

ROLLING UP ONE'S SLEEVES IN THE ARCHIVES: HOW A NON-HIERARCHICAL
APPROACH TO THE CONTENTS OF SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS
TRANSFORMS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF INDIAN RELIGION

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HANDOUT

1. The hierarchical approach. Working within the confines of an established division of Indian Religion; identifying the classics of that traditions and restricting one's study to them; isolating the field of one's interest. The map of Indian religion [on the whiteboard]. My avenue of entry: Mahimabhaṭṭa > Ānandavardhana > Abhinavagupta as poetician > "Kashmir Śaivism" > Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*. Swami Lakshman Joo (Rājānaka Lakṣmaṇa): studying with a traditional scholar in Kashmir.
2. Gnostic bias as a result of an outsider's predisposition to study what appears to transcend what is specific to the culture, leading to the neglect of ritual systems, encouraged by the gnostic bias of favoured Kashmirian sources.
3. This insider gnosticism was the source of a fusion of distinct traditions of practice. The discourses of originally distinct traditions were fused and etiolated through doctrine-centred exegesis whose purpose was to show that the differences between these discourses are merely superficial and dissolve entirely when the categories of the tradition aspiring to dominance have been shown to be the true meaning of those of the systems sought to be subsumed. The dominant tradition translated the discourses of its rivals into its own; and this led in due course to the substitution of the homogenizing exegesis for the diverse literature that was its antecedent, leaving only three scriptural texts, each embedded in the new exegesis: the *Netratāntra*, the *Svacchandatantra*, and the *Mālinīvijayottara*.
4. Recovering the antecedent literature.
In the first six years of my research I was mainly engaged in reading and attempting to understand this body of exegetical texts in its own terms without going beyond it. But as I progressed I could see that in order to understand what was really happening in the production of this literature I would have to see the apparently lost sources that were the raw materials that it was synthesizing.

Only in this way could I hope to see the nature of the exegetical process and so locate it in a broader history.

As my starting point I had the three scriptures that had survived with Kashmirian commentaries; but above all I had paraphrases and citations of passages from at least 200 other scriptural works in the *Tantrāloka* and other such Kashmirian works, particularly in the commentary on the *Tantrāloka* composed by Rājānaka Jayaratha in the thirteenth century, since it was his fortunate practice to identify and quote *verbatim* the passages of scripture that Abhinavagupta merely alludes to or paraphrases. These fragments of the scriptural literature proved to be crucial in the next stage of my work, which was the search for manuscripts of the Śaiva scriptural texts from which these citations were drawn and for related works that would enable me in time to contextualize not only the Kashmirian exegesis but also the traditions from which it drew its raw materials.

Foremost among the many manuscript collections that have yielded transformative evidence are the Bodleian Library, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Institut Français de Pondichéry, the Oriental Research Library in Srinagar (Kashmir), the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin (particularly the Janert collection), and above all the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project and its successor the Nepal-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project, through which we have access not only to the huge number of Sanskrit manuscripts preserved in the Nepalese National Archives and the Kaiser Library, many of them written in Nepal before and during the period that produced the learned exegesis in distant Kashmir, but also to many of the manuscripts in private hands throughout the Kathmandu valley. It now appears to me that from the most productive and innovative phase of the Śaiva scriptural literature, which lasts approximately from the fifth century to the ninth, with a few additions up to the eleventh, at least seventy-eight Śaiva scriptures have survived complete or in large part in manuscripts; and these contain a total of at least one hundred and sixty thousand stanzas. Moreover, there are at least twenty-five more texts of the same kind of which we have a chapter or two surviving in digests, principally the *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* of Hṛdayaśiva of Mālava (eleventh century) and the *Nityādisaṃgrahapaddhati* of Rājānaka Takṣakavarta of Kashmir (after the eleventh century).

In addition these collections give us access to a great quantity of ancillary materials in the form of ritual guides and manuals that are of exceptional value to the would-be historian of Śaivism. For they reveal the extent to which and the manners in which these various traditions were put into practice in particular regions and periods. They are mostly anonymous and mostly without any

pretensions of literary polish or theoretical sophistication. They have therefore been for the most part neglected by researchers. It is the study of these humble texts that I have in mind when speaking in the title of this lecture of a non-hierarchical approach to the contents of manuscript collections.

This non-hierarchical approach, however, begins not with these materials but with the scriptural texts that underly the sophisticated Kashmirian exegesis.

Here are some of the major results on my research on that level:

- (a) A new map of the Śaiva literature [on the whiteboard].
 - (b) The pre-eminence of the Krama (*Kālikulapañcaśaka*, *Devīdvyardhaśatikā*, *Kālikulakramasadbhāva*, and *Jayadrathayāmala*) beneath the surface of the Trika that is the professed subject matter of the *Tantrāloka*.
 - (c) The intrusive character of Kashmirian Śaiva non-dualism.
 - (d) The forms of Śaivism processed in Kashmir and hitherto known as “Kashmir Śaivism” were much more widely distributed and in most cases not Kashmirian in origin.
 - (e) The Saiddhāntika literature of South India was a secondary development on the basis of earlier North-Indian traditions.
 - (f) This earlier Saiddhāntika tradition coexisted with the non-Saