the *amṛtasiddhi* corpus as a

whole. See likewise Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 16. Tsering Dorji (2025) has recently surveyed most of these works, but detailed study of them is needed. We hope that Orofino will be able to fulfill her expressed wish to continue her research in this field.

Chapter 2 of *Dawn* provides a succinct but comprehensive overview of “*Haṭhayoga* in Vajrayāna” (*Dawn* pp. 29–37). For me this chapter was among *Dawn*’s most interesting sections. Orofino observes: “The yoga method known as *haṭhayoga*, literally ‘the yoga by means of force,’ emerged in Indian Sanskrit literature during the latter centuries of the first millennium CE.” For another study of the evolution of the term *haṭhayoga* see Mallinson 2020 (absent from *Dawn*’s bibliography).

Scholars of my generation were raised on the unquestioned belief that *haṭhayoga* is primordial in India, exemplified by the so-called ‘Mahāyogī’ seal from Mohenjo-Daro. Even though that particular scholarly myth has been deconstructed to the point of absolute uncertainty, it comes as a bit of a shock to learn that *haṭhayoga*—at least as a formal, systematized tradition of “physical yoga”—does not seem to appear in the historical record until around the 11th century CE. Of course ascetic practices involving what Monier-Williams characterized as “self-torture”—including special postures and breathing exercises—are found *much* earlier in South Asian literature and art. However, it seems that Indians did not produce formal, systematized textual codifications of these practices until around 1000 CE. Given the classical Indic proclivity for exhaustive (and, sometimes, exhausting) enumeration and categorization—cf., e.g., Buddhist *abhidharma*, the *vedāṅgas*, *dharmaśāstra*, *arthaśāstra*, *kāmaśāstra*, and so forth—this seems very odd to me. I look to experts in the history of *haṭhayoga* to explain this.

Orofino notes Jason Birch’s observation that, in Orofino’s words, “the first texts to describe this [physical *haṭhayoga*] method were the Buddhist *tantras*, while it was absent in Śaiva *tantras* until such late works as the *Rudrayāmalottaratantra*” (*Dawn* p. 29). If future study confirms this understanding of events, it provides us with yet another case of Buddhist influence upon the Śaiva tradition, and yet another nail in the coffin of the certainly erroneous position that Vajrayāna as “the Tantric (or magic) form of Buddhism [is] pure Śaivism in disguise” (Louis de la Vallée Poussin 1937: 184). It is established that certain Buddhist *tantras* that came to be classified as *yoganiruttaratantra* or *yoginītantra* incorporate elements of Śaiva texts to the point that Alexis Sanderson (1994, 1995, 2009) could colorfully describe this textual appropriation as “pious plagiarism.” However, it is becoming ever more clear that borrowing went both ways.

Until recently some scholars thought the *Amṛtasiddhi* itself was a Nāth/Śaiva text that had been appropriated by Buddhists (Schaeffer

2002: 518, 524–525; Baker 2018: 343; see especially Mallinson 2020a: 409–410). The opposite is in fact certainly the case: see *Dawn* pp. 15–16 & n3, referencing Mallinson and Szántó's findings. The initial misidentification of the *Amṛtasiddhi* as a Nāth/Śaiva text is instructive; it exemplifies certain widespread etic suppositions about both traditions. The Śaiva/Nāth traditions' adoption of the *amṛtasiddhi* appears to be an important case in which "we can identify several elements from the Buddhist *tantras* that were adopted in subsequent Indic non-Buddhist literature on *haṭhayoga*" (*Dawn* p. 41). Orofino, citing the research of Birch, notes "the adaptation of *Amṛtasiddhi* verses within Śaiva *haṭhayoga* texts spanning from the 12th to the 15th century, where they were incorporated without explicit attribution" (*Dawn* p. 54, citing Mallinson 2020a: 412–421). Moreover, there is evidence that "specifically Buddhist doctrines...are either unwittingly included, misunderstood (and sometimes presented in corrupt forms as a result) or deliberately changed or omitted" in later, Śaiva-inflected manuscript transmissions of the AS (Mallinson 2020a: 416). On the face of it this would seem to suggest that just as some Bauddhas 'piously plagiarized' Śaiva *tantras* during an earlier phase of the development of *tantra* in India, some Śaivas returned the favor later. Another instance of this sort of thing is the late northeastern Indian Śākta appropriation of Buddhist Tārā traditions. Also, it has long been known that, much earlier, the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali displays considerable Buddhist influence (see Wujastyk 2018 for a review of earlier research and significant new findings).

An important avenue for future research will be additional detailed investigation of such borrowings, with a special focus upon the nature of these borrowings. Are elements imported from an external source relatively superficial and fully assimilable, or are they deeper and more structural such that they fundamentally modify the tradition that adopts them? This will necessarily take us far beyond the basic philology of establishing facts about texts, into the higher and more subjective philology of interpretation and understanding.

Chapter 2 of *Dawn* traces the history of the term *haṭhayoga* beginning with what appears to be its earliest currently known clear attestation as a term for a yogic technique. (For a survey of the term's appearance in a wide variety of Buddhist texts see Mallinson 2020: 2–9; n.b.: the sense of the adverbial phrase [*na*] *haṭhayogena* in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* seems to be unrelated to the practice of *yoga* as such.) This is found in the *Samājottara* at *Guhyasamāja* 18.162d. As Orofino notes, in the *Guhyasamāja* *haṭhayoga* is only briefly mentioned. There is no elaboration on the specific practices to be employed in this *yoga*, and it is only offered as a kind of 'fallback technique' to be used when the practitioner fails to achieve gnostic vision (*darśana*) and awakening

(*bodhi*) via the standard practice of the *Guhyasamāja*'s version of the *śaḍaṅgayoga*. *Haṭhayoga*, it is said, will give rise to the achievement of gnosis (*jñānasiddhi*) for one who fails to attain it via the standard method (*Dawn* pp. 29–31). It would be worthwhile to explore both the Indic and the vast Tibetan *Guhyasamāja* exegetical literature bearing on the term *haṭhayoga* in *Guhyasamāja* 18.161–163; I suspect this would shed additional light upon the history of its usage in the later Vajrayāna tradition. For example, Āryadeva's (10th cent.?) *Sūta* (Skt. ed. p. 473) contains a reference to a *haṭhayogasamādhi* in which an adept takes on the form of Paramāśva and employs this *samādhi* to subjugate persons who are exceedingly deficient in *vīrya*; in this case the term "*haṭhayoga*" seems unrelated to its usage to designate 'physical yoga.' Regarding the *śaḍaṅgayoga* itself, I would draw the reader's attention to *Dawn* p. 30n46. Here Orofino displays her intimate familiarity with this extremely complicated *yoga*, providing an excellent succinct overview of it drawing upon her own and others' earlier studies.

Chapter 2 continues with a detailed explanation of the use of *haṭhayoga* in the *Kālacakra*, utilizing the *Śrī Kālacakra*, its commentary in the *Vimalaprabhā*, and these texts' exegesis by Indian *Kālacakra* masters, prominently including Nāropā (*Dawn* pp. 31–36). Once again Orofino exhibits her mastery of these difficult, extremely complex texts, which are larded with obscure technical terms that are typically either poorly defined within or simply absent from current lexicons.

One of these peculiar terms is *parapuram*, found in *Śrī Kālacakra* 4.197b. Orofino renders this as "the supreme citadel," an interpretation of the Tibetan translation *mchog gi grong khyer*. Monier-Williams, following Schmidt's *Nachträge* to Böhtlingk and Roth, renders *parapurapraveśa* as "entering an enemy's city (as a supernatural art)." In this definition *parapura* is supposed to refer to an enemy's (*para*) fortified town (*pura*). As the Tibetan translation *mchog gi grong khyer* suggests, in the *Kālacakra* usage *parapura* has a somewhat different sense. I think the *Kālacakra* usage is not identical to the [in]famous mundane *siddhi* of *parapurapraveśa*[na] (Tib. *grong 'jug*), a.k.a., *parakāyapraveśa*, "which involves transferring the vital principle from one's own body into another[s] corpse to reanimate it" (*Dawn* p. 33n56, also p. 35; cf. also *Tāntrikābhīdihānakośa* 3.474; White 2009: 12, 120, 165–166). In AS 29.1ab the mundane common *siddhi* (*sāmānyasiddhi*) of *parapurapraveśana* appears following the mundane *siddhis* of "*kāyavyūha*, etc.": *kāyavyūhādikaṃ yac ca parapurapraveśanam* |. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. p. 1324.2 defines *kāyavyūha* as "the supernatural power of assuming several bodies simultaneously"; (cf. Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 145n225 for a different understanding of *kāyavyūha*). In the AS system these *siddhis* are "the sign[s] of perfected Breath" (*siddhavāyulakṣaṇam*) (*ibid.*).

In *Śrī Kālacakra* 4.197 [= *Śrī Kālacakra* 2.121], on the other hand, I do not see any explicit evidence that the *tantra* is describing the 'necro-possession' *parapurapraveśa* / *grong 'jug* practice. Rather, it appears to be describing a *haṭhayoga* technique that forces the *prāṇa* and *apāna* winds in the body to pierce the crown of the skull. This induces a sort of metaphorical 'space travel' (*khecaratvam*; *mkha' la spyod pa nyid*) so that *yogis* attain union with the Mother of the Universe (*viśvamātā*), whose nature is the five supranormal powers. This interpretation seems to be supported by Nāropā's juxtaposition of *Śrī Kālacakra* 5.114 to follow stanza 4.197. *Śrī Kālacakra* 5.114 describes attainment of the transcendent, the fourth state which is the unmoving bliss of *nirvāṇa*, the imperishable *sahaja*. (Cf. *parapadagamana* and *vrajati parapadam* elsewhere in the *Śrī Kālacakra*.) Similarly, Raviśrījñāna's gloss on *Śrī Kālacakra* 4.197d equates *Viśvamātā* with *mahāmudrā*, which in *Kālacakra* usage typically refers to gnostic vision of the "emptiness image" (*śūnyatābimbam*). Thus I suspect that here *parapura* is being used metaphorically. This invocation of the "supreme citadel" indeed most likely alludes to the mundane *parapurapraveśana* practice, but it 'elevates' it to refer to the attainment of the supramundane, supreme *siddhi* of *mahāmudrā*.

In any case the employment of a *haṭhayoga* technique for this is indeed remarkable. Similar to the *Guhyasamāja* tradition, the *Kālacakra* reserves its version of *haṭhayoga* as a 'fallback' technique to force the vital breath into the central channel to induce the attainment of salvific gnosis. Orofino observes: "The earliest form of *haṭhayoga*, as described in the *Kālacakratantra*, is essentially a practice of breath control without involving postural physical exercises. As previously mentioned, it is considered a supplementary technique of the six-fold yoga (*ṣaḍaṅgayoga*) to be employed when there is a failure to effectively control the *prāṇa*. Thus, it should be understood as part of the *utpannakrama* process in the Buddhist *tantras*." She goes on to detail this *yoga*'s use in "the ritualized sexual union envisaged in the Buddhist [*yoga*] *niruttaratantra* practices, which can be sublimated through the visualization of the deity" (*Dawn* 33–34). Here once again the author gives a succinct and remarkably lucid description of the theory and practice of crucial advanced Vajrayāna yogic techniques.

Orofino notes that "[t]he Sanskrit term *haṭhayoga* is translated into Tibetan as either *stobs kyi rnal 'byor* or *btsan thabs kyi rnal 'byor...*," and she illustrates the choices made in various Tibetan translations of Indic works (*Dawn* 31n50). As a mere aside, I would point out that the term *btsan thabs sbyor ba'i cho ga* (< *haṭhayogavidhānā*) is found in the eighth chapter of the *Ḍākārṇavatāntra* (see Mallinson 2020: 6n36). This appears within a context that suggests it is related to physical *haṭhayoga* as it is employed in Vajrayāna *niṣpanna-* / *utpanna-krama yoga*. Further

investigation may shed light upon this text's place within the sequence of developments of the *haṭhayoga* tradition.

Chapter 3 (*Dawn* pp. 39–45) is titled “The Central Doctrine of the *Amṛtasiddhi*.” As promised, Orofino provides “a synopsis of [the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s] central doctrine,” and she refers readers to “the comprehensive translation of the text by Mallinson and Szántó (2021).” I would recommend that those who want to begin exploring this literature start with this section of *Dawn* in conjunction with Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 7–23. Orofino, once again, presents a very clear and concise but thorough overview of the basic theory and practices of this form of *yoga*.

That said, one major issue I did not fully understand from Mallinson and Szántó’s and *Dawn*’s treatments of the *Amṛtasiddhi* is the precise sense of *amṛta* in this title. Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 7) note: “The title of the text means ‘the attainment of’ *amṛta*. The most common referent of *a-mṛta*, whose literal meaning is ‘not dead’ or ‘immortal’, is a liquid that bestows immortality, but, as is explained in the closing section of the text, in the *Amṛtasiddhi* *amṛta* refers to semen, liberation or life. Thus the text’s title may mean ‘The Attainment of [Mastery over] Semen’, ‘The Attainment of Liberation’ or ‘The Attainment of Immortality’.” (But in place of “Immortality” here read “Life”—see next.) The Sanskrit of AS 36.6 referenced here reads: *śukrasya amṛtaṃ vācyam mokṣasya jīvitasya ca | trayāṇāṃ kathitā siddhir amṛtasiddhir ihocyate |*. Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 150) translate this as “Immortality (*amṛtam*) is a word for semen, liberation and life. The perfection (*siddhiḥ*) of the three is taught here as the Perfection of Immortality (*amṛtasiddhiḥ*).” Note that the third member in the triad—*jīvita*—indeed means “life” or “living” in general, but it also means “duration of life” (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v.). That being the case, we might gloss *jīvitasya...siddhiḥ* in AS 36.6 as “attainment/perfection of the duration of life.” In *Dawn* (p. 42) Orofino notes that the “*Amṛtasiddhi*, akin to the *śaḍaṅgayoga* practice of Buddhist *tantras*, teaches that in order to realize innate wisdom, the *bindu*, which corresponds to the lunar *amṛta*, must be raised along the central channel and must not be emitted. If it descends and is emitted, one will age, die, and be destined for the endless cycle of transmigration. Conversely, if it is not emitted, the *yogin* achieves immortality.”

My question is, what does “immortality” signify here? In basic Buddhist teachings it is said that *nirvāṇa* is *amṛta* (Pali *amata*), but this most certainly refers to a *lokottara* state of transcendence in which the ordinary human body has been cast away: even Śākyamuni Buddha cast away—or at least ‘displayed casting away’—his physical body on the occasion of his *parinirvāṇa*. In the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition, on the other

hand, I have the impression that ‘immortality’ may have a more this-world, physical sense, perhaps in harmony with the second stanza of Biruā’s song, which says: *sahaje thira karī bāruṇī bāndha | je ajarāmara hoi dīrha kāndha |* |; “Making it naturally (*sahaje*) firm, produce liquor, so that having become free from old age and death, the body becomes incorruptible” (adapted from Kværne 2010[1977]: 81–86). A possibly related statement is found in a *dohā* of Saraha: *jīvantaha jo ṇai jarai so ajarāmara hoi |* (67ab); “Anyone alive who does not age would be free from old age and death” (Mathes & Szántó 2024: 152, 274, 357). Thus, it is not clear to me whether the immortality sought in the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition is an exclusively, or even primarily, mental, gnostic state of transcendence, or is instead a literal physical immortalization via transmutation of the ordinary human body. The concluding portion of the AS titled “Inquiry into *Nirvāṇa*” (*nirvāṇaviveka*; AS 34) suggests the *amṛtasiddhi* adept achieves a ‘body of gnosis’ (*jñānakāya*, *jñānadeha*), but I am unsure how this relates to the ‘inner alchemy’ of physical manipulation of breath and semen that is the central focus of the text. We will return to this issue at the end of this review.

As just noted, Orofino refers to the achievement of immortality via the yogic practice of ‘raising the lunar *amṛta* within the central channel of the subtle body, and avoidance of allowing it to descend.’ In determining the relationships between the *Amṛtasiddhi* and the Kālacakra corpus, it is significant that AS 4.11c (*adhaś candrāmṛtaṃ yāti*) is identical to *Sekoddeśa* 86a, as noted by Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 115n152). Also, not explicitly noted by Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 122), the entire hemistich of AS 7.26ab (*adhaś candrāmṛtaṃ yāti maraṇaṃ sarvadehinām |*) is almost identical to *Sekoddeśa* 86ab, with the only difference being that the latter reads *marane* in *pāda* b. The *Sekoddeśa* is an excerpt from the Kālacakra *mūlatantra* titled *Paramādibuddha*. Based upon textual correspondence and additional ideas that are found in both the AS and the Kālacakra literature, Orofino argues that the AS refers to the Kālacakra (*Dawn* p. 40 & n70). I agree that this is very likely. If further study confirms the position that the AS draws upon the Kālacakra, it supports a theory that the AS originated some time after around the turn of the millennium—perhaps around the middle of the 11th century—during or shortly after the initial diffusion of the Kālacakra *tantra* literature (cf. Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 3 & n2).

Another possible linkage between the Kālacakra and the AS is their perhaps common employment of the [Mañjuśrī] *Nāmasaṃgīti*. The *Nāmasaṃgīti* is a foundational text for the Kālacakra. In its “Inquiry into *Nirvāṇa*” AS 35.1cd *avyayo niṣkalo vyāpī śivaḥ sarvagato vibhuḥ |* seems to draw upon *Nāmasaṃgīti* 95–98; cf. especially *Nāmasaṃgīti* 97c *niṣkalaḥ sarvago vyāpī*, with the lemmas *śiva* and *vibhu*—and some of the other descriptors of *nirvāṇa* found in AS 35—also appearing in the

Nāmasaṃgīti. Of course most of these terms are common tropes throughout Indic panegyric, and the *Nāmasaṃgīti* itself is the common property of the entire Vajrayāna tradition, but further study may reveal significant intertextualities.

Other interesting parallels between the Kālacakra and the AS are their employment of Sāṃkhya terminology and their use of the macrocosm/microcosm homology (see also *Dawn* p. 41). In its treatment of *Śrī Kālacakra* 1.2b (*bāhye dehe pare ca prakṛtiṣu puruṣaṃ pañcaviṃśātmakam ca*) *Vimalaprabhā* 1.6.2b quotes a modified version of *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 3 (cf. Newman 1987: 385, 402–405). Like the Kālacakra, the AS adopts Sāṃkhya terminology and ideas but significantly modifies them. If, as seems possible, the AS draws upon the Kālacakra in other respects, its adaptation of Sāṃkhya ideas might have been inspired by the Kālacakra. I have the impression that the two texts' usage of Sāṃkhya terms and concepts are rather different, but this calls for further study. Likewise, as exemplified by the *Śrī Kālacakra* 1.2b *pāda* just cited, the Kālacakra is based upon a model in which the external world (*bāhya*) is reflected in the body (*deha*), which serve as a basis for purification/transformation in order to achieve the transcendent (*para*), a supramundane blissful gnostic cognition of the universe. We find a somewhat similar model in the AS. See Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 8), “[t]he body is a microcosm of the universe”; Orofino (*Dawn* p. 39), “the body is a microcosm, perfectly symmetrical with the macrocosm.” Of course this kind of idea is widespread in pre-modern South Asian thought, but further study may reveal some sort of genetic relationship between the Kālacakra and the AS use of this principle. The same applies to the Kālacakra and the AS employment of alchemical terminology and ideas. See Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 50n48, and esp. Mallinson 2025b; I think there is much more to be said about this. Likewise, the *Vimalaprabhā* employs the terms *piṅgalā*, *iḍā*, and *avadhūtī* for the three main right, left, and central *nāḍīs* correlated with Sun, Moon, and Rāhu (cf., e.g., Newman 1987: 242; *Vimalaprabhā* 2.2.43); this probably predates the AS usage of *iḍā* as the left channel associated with Moon (cf. Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 112n120).

Orofino, similar to Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 125n166), further suggests that there are parallels between the AS 9 treatment of the widespread Indic doctrines of *prakṛti*, the three *guṇas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, *taṃas*), and the three *doṣas* (here *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha*), and ideas found in the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition (*Dawn* p. 41). I agree that the AS doctrine of “mental *prakṛtis*” (*cittaprakṛtayas*) as being like waves on the ocean (AS 9.5) shows affinities with Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition ideas (*āryīyamataṃ*; ‘*phags lugs*). However, the AS says that all one’s good and bad actions performed in prior lifetimes reside within one’s body in the form of *prakṛti* (AS 9.2), such that there are “bodily *prakṛtis*”

(*śārīrī/dehe prakṛtayaḥ*). These “bodily *prakṛtis*” consist of apparently strictly physical *vāta*, *pitta*, and *kapha* that ‘perform their functions paying no heed to mind’ (AS 9.7). This appears to present a kind of ‘bodily karmic DNA’ doctrine, which to my knowledge is rather extraordinary in Buddhist literature.

Also, the AS teaching of “bodily *prakṛtis*” seems to be at odds with the fundamentally strictly mentalistic trajectory of the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition treatment of its version of *prakṛtis*. In the Ārya tradition texts *Pañcakrama* 2 and *Sūta* 4 the 80/160 *prakṛtis* seem to be something like mental ‘paradigms’ or ‘prototypes’ that are latent forms of emotional states and primarily mental experiences. As I vaguely understand this, they seem to represent special kinds of stable, prototypical *vāsanās* (‘propensities’) or *bījas* (‘seeds’) that give rise to and condition much of human experience. For a table presenting the eighty *prakṛtis* of the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition see Wedemeyer 2007: 775–778. This set of eighty is doubled to one hundred sixty to account for the two stages of the eighty *prakṛtis*’ gradual, phased dissolution when approaching the death state of luminosity (*prabhāsvara*) and their inverted phased reemergence after exiting it. In Candrakīrti’s *Pradīpoddyotana ad Guhyasamāja* 7.14 (Ch ed. p. 65) we are told: *rūpādīviṣayān bāhyābhiniveśaparihāreṇa mṛdvādimātrasthitarāgādiṣaṣṭyuttaraśataprakṛtisvabhāvānubhavana jāntīyād iti* |; “One should know [mind (*cittam*)] via completely rejecting attachment to visible form and so forth [—i.e., the five *kāmaguṇas*—] as being external and [by instead] experiencing [them as] having the nature of the one hundred sixty *prakṛtis* of the states of attraction and so forth, that have the [three] degrees of slight and so forth [i.e., slight, middling, and excessive].” Likewise, *Pradīpoddyotana ad Guhyasamāja* 12.55 (Ch ed. p. 114) says: *kāyavākcittalakṣaṇaiḥ kāyādisvabhāvaiḥ gaṅgāvālukāsamesu kāyavākcittalakṣaṇeṣu lokadhātuṣu sarvasattvānāṃ nāṭakavaṇ nāṇāprakāreṇa spandamānaṃ cittākhyam ṣaṣṭyuttaraśataprakṛtīnāṃ kāraṇabhūtaṃ sa vetti* |; “[The practitioner] knows the mind of all sentient beings via the characteristics of their bodies, voices, and minds—the nature of their bodies and so forth—in world systems as numerous as the sands of the Gaṅgā, characterized by [their] bodies, voices, and minds. [He knows that mind] gyrating (*spandamānam*) in various forms like a dramatic dancer, as the cause of the one hundred sixty *prakṛtis*.”

When I examine the list of eighty *prakṛtis* and their treatments in Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition exegesis, I see nothing physical. A very helpful Tibetan investigation of the exceedingly complex, difficult, and still rather obscure subject of the *prakṛtis* in the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition corpus is found in rJe Tsong kha pa’s *Rim lnga gsal sgron* in a section titled “*rGyud kyi don snang ba gsum dang rang bzhin rnams bstan*

pa” (ed. pp. 213–225); this has been accurately translated into English by Gavin Kilty (2013: 341–358), but some of the technical terminology in this translation calls for refinement. I suspect further study will reveal interesting differences—and parallels—between the Ārya tradition and the AS treatment of *prakṛtis* that will shed light on both traditions.

A possibly fundamental difference between the two traditions is the emphasis in the AS upon exercises physically cultivating the human body whereas—according to the Ārya master Candrakīrti, at least—in the practice of the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition the attainment of buddhahood involves “separation from one’s ordinary body” (*prākṛtadehāpagama*): “The [five] *buddhas* are the [five] aggregates of the body, [sensation, ideation, activity, and awareness]. Their achievement (*siddhi*) is acquisition of the body of gnosis (*jñānadeha*) that consists of munificence [—i.e., the Dharma teaching of the *rūpakāyas*—] and profundity [—i.e., the gnoses of the *dharmakāya*—] via separation from one’s ordinary body (*prākṛtadeha*)”; *buddhā rūpādayaskandhāḥ teṣāṃ siddhiḥ prākṛtadehāpagamena audāryagāmbhīryātmakajñānadehaparigrahaḥ* | (*Pradīpodyotana* ad *Guhyasamāja* 11.44 [Ch ed.] p. 105).

Likewise, the AS 8.9 & 10.11 apparent denigration and rejection of practice “via the *yoga* of self-empowerment” (*svādhiṣṭhānena yogena*)—the first instance appearing in its section titled “inquiry into mind” (*cittaviveka*)—might easily be read as a criticism or even repudiation of the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition doctrines of the *svādhiṣṭhānakrama* and *cittaviveka* found in Nāgārjuna’s *Pañcakrama*, Āryadeva’s *Sūtaka*, and so forth. (For the *Sūtaka* on *cittaviveka* and *svādhiṣṭhānakrama* see, e.g., Wedemeyer 2007: 393–413, 427–439.) For a somewhat different interpretation of this issue see Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 18–19n43–44). They contrast the ideas found in the Ārya tradition and those found in the *Svādhiṣṭhānaprabheda* ascribed to Āryadeva. (I use the title given in the first stanza of the Sanskrit of this text.) However, I consider the doctrines found in the *Svādhiṣṭhānaprabheda* to be in agreement with Āryadeva’s *Sūtaka* 6. In *Sūtaka* 6 the *svādhiṣṭhānakramopadeśa* (*bdag la byin gyis brlab pa’i rim pa’i man ngag*) is a soteriological method that involves seeing the phenomenal reality of life and death within samsara as like a dream, so that one can discard one’s beginningless clinging to the intrinsic existence of one’s ordinary identity and body. Thus, I would argue that the question of the relationships between the AS and the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition calls for further study. I agree with the suggestion of Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 19) that “the school of the *Svādhiṣṭhānakramaprabheda* was an important interlocutor for [the AS] author,” but with the major proviso that this school includes the doctrines of the Guhyasamāja

Ārya tradition as whole. (After I had written the preceding I became aware that Faye Lois Duncan has covered much of the same ground and has arrived at very similar findings in her 2023 MA thesis; I refer those interested in further discussion of the relationship between the AS and the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition to her study.)

On this issue a statement made by Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 18) needs modification. They say: “The *Amṛtasiddhi* [cf. AS 19.15a, 20.7b, 25.1c, 30.1c]...maps onto [its] four stages [of practice] a tetrad consisting of three voids, *śūnya*, *atiśūnya* and *mahāśūnya*, and *prabhāsvara*, ‘the shining light’. This tetrad is found only in the *Svādhiṣṭhānakramaprabheda*, in which the three voids evolve from *prabhāsvara*: *prabhāsvara* > *mahāśūnya* > *atiśūnya* > *śūnya*.” Regarding the first void, in fact AS 19.15a reads *śūnyatānupraveśo* ‘pi, a minor but perhaps significant difference. More important is the fact that a model of three voids followed by *prabhāsvara* is fundamental to the entire Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition system. See, e.g., *Pañcakrama* 2.4: *śūnyam ca atiśūnyam ca mahāśūnyam tṛtīyakam | caturtham sarvaśūnyam ca phalahetuprabhedataḥ |* . See also, e.g., *Sūtaka* 4 (Wedemeyer ed. p. 402): *vajrayāne tu paryāyam āha | ...śūnyam atiśūnyam mahāśūnyam iti |* ...; *ibid.* p. 404: *evam sarvabuddhopadeśam śūnyatrayalakṣaṇam pratipādyā |* ...; *ibid.* p. 418: *...śubhāśubhaprakṛtayāḥ śūnyatrayasamudbhavā vāyuvāhanavaśāt kṣaṇe kṣaṇe cotpadya viśayān anubhūtya punaḥ punaḥ prabhāsvaram praviśanti |* . Thorough discussion of this would require more space than is warranted here, but the last quotation notes “wholesome and unwholesome *prakṛtis* arise from the three voids due to the force of being conveyed by the [body’s] *vāyu(s)*; originating moment to moment they experience objects, and over and over enter into luminosity.” As I read the AS, its soteriology includes adoption and radical revision of basic structures found in the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition. Further comparative analysis of both systems is needed. (N.b.: The Kālacakra employs a different set of three emptinesses followed by a fourth [i.e., *śūnyatā*, *mahāśūnyatā*, *paramārthaśūnyatā*, *śūnyatā sarvākārā*; cf. Newman 1987: 285–286]; this appears to be an adaptation of the Prajñāpāramitā sixteen emptinesses.)

These arcane, complex, difficult, and unresolved philological-historical issues aside, we can wholeheartedly agree with Orofino’s statement that “[b]y analyzing the teachings of the *Amṛtasiddhi*, we can identify several elements from the Buddhist *tantras* that were adopted in subsequent Indic non-Buddhist literature on *haṭhayoga*” (*Dawn* p. 41). Orofino goes on to give a fascinating discussion of the idea of *bindu* as “seminal fluid.” In other Vajrayāna texts this is most often connected with the ‘subtle body’ (*sūkṣmaśarīra*/*sūkṣmadeha*; *phra ba’i lus*/*phra mo’i lus*) composed of *nāḍīs* and *cakras* through which flow

vāyus ("winds") and *bindu(s)* ("drop(s)"), but it is very noteworthy that "[t]he *Amṛtasiddhi* makes no mention of Kuṇḍalinī, lotuses, or wheels [i.e., *cakras*]" (Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 11). The AS presentation of 'the subtle body' seems to be *much* simpler than the intricate models that are prevalent in Vajrayāna systems such as the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara *tantras*. I suspect this difference has important ramifications that call for further study.

As mentioned above, another key doctrine of the AS is "the correspondence between the macrocosm and microcosm," especially the employment of "the triad of Sun, Moon, and Rāhu within the human physical body" (*Dawn* p. 41). As Orofino notes, these AS doctrines are highly reminiscent of parallel ideas found in the Kālacakra *tantra*.

Here *Dawn* (pp. 42–43n72; see also p. 50) offers us a long note examining scholarly literature treating parallels between Indic ideas and practices that are the focal point of *Dawn* and similar ideas and practices found in China. It has long been recognized that there are remarkable similarities between doctrines found, on the one hand, in the Indic Vajrayāna *tantras* that came to be classified as *yoganiruttaratantra*—especially the teachings pertaining to so-called 'sexual *yoga*' with a *karmamudrā* in these *tantras*' *utpanna-* / *niṣpanna-kramas*—and, on the other hand, "[t]he practices of retaining semen and reversing its flow [that are] integral to Chinese alchemy and the tradition of sexual cultivation for achieving longevity in China, dating back to the 5th century BCE." Orofino surveys a good portion of both the earlier and the more recent research on this exceedingly obscure and fascinating subject, and she concludes—correctly, in my opinion—that further progress in tracing the history of these parallels "requires large-scale, multidisciplinary projects with a global scope, grounded in comparative multilingual textual-historical analyses to address the complex exchange of ideas and practices between India, Tibet, and China." The correspondences between Sinic and Indic ideas and practices related to 'sexual *yoga*' are often so striking that one tends to assume that cross-cultural transmission rather than independent parallel development has occurred. However, the devil is in the details, and it is established that over a period of many centuries people and ideas traveled in both directions. Thus, as Orofino argues, further study is needed (cf. likewise Mallinson 2018: 199).

The remainder of *Dawn* Chapter 3 treats details in the AS, noting its seventh chapter dealing with *bindu*. This seems to reference the four *ānandas* of Vajrayāna *utpannakrama yoga* found especially in the *yoginītantras* such as the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara, but the AS presentation of the *ānandas* differs in significant ways (cf. Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 17–18, 118). The conclusion of *Dawn* Chapter 3 details the

three *mudrās* taught in AS 11–13. Among the three it is noteworthy that in AS 11 the term *mahāmudrā* seems to be used to designate a sitting posture and a strenuous physical exercise designed to “[s]top the movement of the Moon and Sun, and perform restraint of the breath (*prāṇayantraṇam*)” (AS 11.5 translated by Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 128). Although the *mahāmudrā* is called “the greatest of seals,” the AS treatment of it mostly centers upon physical exercise rather than the mystico-philosophical metaphysical discourse this term most often attracts in Indo-Tibetan Vajrayāna literature. (But see AS 31.3 and Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 148n233, and esp. p. 173, for *Amṛtasiddhi* corpus references to *mahāmudrā* in the sense of “the *summum bonum* [as] in much of tantric Buddhism.”) As we will see when we examine the *ASN below, the emphasis placed upon physical exercises instead of or in addition to ‘meditative’ contemplation is a dominant pattern in the AS and its associated texts.

Chapter 4 of *Dawn* (pp. 47–56) is titled “Dispelling the Hindrances to Immortality.” Thus it provides an overview and discussion of key points in the *ASN, an invaluable introduction to the edition and translation of *ASN that constitute Parts II & III of *Dawn*. Orofino observes: “The **Amṛtasamkṣāṇibārhaṇa* is a yoga manual organized into thirty-six chapters, each consisting of three sections: a preliminary, a main, and a concluding one. In its colophon, the yoga trainings described in the text are defined as ‘*khrul ’khor*, which translates the Sanskrit polysemous word *yantra*” (*Dawn* p. 47). The pertinent portion of the colophon reads: ...‘*chi med grub pa’i ’phrang sum cu rtsa drug gi ’khrul ’khor*, which Orofino translates as “...the thirty-six yoga practices (‘*khrul ’khor*) for [dispelling] the hindrances [‘*phrang*] of the Attainment of Immortality” (*Dawn* p. 132). She goes on to discuss the appearance of *yantraṇam* and *yantra* in AS and what seems to be the typical translation of *yantra* into Tibetan, ‘*khrul ’khor*, with a variant form ‘*phrul ’khor*. The latter spelling appears to be favored in some Tibetan traditions; see, e.g., Norbu 2008. Because ‘*khrul* has a naturally negative sense involving ‘error,’ I wonder if a preference for the form ‘*phrul ’khor* is significant, evoking a more positive sense of ‘divine power,’ similar to Sanskrit *divya*, *ṛddhi*, *nirmāṇa*, and *prātihārya*, which are often translated by Tibetan terms containing ‘*phrul* (compare Baker 2018: 344–345 & n.28). Orofino notes: “[*Yantra*’s] Tibetan rendering, ‘*khrul ’khor*, means, as in Sanskrit, machine or device, and in certain contexts of yoga literature, it means physical training” (*Dawn* p. 47). For a graphic example of *yantra* / ‘*khrul ’khor* in the sense of “machine” see the war machines, merry-go-round, and other mechanical devices taught in the *svarodayayantravidhīniyamamahoddeśa* in *Śrī Kālacakra* 1.128–149 and *Vimalaprabhā* 1.10.128–149 (cf. Newman 1987: 543–547); for the usage

of *yantra* in the sense of “magical device” or “diagram” see, e.g., Kuranishi 2013.

The semantic shift from *yantra*/*'khrul 'khor* in the sense of “[mechanical] device” or “apparatus” to “physical training” seems to imply that the human body is a kind of complex ‘machine’ that can be manipulated for a special kind of ‘work,’ with ‘breath’ (especially *prāṇa* and *apāna*) being the principal form of energy that drives this ‘machine’ (see *Dawn* pp. 47–48). The idea that the human body is a *yantra*—i.e., *dehayantra*—is well-attested in late Sanskrit works (see Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 129n171). Much earlier we find the same idea expressed as *kāyayantam* in Pali, and in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* we read: “This body, alas, is a contraption, bones held together with tendons!” (*yantrabhūto batāyaṃ kāyo 'sthisnāyuvinibaddhaḥ*; § 2.9 of GRETEL eText). We also find the equivalent term *śarīrayantram* in the *Bhadrāpālīpariprcchā-sūtra*, which is quoted in Guhyasamāja exegesis in Āryadeva’s *Sūta* (Wedemeyer 2007: 397). We find the remarkable statement that “the body machine is devoid of self” (*dehayantro nirātmakaḥ*) in Kambala’s so-called “*Navāśloka*” *Prajñāpāramitā-piṇḍārtha* [5]9d (Tucci ed. 1956, *Minor Buddhist Texts* I, p. 217 > GRETEL eText, Klaus Wille input 2020-07-31). Moreover, a search of “The Buddhist Canons Research Database” for the collocation *lus kyi 'khrul 'khor* produced “41 instances in 30 texts” ranging from Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *tantras* through a wide variety of *sūtra* and *tantra* exegesis. Thus the idea of the human body as a ‘device’ (*yantra*; *'khrul 'khor*) has a long and varied history in Buddhism, a history that would reward detailed systematic exploration.

As mentioned, in each of its thirty-six chapters the *ASN begins by defining a specific error/hindrance, and then it describes the error’s countermeasures in a practice consisting of three stages (*rim pa < *krama?*): 1) a preliminary stage (*dang po sngon 'gro'i rim pa ni |*), 2) a main stage (*gnyis pa dngos gzhi'i rim pa ni |*), and 3) a concluding stage (*gsum pa rjes kyi rim pa ni |*). These *pādas* are repeated in a pattern that obtains throughout the text. The *pāda* “*sngon 'gro dngos gzhi rjes gsum mo |*” appears at the end of the introductory stanza of each of the thirty-six chapters, and the three *pādas* given above appear at the head of each of the three sections of every chapter. This structure strikes me as being peculiar for an Indic text, being more reminiscent of the numbered *sa bcad* structure employed in classical Tibetan scholastic works. See likewise Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 16): “...some [AS corpus works found in *Tangyurs*] may not even have had an Indic original behind them. This is suggested for example by the enumerative style, which is extremely rare in South Asian writing but prevalent in Tibetan.” I wonder if Amoghavajra adopted this organizing principle under Tibetan influence. Also, the colophon of *ASN makes no mention of

any sort of translator or translation activity (*Dawn* pp. 132, 184). These facts support Orofino's proposal that "...Amoghavajra, the author of [*ASN], was an Indian *yogin* who, during his travels in Tibet, wrote these instructions directly in Tibetan for a Tibetan audience, at a time when Buddhism was declining in India and was received with great fervor in the Land of Snow" (*Dawn* p. 56). If this understanding is borne out, the *ASN is a true 'gray text' in the proper sense of that term, a text composed in Tibet by an Indian in Tibetan, perhaps in collaboration with one or more Tibetans. A somewhat analogous earlier parallel may be Atiśa's *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*, a work composed in Tibet for Tibetans, although in that instance it is believed that the text was composed in Sanskrit and translated. In any case, the *ASN exemplifies the remarkably intimate relationships between Indic and Tibetan Buddhists during the 11th–13th centuries. It is well known that during that period Tibetans studied in South Asia and South Asians taught and worked as translators in Tibet. Less studied is the fact that some South Asians learned Tibetan such that they could autonomously translate Sanskrit works into Tibetan, and perhaps even compose original works in Tibetan. Also, it is at least possible that some late Sanskrit works were composed by Tibetans. It is clear that the boundary between "Indian Buddhism" and "Tibetan Buddhism" was highly permeable and often bridged at this time.

Each of the three stages of each of the thirty-six chapters of the *ASN prescribes an *āsana*. Chapter 4 of *Dawn* (pp. 48–50) demonstrates that some of the names and properties of *āsanas* described in *ASN were transmitted over the course of hundreds of years in medieval/premodern *haṭhayoga* literature. Many of these names and properties even persist in the contemporary globalized explosion of the body cultivation 'yoga life-style' noted at the beginning of this review. For example, Orofino notes that *āsanas* similar or identical to those found in *ASN appear in "the modern Yoga Challenge® System" (*Dawn* p. 85n127, 100n139, 112n151, 113n152, 115n155, 116n156, 118n158, 124n164, 132n172). Undoubtedly this list of examples could be greatly augmented, and it would be interesting to trace further the continuities—or at least commonalities—between the *ASN and the current 'secularized' transcultural yoga phenomenon.

As a small contribution to further study of the history of *āsanas*, in an appendix to this review I provide an edition and translation of the Sanskrit text of *Śrī Kālacakra* 3.19cd and *Vimalaprabhā* 3.1.19cd, which is titled *aṣṭavidhāsanabhedananiyamah*, "the precept on differentiation of eight types of *āsanas*." In the *Kālacakra* these *āsanas* are prescribed as the postures to be adopted when performing nine types of magic rites. Although they are not presented embedded in dynamic *haṭhayoga* practices, some of the *Kālacakra āsanās* share names and/or features

found in the *āsanas* of *haṭhayoga* texts. Because the *Śrī Kālacakra* and the *Vimalaprabhā* achieved completion ca. 1025–1040, this *tantra*'s depiction of these *āsanas* might serve as a kind of benchmark in the development of *āsana* systems in general and *āsanas* in the *haṭhayoga* tradition in particular. Further study is needed to determine the relationships that exist between the *āsanas* given in this section of the *Kālacakra tantra* and those found in other works.

Chapter 4 of *Dawn* continues (pp. 51–53) by highlighting and summarizing the key features of *ASN. *ASN begins with “Homage to Vajrayoginī.” This suggests to me that—if this homage is authorial—Amoghavajra announces at the very outset that his work especially pertains to the *yoginītantra*/*prajñātantra* subtradition of Vajrayāna praxis. This supposition appears to be supported by the AS as well, which begins by paying homage to Chinnamastā, the decapitated form of the buddha goddess Yoginī (AS 0.1c; Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 107; cf. also p. 15). Chinnamastā (or Chinnamuṇḍā? < *dbu bcad* [*ma*]) is also honored at the beginning of the **Amṛtasiddhimūla*, a work existing only in Tibetan which is closely related to the AS (Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 155, 165). Orofino begins her overview of the *ASN by pointing out that “the analysis of the thirty-six hindrances impeding the practice of the *Amṛtasiddhi* clearly reveals that the **Amṛtasaṃkaṭanibarhaṇa* is rooted in an unmistakably Buddhist Vajrayāna context” (*Dawn* p. 51).

This brings to the forefront what I found most fascinating in *ASN and its treatment in *Dawn*. Orofino notes: “The first two chapters [of *ASN] specifically address obstacles to the practice of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, meditation techniques that have been highly significant and widely practiced across Buddhist schools since ancient times.” A passage in *ASN 1 reads, in Orofino’s translation: “When eradicating the errors that hinder the practice of the cultivation of tranquility (*śamatha*), there are three stages: the preliminary, the main and the concluding” (*Dawn* p. 59). The preliminary stage begins with the practitioner placing their feet in *padmāsana* (or, perhaps more precisely, **padmaparyāṅka*? < *pad ma’i dkyil krung*). This *āsana* apparently corresponds to the *āsana* named *pariyāṅka* in the *Śrī Kālacakra* and the *Vimalaprabhā* (see Appendix below), and it is interesting to note that in the *sTang stabs kyi bkod pa* (< **Gativyūha*) ascribed to Buddhajñānapāda we find *lus ni rab tu zhi ba’i tshul dang ldan* || *padma’i ‘dug stang yin par mkhas pas bshad* || (*Dawn* p. 60n103), which I would translate as: “The learned explain that the body possessing a very peaceful mode is the *padmāsana* (*padma’i ‘dug stang*).” Thus, the *sTang stabs kyi bkod pa* (*zhi ba’i tshul*), the *Kālacakra* (*śānti*[*karman*]), and the *ASN (*śamatha*) all connect this *āsana* with a ‘peaceful’ affect and/or ‘peaceful’ activity. However, in the *ASN, after sitting in *padmāsana*/**padmaparyāṅka* we are instructed to “...cross the hands behind the back. Bind the arm

muscles, then vigorously pull the *apāna* upward and slightly push the *prāṇa* downward. After placing the forehead on the floor, perform the practice with great force" (after *Dawn* pp. 60–61). Rather than serving as a bodily posture for physically static, quiet contemplation—as it is most commonly depicted in Buddhist texts and art—or as a posture for the performance of a magic rite of pacification as is prescribed in the *Kālacakra*, in the *ASN we are told to adopt the **padmāsana*/**padmaparyāṅka* and then forcefully manipulate the vital energies in the body (*stobs bskyed rab tu bsgom par bya*) as part of a complex sequence of physical practices designed to 'eradicate the errors that hinder the practice of the cultivation of *śamatha*' (...*zhi gnas 'phrang gi ni* | | *skyon rnam rab tu sel ba'i tshe*...).

We find this pattern repeated throughout the thirty-six sections of *ASN. The *ASN follows and expands upon the versified list of thirty-six types of external and internal hindrances (*phyi nang gnyis kyi phrang sum cu rtsa drug*) given in the **Amṛtasiddhivṛtti* / 'Chi med grub pa'i 'grel pa [henceforth *ASV] of Amoghavajra (Q5058 92v1–93r2; dPe bsdur ma ed. vol. 48, pp. 231–232); this text, according to its colophon, was composed in Tibet (Q 98v4) (see *Dawn* p. 52). To list just a few other errors or faults to be eradicated via the forceful *yoga* prescribed in the *ASN: As noted, (2) errors pertaining to the cultivation of *vipāśyanā*; (3) errors arising from abstention from desirable sense objects ('*dod yon < *kāmaguṇa*); (4) strong attachment to material goods (*zang zing mchog tu 'dzin pa < *āmiṣaparaṃrṣṭi*) [JN: cf. the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* treatment of this]; (5) errors pertaining to wishing to act to help others (*gzhan don 'jug 'dod*); (6) errors pertaining to understanding the causality of consciousness (*rgyu 'bras shes pa'i rig pa*), i.e., misapprehending insensate matter as if it possesses life (see *Dawn* p. 71n121); (7) errors pertaining to causality appearing to be vain (*rgyu 'bras stong par snang ba*), which entails a nihilistic view (cf. *Dawn* p. 73n122; I take *stong pa* in the sense of *hīna* or *tuccha* here; cf. *gsob*); (8) errors pertaining to the actions of listening to and critically thinking about [the Dharma] (*thos dang bsam pa'i las byed*); (9) errors pertaining to despising all Dharma teachings/*dharma*s (*chos rnam kun la smad pa*); (10) errors pertaining to promoting Dharma teachings/*dharma*s (*chos rnam rje su 'dzin pa*); (11) errors pertaining to having contempt for all sentient beings (*sems can kun la brnyas pa*); (12) the error of considering scriptural authority and rational proof to be principal (*lung rigs gtso bor 'dod pa*) (< **āgamayuktiṣradhānasammata*?); (13) errors pertaining to practice via view, behavior, and meditative cultivation (*lta spyod sgom pas grub pa*). The *ASN continues through all thirty-six types of errors (*skyon < *doṣa*?) or hindrances (*phrang < *saṃkaṭa*; literally, "narrow passage," figuratively "strait" in the sense of "peril"), prescribing postures and sequences of practices centering upon manipulation of winds in the

body, entailing some variable degree of force in 'pressing the upper wind (*steng rlung*, prob. < *ūrdhvavāyu*) downward and drawing the lower wind ('og *rlung*, prob. < *adhovāyu*) upward.'

What is most striking to me in the *ASV/*ASN series of 'errors' or 'hindrances' and their 'treatments' given in *ASN is that, as Orofino explains, they cover forms of attachment and aversion and purportedly erroneous attitudes and philosophical beliefs ranging from those held in common by all Buddhist practitioners through obstacles to developing a correct understanding of reality in a specifically Mahāyāna sense. In *ASV these thirty-six 'errors'/'hindrances' are as mentioned divided into two categories—external (*phyi*) and internal (*nang*). In addition to those listed above, among the 'internal hindrances' we find: (no. 18) "[attachment to] bliss, clarity, and non-conceptuality" (*nang* [gi 'phrang ni] *bde gsal mi rtog* [pa la zhen pa] *dang* |); (no. 21) "[attachment to] nonduality being established as real" (*bden pas bsgrub pa'i gnyis med* [rang la zhen pa] *dang*); and (no. 32) "conceit at having achieved reality" (*de* [kho na] *nyid bsgrub pa'i rlom sems dang* |) (after *ASV dPe bsdur ma ed. p. 232; bracketed material is *mchan bu* inserted in the *pādas* of the stanzas). Thus it is clear that the hindrances, and the *hathayoga* techniques designed to counteract them, pertain to mental states judged to be deleterious to the attainment of the mental purification and realization sought in Vajrayāna practice.

Here Orofino raises an important issue, an issue that permeates much of the Buddhist tradition as a whole. She says: The *ASN "reflect[s] philosophical and religious developments taking place among the *mahāsiddhas* of the Vajrayāna tradition around the 11th century. While preserving continuity with earlier Buddhist paradigms, these *yogins* were also protagonists of a strong social and religious critique, embodying a radical and anti-intellectual perspective that stands in contrast to earlier Buddhist monastic traditions" (*Dawn* p. 51). Again, "Chapter 12 [of *ASN] describes the errors of placing excessive importance on scriptural authority (Skt. *āgama*, Tib. *lung*) and logical reasoning (Skt. *yukti*, Tib. *rigs* [pa]), representing a critique of dogmatism and intellectualism. In addition, the text contains a list of errors that indicate a sharp condemnation of conceptual thought. One such error is 'conceptually abandoning what is right or not right' (Ch. 14), which underscores the necessity of transcending binary distinctions to perceive the true nature of phenomena beyond dualistic categorizations" (*Dawn* p. 52).

It hardly needs saying that this is a perennial topic in Buddhist dogmatics. The classic exemplar of this problem is of course the legendary controversy or 'debate' between Kamalaśīla and his Tibetan disciples versus Hoshang Moheyan and his Tibetan disciples that is

said to have occurred in Tibet at the end of the 8th century (see Seyfort Ruegg 2013 for an overview). In that dispute both factions—like all Mahāyāna Buddhists—agreed that buddhahood has as an essential property nondual, nonconceptual gnosis. However, the two sides—in their rhetoric, at least—starkly disagreed about the role played by the intellect, thought, and discriminative judgements about what is good and bad, in the path leading to the realization of nonconceptual, nondual gnosis (*avikalpa-/nirvikalpa-, advaya-, jñāna*). In his three *Bhāvanākramas* Kamalaśīla argues that there is no way to attain nonconceptual, nondual gnosis without sequentially (*kramaṇa; rim gyis*) developing three forms of wisdom (*prajñā*) through the three phases of study, intellectual analysis, and meditative cultivation. Moheyan, on the other hand, is recorded as having said ‘White clouds, dark clouds, both obscure the sun,’ suggesting that simply negating the mental activity of thought is the totality of the path, and that realization arises immediately or spontaneously upon the meditative stoppage of thought (Ch. *dun*, Tib. *ston min/mun*; cf., e.g., Seyfort Ruegg 2013: 114). In effect, one could generalize and say that *all* Mahāyāna Buddhist thinkers agree that the intellect and rationality are *not sufficient* for the attainment of nirvana and/or awakening, but they differ—sometimes radically—as to whether the intellect and rationality are *necessary* for such attainments.

From its earliest phases the Buddhist tradition presents cases of individuals who achieved realization without engaging in much study or intellectual analysis of Buddhist doctrine—at least during the lifetime in which they attained realization. One thinks of the famous story in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayavibhaṅga* (Lhasa ed. ff. 98–99) of the monk Panthaka (Tib. *lam pa*; cf. Pali [*cūla*] *panthako* in the *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* ad *Dhammapada* 25, H.C. Norman ed., PTS (1909) Vol. I, Part II, pp. 239–255). In the version of this tale as it is given in the Tibetan of the *Vinayavibhaṅga*, initially Panthaka is so perfectly stupid that he is unable to retain a single word of Dharma. To deal with this the Buddha tells Panthaka to clean the other monks’ shoes and sandals, and he is given the words “I cast away the dirt; I cast away the dust” (*rdul spang ngo dri ma spang ngo*) to recite while cleaning the Sangha’s footwear. After some time Panthaka comes to realize that the Buddha had the underlying intention (*dgongs te bka’ stsal*) of using ‘dirt’ and ‘dust’ in reference to desire, hatred, and ignorance. By enthusiastically, energetically cleaning shoes, Panthaka develops better and better mental focus (f. 99a5: *gong nas gong du yid la byed pa’i khyad par thob nas*), such that he understands the reality of samsara in all its details, casts away all his mental afflictions, and becomes an arhat endowed with all knowledge and psychic powers. As I read this narrative there is no indication that Panthaka studied scripture or

engaged in formal study of any kind.

Another famous example of a non-scholastic type attaining enlightenment is the sociopathic mass-murderer Aṅgulimāla. In the Mahāyāna *Aṅgulimālīya* incarnation of this ancient tale Aṅgulimāla undergoes an apparently almost instantaneous transformation from monstrous serial killer to foremost awakened Dharma teacher. Aṅgulimāla does not spend any time studying scripture. Yet he outshines and humbles Śāriputra and other arhats in dialectic, and he contradicts Mañjuśrī, in effect calling him a fool. Aṅgulimāla forcefully expounds the Buddha's ultimate teaching, *tathāgatagarbha*, and declares that the teaching of *nairātmya* is merely provisional. When the Buddha commands Aṅgulimāla to take the five precepts, Aṅgulimāla responds by proclaiming that he will *never* give up killing, lying, drinking alcohol, having sex, and stealing. He boasts to the Buddha that he will instead *always* kill, lie, drink alcohol, have sex, and steal, giving metaphorical interpretations of killing and so forth that are reminiscent of the precepts found in *Śrī Guhyasamāja tantra* 16.61 and *Śrī Hevajra tantra* 2.3.31 (Newman 1992).

One could adduce any number of other examples of Buddhist luminaries who achieved success without much in the way of study or any sort of formal intellectual activity. In a specifically Vajrayāna context one thinks of the many overtly anti-intellectual passages ascribed to Buddhist *siddhas*, like that of the probably apocryphal **Mahāmudropadeśa* ascribed to Tilopā, in which Tilopā says to Nāropā: "You will not see the luminosity *mahāmudrā* via the Dharmas spoken in *mantra* and *pāramitā*, the *vinayapiṭaka*, and so forth, or even by your own beliefs and philosophical views" (cf. Torricelli 2025: 222–223; Rheingans & Schott 2025: 24–28, 34). Likewise, the hagiographic stories of Vajrayāna adepts often celebrate a non- or even anti-intellectual orientation in their heroes. For example, there is the wonderful tale of the miserably impoverished peasant **Koṭali* (Tog tse pa < *kuddāla*) who—instructed by the *mahāpaṇḍita* / *siddha* Ratnākaraśānti—hoed his rocky field all the way to *siddhi*, becoming the Vajrayāna author Kuddālapāda. And of course there is rJe btsun Mila, who performed hard, back-breaking labor for Marpa to purify his sins of magic murder. Neither of these individuals is said to have spent much time pondering the intellectual mysteries of the Buddhist *śāstras*.

Nevertheless, it is not generally the case that the historically documented Indian masters of the Vajrayāna were anti-intellectual or without qualification opposed to the study of *āgama* and the employment of critical reasoning. Although all Vajrayāna masters would most likely at least pay lip service to a rejection of dogmatism and intellectualism—if we define the latter as mere intellectual understanding of Dharma as an end in itself—the Indic literature of

the Vajrayāna is filled with exceedingly—oftentimes mind-numbingly—complex intellectual constructs. In its apologetic and polemical portions Vajrayāna literature very often at least flirts with dogmatism, including instances of intellectually sophisticated, aggressive, and quite dogmatic assertions of anti-dogmatic ‘naturalness’ and ‘spontaneity,’ and a monopolistic claim to have unique ‘unmediated’ access to ‘nonduality’ and ‘the Real.’ Thousands of palm leaves are inscribed with elaborate descriptions of the ineffable, and detailed prescriptions of excruciatingly complex techniques to attain it.

This raises the question of whether the occasionally encountered language expressing ‘anti-intellectualism,’ ‘anti-ritualism’—and ‘antinomianism’ in general—is itself real, or is instead rather merely a kind of rhetorical stance affected by Buddhist intellectuals critiquing fellow members of a Buddhist elite intellectual in-crowd. Thus I wonder if we can really find pure examples of “two opposing tendencies among Buddhist practitioners—the gradualist, intellectual analytical procedure of the scholar on the one hand and the simultaneist, innateist realization of the yogi on the other” (Jackson 1994: 142). While it is certainly the case that leading figures in Indian Vajrayāna sometimes exhibit an emphasis upon one or the other of these ends of a spectrum, most of them display at least some amount of education, and none of them are considered to have been ‘dry’ scholars who neglected practice. This fact applies to Vajrayāna masters ranging from Saraha to Ratnākaraśānti.

Wandering back to the issue at hand: In the AS categorization of candidates for achievement in the practice of *amṛtasiddhi* (AS 15–18), by implication “weak persons” (AS 15) have little learning. “Middling persons” “have average learning” (AS 16.1d *samāgamāḥ*); “excellent persons” are “learned” (AS 17.2a *sākṣarāḥ*); “outstanding persons” are “well-versed in all learned treatises” (AS 18.2a *sarvaśāstrakṛtābhyāsāḥ*) (translations after Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 136–138). In this hierarchy of practitioners it appears to be assumed—and in the case of “outstanding persons” it is explicitly stated—that persons qualified to engage in *amṛtasiddhi* practice have a considerable amount of “practice [of Dharma] performed in previous lifetimes” (AS 18.4a *janmāntarakṛtābhyāsāḥ*; cf. also 17.3ab *puṇyakarmāṇo yoginaḥ siddhamārgataḥ*: “people with good karma, yogis on the *siddha* path”). This suggests to me that the instructions of the AS tradition are not anti-intellectual without qualification, but rather reject a ‘dry’ sort of intellectualism that is satisfied with mere intellectual understanding that lacks personal gnostic experience.

This appears to be supported by the 12th hindrance in *ASN: errors pertaining to esteem for knowledge of scripture and rational proofs as

if they are foremost (*lung rigs gtso bor 'dod pa yi | skyon rnams < *āgamayuktiṣṭhānasammatadosāḥ?*). In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Dutt ed. pp. 197–198) ten *dharma*s are enumerated which a bodhisattva is supposed to esteem as being principal (*pradhānasammata*; *gtso bor 'dod pa*); *āgama* and *yukti* are not among them. Of course this does not entail that a bodhisattva is to turn their back on learning and critical reflection on the Dharma, but we may assume that excessive esteem for these necessary but not sufficient practices is a hindrance throughout the Mahāyāna path. I suspect this attitude was presupposed by the authors of the *AS* and the **ASN*. In any case, both works are difficult, technical texts that display considerable familiarity with large swaths of the 11th century tradition of Sanskrit learning.

Another issue regarding the 'target audience' of the *amṛtasiddhi* corpus is the question of 'sexual yoga' versus 'celibacy.' Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 3–4) state that the *AS* "was composed within a Vajrayāna milieu, but it is unorthodox insofar as its yoga method is for individual celibate male *yogins* and is deemed to be superior to the practices of ritual sex taught in mainstream Vajrayāna tradition." Again, in more detail: "The *Amṛtasiddhi* contrasts its celibate yoga method with the sexual yoga of mainstream Vajrayāna, in which the male participant is usually said to experience orgasm and ejaculation. A minority of schools, the best known of which is the Kālacakra, teach sexual yoga in which semen is not released. The *Amṛtasiddhi* rejects sexual intercourse altogether. Its teachings are not closely related to those of the Vajrayāna traditions which advocate sexual ritual in which semen is not shed" (Mallinson & Szántó 2021: 17). More recently Mallinson (2025: 214) says: "...the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s teachings are for celibate male ascetics." Although Orofino (*Dawn* p. 42 *et passim*) notes the *AS* prohibition of the emission of *bindu* ('seminal fluid') during practice, I did not see the proposal that the *amṛtasiddhi* system of practice is restricted to "individual celibate male *yogins*" addressed in *Dawn*.

It is perhaps worthwhile to point out that among the thirty-six errors or hindrances defined and treated in **ASN*, none of them seem to focus upon sexual desire in particular. As mentioned above, **ASN* 3 provides a remedy for 'errors pertaining to abstention from desirable sense objects' (*'dod yon bkag pa yi skyon rnams*) (*Dawn* pp. 64–66), but this seems to refer to a generic ascetic practice of turning one's back on attachment to sensory pleasure. If the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition presupposes an uncompromising, strict regime of 'celibacy' in the sense of categorical avoidance of sexual activity in any way, shape, or form, the absence of a mention of this in **ASN* seems odd to me.

It is clear that the *AS* advocates retention of semen and the practice of *brahmacharya*. In its "Inquiry into the Signs of the Unperfected Body," *AS* 32.4ab says: *asiddhaṃ tad vijānīyād vapur abrahmacārīṇām |*, which

Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 148) translate as: “One should recognize as unperfected the bodies of those who do not observe celibacy...” The immediately prior stanza AS 32.3 goes so far as to strikingly say: “Even a Buddha is unperfected [and] considered a man in *saṃsāra* as long as the lord that is seed (*bījendraḥ*), which has the form of Brahmā, leaks from the body” (*ibid*; bracketed additions original).

While it clearly seems to be the case that the AS and the *ASN strongly emphasize retention of semen—at least during the practice—AS 19.6ab reads *grhastho vāvadhūto vā yogābhyāse sadā rataḥ* ।. Mallinson and Szántó (2021: 139) translate this as “Whether he is a householder [*grhastha*] or an ascetic [*avadhūta*], he should be constantly devoted to the practice of yoga...” (bracketed Sanskrit added to translation). The immediately preceding stanza, AS 19.5, makes it clear that the ‘householder’ is a *yogin* who “should practise the path of yoga” (*abhyased yogamārgam tu*). Furthermore, AS 19.7 says: *agnisevābalāsevā pathasevā ca sarvadā | prathamābhyāsakāle tu saṃtyājyā yoginā sadā* ।।; “When first practising, the yogi should always and in all circumstances shun the use of fire, indulgence in women [*abalāsevā*] and travel” (*ibid.*; bracketed Sanskrit added). Given that the AS has just explicitly allowed ‘householders’ access to its practices, the restriction against “indulgence in women” during the period one begins the practice (*prathamābhyāsakāle*) seems to at least leave the door open to a householder yogi ‘indulging in women’ at some point after the initial phase of his practice: lumping ‘indulging in women’ together with ‘using fire’ (*agnisevā*, presumably referring to the practice of *homa*) and ‘travel’ makes it sound to me as if these restrictions are temporary. If the AS categorically forbids its practitioners to engage in sexual activity, the specification ‘during the period one begins the practice’ seems very odd to me. That is, if sexual activity is categorically forbidden, why does the AS not explicitly state this, and instead prohibit it only during the initial period of practice?

Also, if the practitioner of the AS is forbidden to engage in any sort of sexual activity during and after they have entered “the path of yoga” taught in the AS, it is difficult to see how this system would fit into the overall *yoganiruttaratantra*/*yoginītantra*/*prajñātantra* Vajrayāna traditions in which it is certainly embedded. If such a restriction is the case, the AS yogi would be unable to take the actual physical forms of the *guhya* and *prajñāñāna* initiations. This leads into complexities that we simply cannot explore in much detail here. I would note, however, that if the AS in fact ‘deems itself to be superior to the mainstream Vajrayāna tradition, which contains practices of ritual sex,’ the AS would be unorthodox indeed, and it would be difficult to harmonize it with the ‘mainstream’ of 10th–12th century Indic Vajrayāna Buddhism. Some important Vajrayāna exegetes of this

period—e.g., Vāgīśvarakīrti and Abhayākaragupta—go so far as to posit arguments to the effect that a *bhikṣu* can maintain the *śrāvakasaṃvara* vow of ‘celibacy’ even while taking the *guhya* and *prajñājñāna* initiations—and, presumably, subsequently while performing *utpannakrama* practices with a *karmamudrā* as well—without this necessarily entailing damage to their *bhikṣu* vows (*bhikṣusamvarakṣati*). It seems that questions regarding the definition of *brahmacarya* and what constituted a *brahmacārin* were being debated during the period the AS appeared. Is it at least possible that in the AS soteriology a *brahmacārin* is a yogi who retains semen (cf. AS 34.2a *ūrdhvoaretā yadā yogī...*) without necessarily abstaining from sexual activity? I have no solution to offer on this issue, and only raise it in the hope that it will lead to clarification in the future.

Returning, finally, to the concluding portion of *Dawn's* introduction, Orofino observes: “The **Amṛtasaṃkaṭānibarhaṇa*, along with the other texts in the *Amṛtasiddhi's* corpus by Amoghavajra preserved in the Tibetan canon, represents a significant moment in the evolution of the *Amṛtasiddhi* teachings from the second half of the 11th century onward. After its emergence in the Deccan region of India within a Buddhist tantric milieu, these teachings likely diverged along two distinct trajectories.

The Buddhist trajectory crossed the Himalayas and, thanks to Eṇadeva (alias Kāla Virūpa) and Amoghavajra, entered Tibet, where it continued to develop.

The Śaiva trajectory, on the other hand, is reflected in the adaptation of *Amṛtasiddhi* verses within Śaiva *haṭhayoga* texts spanning from the 12th to the 15th century...

Ultimately, this split in two distinct trajectories, the Buddhist and the Śaiva, mirrors the broader historical shifts in Buddhism itself: while it declined and eventually disappeared in India, it continued to flourish and evolve in Tibet” (*Dawn* pp. 53–54).

The final three pages of the Introduction to *Dawn* (pp. 54–56) will be of special interest to Tibetologists. Here Orofino provides a preliminary sketch of the history of the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition in Tibet. She observes that these teachings “were transmitted as highly esoteric doctrines, primarily within the Shangs pa Bka’ brgyud school” (*ibid.* p. 54). Specific moments in this stream of transmission include the twelfth–thirteenth century masters Sang rgyas gnyan ston Chos kyi shes rab (1175–1255) and his disciple Sangs rgyas ston pa brTson ‘grus seng ge (1207–1278), Tāranātha (1575–1634), and ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul bLo gros mtha’ yas (1813–1899/1900). (A broader survey of the virtually universal diffusion of *‘khrul ‘khor* / *‘phrul ‘khor* practices throughout Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism and Bon is given in Baker 2018.)

On the last pages of the Introduction to *Dawn* Orofino quotes Richard Barron's English translation of an intriguing passage from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's massive *gDams ngag mdzod*. In a section of that work titled in this translation "Unerring Immortality," 'Jam mgon Kong sprul says:

"By performing the thirty-two physical exercises [*'khrul 'khor sum bcu rtsa gnyis*] that ensure immortality [*'chi med grub pa < amṛtasiddhi*], one utilizes one's body on the path to liberation [*lus thar pa'i lam du gzung*]. Given that one's own mind is primordially unborn, its immortality [*'chi med < amṛta*] is ensured as a supreme state of natural freedom. The physical body as the natural consequence of karma, being an assemblage of inanimate matter [*rnam smin phung po bem po'i tshogs pa*] is devoid of any basis for assigning birth or death. In actual fact, even the body occurs simply as a manifestation of mind [*don du lus kyang sems snang tsam las byung*], so if one gains the indwelling confidence of realizing mind to be [birthless and] deathless, the manifestation of the body is that of Mahāmudrā in the form of the deity [*lus snang lha sku phyag rgya chen po*], as determined within basic space, without the error that is due to perceptions based on confusion. It is said that one can gain the kāya of primordial unity [*zung 'jug gi sku < yuganaddhakāya*] in this lifetime by receiving just a few of these instructions, and that merely hearing them will allow one to awaken to buddhahood in the intermediate state after death as the sambhogakāya of the victorious ones..." (trans. Barron 2013: 71, bracketed Tibetan and English emendation added; trans. also quoted in *Dawn* pp. 55–56).

འཆི་མེད་གྲུབ་པའི་འཁྲུལ་འཁོར་སྐྱུ་བཅུ་ཙུ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་ལྷན་ཐར་པའི་ལམ་དུ་གཟུང་། རང་སེམས་གདོད་མ་ནས་
མ་སྐྱེས་པས་འཆི་མེད་རང་གྲོལ་ཆེན་པོར་གྱུབ། རྣམ་སྒྲིན་ཕུང་པོ་བཅས་པོའི་ཆོགས་པ་སྐྱེ་འཆིའི་གདགས་གཞིས་སྤྱོད་།
དོན་དུ་ལྷན་ཀྱང་སེམས་སྤྱང་ཙམ་ལས་བྱུང་ཞིང་སེམས་སྐྱེ་འཆི་མེད་པར་རྟོགས་པའི་གདོད་ཐོབ་པ་ན་ལྷན་སྤྱང་ལྷ་སྐྱེ་
ཕུག་ཆུ་ཆེན་པོ་འཁྲུལ་སྤྱང་གིས་འཆུགས་པ་མེད་པའི་དབྱིངས་སུ་བསྐྱེམས་པ་སྟེ། གདགས་ངག་སྒྲ་རེས་ཀྱང་ཆོ་འདྲི་
ལ་བྱང་འཇུག་གི་སྐྱེ་བཞེས་ཤིང་། ཐོས་པ་ཙམ་གྱིས་ཀྱང་བར་དོ་རྒྱལ་བ་འོངས་སྐྱར་འཆང་རྒྱ་བ་སོགས་གསུངས་ཏེ།
... *gDam ngag mdzod* vol. 18, p. 53 of eText; BUDA citation: 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, editor. *gDams ngag mdzod*. Shechen publications, 1999. *Buddhist Digital Resource Center* (BDRC), purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW23605 [BDRC bdr:MW23605].

I defer to those with expertise in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's thought, of which I have none. But as I read this passage it appears to de-emphasize the physical yoga practices manipulating "the karmically-produced body that is a mass of matter" (*rnam smin phung po bem po'i tshogs pa*) that are so fundamental to the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition. Instead, "since one's own mind is primordially unborn, it is established as the

immortal great automatic liberation" (*rang sems gdod ma nas ma skyes pas 'chi med rang grol chen por grub*). Here "the body in fact occurs simply as an appearance of mind" (*don du lus kyang sems snang tsam las byung*), and *mahāmudrā* is interpreted in line with perhaps typical Vajrayāna understandings of that term pertaining to the practitioner appearing as the divine *sambhogakāya* embodiment of the buddha deity integrated (*yuganaddha*) with the buddha deity's *dharmakāya*. This way of interpreting the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition's theory and practice seems to be absent from or at best only vaguely hinted at in the AS itself. See also Baker (2018: 357 ff.) for a discussion of a notable "clear absence of Trulkhör practices" in certain early strata of the Nyingma tradition, and their [re]-emergence and development later. Baker (*ibid.* p. 364) also reports a contemporary Dzogchen master's opinion that "the 'illusory body movements' of Tsalung Trulkhör [*rtsa rlung 'khrul 'khor*], when practised from a Dzogchen perspective, are considered to be direct expressions of enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*) rather than specific means for attaining it." Likewise (*ibid.* p. 369): "From a Dzogchen point of view, the forceful actions of Tsalung Trulkhör are thus only useful in so far as they support the direct and ultimately effortless experience and perception of the self-effacing effulgence at the heart of every moment." Again, (*ibid.* p. 374): "For while Vajrayāna as whole brings body, mind, and respiration into a renewed functional unity, Dzogchen ultimately maintains the supremacy of an integral awareness transcendent of the physical body."

This raises a crucial question for future research on the Buddhist Virūpa/Birūa *amṛtasiddhi* tradition: What role does the ordinary human body play in the path to buddhahood? As *Dawn* amply illustrates, in the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition manipulation of energies within the physical body is the fundamental practice. If we track Buddhist self-cultivation from its earliest forms through to the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition, how did Indian Buddhism arrive there?

As a general rule basic normative Buddhist ascetic soteriology treats the ordinary human body as a mere field of suffering, a filthy lump of foam (*phenapiṇḍopamaṃ rūpam*) arising from one's own contaminated karma and the fluids of one's parents' sexual intercourse. It is a skeleton covered with flesh, a fragile leaky sack of skin filled with repulsive effluents. It is the physical basis for contaminated sensation that perpetuates the miseries of samsara. Of course even the earliest forms of Buddhism involve sitting postures for the practice of meditation and some basic techniques attending to the breath and/or body sensations, but these seem to be mere adjuncts in support of mental stabilization practices leading to *śamatha* and contemplative exercises conducive to mindfulness, insight, and salvific gnosis.

With the appearance of the Vajrayāna in the second half of the first millennium we see a dramatic shift toward an emphasis upon the body and a different evaluation of its usefulness in soteriology. We see this shift in the Guhyasamāja Ārya tradition's doctrine of the purification and transformation of the body's 'wind' (*vāyu*) into the 'illusory body' (*māyādeha*) as a means to accomplish the *saṃbhogakāya*. Emphasis upon the body becomes especially obvious in the more complex Vajrayāna developments elaborating the 'subtle body,' advanced forms of *prāṇāyama*, manipulation of 'semen,' and the 'sexual yoga' practices producing physical and mental *mahāsukha*—"great bliss"—that are found in the '*yoganiruttaratantras*.'

In an extraordinary fashion the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition appears to follow this track even further, but diverges from it in interesting ways. It apparently eschews—or at least greatly de-emphasizes—the extremely complex visualization practices found in virtually all other Buddhist tantric systems. It seems to replace these strenuous mental exercises with relatively simple—but no less strenuous!—techniques of body exercise. (See similarly Duncan 2023: 40.) There is evidence that the employment of *haṭhayoga* in advanced Vajrayāna soteriology was controversial. See, e.g., the *Phyag rgya bzhi'i rgya cher 'grel pa rin po che'i snying po zhes bya ba* (Derge 2259; rGyud 'grel WI) ascribed to Bhi ta karma (< *bhītakarma*?; = *Karopa?) f. 239b4 ff. As already mentioned, I agree with Orofino and other scholars that further investigation of the relationships between the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition and the broader Vajrayāna tradition will very likely shed considerable light upon both.

In this endeavor scholars can do no better than adopt the model Orofino employs in *Dawn*. Orofino's fine textual scholarship is enhanced by her engagement with the living tradition. In the Acknowledgements to *Dawn* (p. 11) she notes her debt to living masters of the *amṛtasiddhi* tradition. In her 29 September 2025 presentation of an overview of *Dawn* hosted by the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, Orofino reiterated her debt to her Tibetan and Himalayan teachers, and explained that this tradition is not very well known to etic scholars because in the past it had been kept secret.

Such restrictions appear to have been relaxed in the face of contemporary conditions: Tibetan and Himalayan masters of these practices are now making them accessible to the world at large. In her Acknowledgements to *Dawn* (p. 12) Orofino notes her debt to her master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche (Chos rgyal Nam mkha'i nor bu rin po che; 1938–2018). Beginning in the early 1970s, he was among the first Tibetan masters to make this tradition more widely known, with his teaching of the practices to non-Tibetans and his book *Yantra Yoga: The Yoga of Movement* (1st ed. 1988), subsequently re-issued

under the title *Yantra Yoga: The Tibetan Yoga of Movement* (Norbu 2008). This is a translation and study of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche's own work in Tibetan, the 'Phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor gyi dgongs 'grel dri ma med pa nor bu'i me long. As an aside, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (2008: 3; cf. p. 1) attributes the Tibetan origin of his tradition to the Tibetan *snga dar* master Bai ro tsa na (< *vairocana*). This would place its transmission into Tibet in the 8th–9th century, two centuries earlier than the AS or any other known Indic tradition of this sort of *yoga*. Similarly, some Bon pos claim that "Trul khor was taught in Bön prior to the eighth century as an oral teaching" (Baker 2018: 348n41). Investigation of such traditional beliefs might have implications for both the Indic and the Tibetan history of this type of *yoga*.

Regarding the contemporary global diffusion of 'khrul 'khor/'phrul 'khor, my 31 Oct 2025 Google search for "Trul Khor" conjured up a variety of YouTube videos that appear to portray a diverse array of both traditional and (more-or-less) Tibetan-derived practices. A mere glance at websites and 'social media' accounts suggests "Tibetan Yoga"/"Trul Khor" is 'having a moment' in the global spiritual economy. For example, for USD \$247 Dr. Ale Chaoul offers online instruction in an apparently Bon po tradition of "Magical Movements" called *trul khor* (< 'phrul 'khor). This course provides a graded series of lessons including "The A-tri Ngondro Magical Movement," "The A-tri Extending the Bow to Shoot and [sic] Arrow Magical Movement," "The A-tri Little Boy Jumping Strongly Magical Movement," and so forth. Dr. Chaoul describes this as "Tibetan Yoga for Health & Well-Being" (<https://wisdomexperience.org/tibetan-yoga/> [accessed 29 Oct 2025]). Thus it appears that a globalization and perhaps secularization of Indo-Tibetan 'khrul 'khor/'phrul 'khor practice is taking place, lagging behind but paralleling the globalization, secularization, and monetization of Indic *haṭhayoga*. This suggests to me an urgent need to support traditional forms of these practices, and to document them before they disappear.

It is a general rule that in the study of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist doctrinal and historical texts we can save much time and avoid many gross errors by listening to the people who actually *live* these texts. In the case of the physical practices of the *amṛtasiddhi*, the living tradition is almost certainly simply indispensable for full and accurate understanding. In support of this assertion I recommend that anyone interested in these practices watch minutes 39:45–45:50 of the 2002 film "The Yogis of Tibet." In this documentary a traditionally-trained young Drikung Kagyu master Chenga Rinpoche (sPyan snga rin po che; born 1974), demonstrates his 'khrul 'khor practice. Before starting the demonstration Chenga Rinpoche earnestly requests that the audience not attempt to imitate him—in effect, 'Please do not try this

at home.' When one sees the strenuous force (*btsan thabs < haṭha*) with which this practice is performed that is very good advice indeed. Similarly, Snow Lion Publications' 2008 copyright page of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's work on '*phrul 'khor* says: "Before following any advice or practice suggested in this book, it is recommended that you consult your doctor as to the suitability, especially if you are pregnant, or suffer from any health problems or special conditions. The publishers, the author, and the photographers cannot accept any responsibility for any injuries or damage incurred as a result of following the exercises in the book, or of using any of the therapeutic techniques described or mentioned here."

But what I took away from Chenga Rinpoche's demonstration of '*khrol 'khor* is that even to gain an intellectual understanding of the Indo-Tibetan traditions of '*khrol 'khor*, mere philological-historical scholarship will only scratch the surface. Of course the findings of 'anthropological' study of a living tradition such as this have to be checked against the tradition's texts, but I would argue that without the former the latter will often remain mere words.

Giacomella Orofino concludes the Introduction to *The Dawn of Physical Yoga* as follows: "From the end of the 11th century onward, Buddhist tantric physical yoga teachings spread across all Tibetan schools becoming an essential part of Tibetan Buddhist esoteric practice. These developments highlight the complexity of the fabric of Tibetan religion, where diverse *mahāsiddha* traditions were woven into its Vajrayāna doctrines, having a profound effect on shaping both its theoretical and practical dimensions" (*Dawn* p. 56).

We hope that the fine golden light of *The Dawn of Physical Yoga* heralds a full sunrise of additional studies further illuminating this fascinating, previously little known dimension of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist life.

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Appendix: Eight Āsanas for Nine Rites of Magic in the Kālacakra Tantra

The following text is an edited transcript of the 1994 Sarnath *editio princeps* of *Vimalaprabhā* 3.1.19cd (pp. 2.17.25–18.8); this *editio princeps* also includes an uncritical edition of *Śrī Kālacakra* 3.19. I checked this edition's text of *Śrī Kālacakra* 3.19cd against the palm-leaf *Śrī Kālacakra* MS in the British Library, accession no. Or 16981, f. 43v5–6, which presents no significant v.l. This is particularly relevant to the problematic reading *utkaṭam* in *pāda* c, a reading also found in Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra's 1966 *editio princeps* and Biswanath

Banerjee's 1985 edition of the Sanskrit text of the *Śrī Kālacakra*, with no v.l. given. I modify the Sarnath edition of the *Vimalaprabhā* text after the following palm-leaf manuscripts: 1) MS "B" – Asiatic Society of Bengal, Kolkata MS no. G 10766 ff. 99v6–100r2; 2) MS "Ch" – Lokesh Chandra, *Sanskrit Manuscripts from Tibet* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 2010. Śata-piṭaka Series vol. 629) p. 59, img. 1, lines 2–5; *abhiṣekapaṭala* f. 8v2–5. I ignore *sandhi* variants I consider insignificant. For the *daityāsanam* see also Newman 1998: 361. I have not seen this term in Sanskrit lexicons. This *āsana* seems to allude to the *sujūd* phase of the Islamic obligatory prayer called *aṣ-ṣalāh* or *namāz*. This is remarkable given the period of origin of these Kālacakra texts, and the association of this *āsana* with the magic rite of killing is noteworthy. For the overall context of this passage and more information on the magic rites as they are depicted in the Kālacakra see *Śrī Kālacakra* 3.8–22 and *Vimalaprabhā* 3.1.8–22.

Śrī Kālacakra 3.19cd:

paryāṅkaḥ śāntikāḍau kramapariracitaṃ vajradaitotyakṣaṃ ca
paryāṅkārdham dvibhedam gudagatacaraṇam cāsanam karmabhedaiḥ |

Vimalaprabhā 3.1.19cd [*tantra* lemmas given in bold]: *idāntiṃ śāntyādikarmasādhanaṃ āsanāny ucyante paryāṅka ityādinā | iha śāntikāḍau krameṇāsanāni bhavanti | tatra śāntau paryāṅka iti | vāmajānūpari dakṣiṇapādo gataḥ uttāna¹ iti paryāṅkaḥ | puṣṭau vajrāsanam | savyaḥ pādo² vāmorumūrdhni [ed. p. 18] vāmo 'pi savyorumūrdhni tiryaguttāneneti vajrāsanam | daityam iti daityāsanam mārāṇaṃ āṅkakārakūrmapādaḥ iti [B 100r1] daityāsanam | utkaṭam³ ceti uccāṭaṇe vidveṣe cotkaṭam bhavati | bhūmyām dvau pāḍau samau⁴ gulphau sphiccakamūlalaṅghau⁵ ūrdhvaṃ gataṃ jānūdvayam ūrudvayam cety utkaṭam | paryāṅkārdham dvibhedam iti | iha vāśye vāmapādaḥ paryāṅkavad dakṣiṇa utkaṭavat kiñcid dakṣiṇe namra iti | ākrṣṭau dvitīyo bhedaḥ | dakṣiṇaḥ⁶ paryāṅkavad vāma utkaṭavat kiñcid vāme namra iti paryāṅkārdham dvibhedam | gudagatacaraṇam iti | iha mohane vāmacaraṇam gudagataṃ caraṇopari guḍo niṣaṇṇaḥ dakṣiṇam utkaṭavad iti | stambhane dakṣiṇam gudagataṃ caraṇopari guḍo niṣaṇṇo vāmam utkaṭavat iti | aṣṭavidhāsanabhedananiyamah⁷ |. v.l.: 1) ed. gata uttānaka. 2) ed. savyapādo. 3) Ch utkūṭam; **note**: Ch reads utkūṭa° or utkūṭa° throughout the following text; utkūṭa may in fact be the proper term for this āsana. 4) B pāḍasamau > pāḍaḥsamau p.c. 5) ed. phiccaka°; B °mūlā°. 6) Ch & B dakṣiṇa° > B dakṣiṇaḥ p.c. 7) ed. & Ch |ity aṣṭavidhāsanabhedananiyamah |; I follow B °bhedana°.*

[Tentative translation:] Now “cross-legged” *et cetera* [in *Śrī Kālacakra* 3.19cd] states the āsanās for the performance of the rites of pacification

and so forth. On this, the *āsanas* occur according to their sequence in [the magic rites of] pacification and so forth. [The *tantra*] says “cross-legged [*paryāṅka*] for pacification.” “Cross-legged” is the right foot facing upward situated above the left knee. The *vajrāsana* is for prosperity. The *vajrāsana* is the right foot on top of the left thigh, and the left on top of the right thigh, [with both] straight and facing upward. [The *tantra*] says, “demonic,” referring to the demonic *āsana*. The demonic *āsana* is for killing; [one’s limbs are] like the feet of a fighting tortoise (*aṅkakāṛakūrma*). [The *tantra*] says, “and squatting.” [See text note 3 for the readings *utkaṭam* / *utkuṭam* / *utkūṭam*; see also *Dawn* p. 62n111; TSD s.v. *tsog pu* < *utkuṭam*.] The squat is for [the magic rites for] ruination and creating enmity. The squat is both feet together on the ground; both knees and both thighs are placed above the ankles and the basal juncture of the buttocks. [The *tantra* says] “There are two types of the half cross-legged [*āsana*].” On this, for [the magic rite of] domination the left leg is as in the cross-legged [*āsana*]; the right is similar to the squat, with the right somewhat bent. The second type [of the half cross-legged *āsana*] is for [the magic rite of] attraction: the right leg is like the cross-legged [*āsana*]; the left is like the squat, with the left somewhat bent—these are “the two types of the half cross-legged [*āsana*].” [The *tantra*] says “foot placed at the anus.” Regarding this, for [the magic rite of] stupification the left foot is placed at the anus; i.e., the anus is placed upon the [left] foot and the right [leg] is like the squat. For [the magic rite of] paralysis the right is placed at the anus; i.e., the anus is placed upon the [right] foot and the left [leg] is like the squat. This is the precept on differentiation of the eight types of *āsanas*.

The preceding can be tabulated as follows, tentatively correlating the Kālacakra *āsanas* with *āsanas* mentioned in *ASN and in the **Gativyūha* ascribed to Buddhajñānapāda. In some cases the correspondences are not exact:

9 magic rites	8 <i>āsanas</i>	*ASN section	* <i>Gativyūha</i> [D 1864]
<i>śānti</i>	<i>paryāṅka</i>	= <i>padmāsana</i> 1.1 et seq. 52 mentions	68b4–5 * <i>padmāsana</i> & * <i>sattvaparyāṅka</i>
<i>puṣṭi</i>	<i>vajrāsanaṃ</i>	2.2, 3.1, 26.1, 36.2	cf. 68b3–4 * <i>vajrāsana</i>
<i>māraṇa</i>	<i>daityāsanaṃ</i>		
<i>uccāṭana</i> & <i>vidveṣa</i>	<i>utkaṭam</i> (v.l. <i>utkuṭam</i>)	2.1, 5.1, 5.3, 11.3, 13.2, 28.3	cf. 68b7 * <i>utkuṭa</i>
<i>vaśya</i>	<i>paryāṅkārdham</i>		cf. 68b5–6 * <i>vīrāsana</i>

<i>ākṛṣṭi</i>	“		cf. 68b7–69b1 * <i>lalitāsana</i>
<i>mohana</i>	<i>gudagatam</i>	cf. 27.1	
<i>stambhana</i>	“		

* * * * *

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*ASN **Amṛtasamkāṣanibarhaṇa*. Ed. & trans. in *Dawn*.

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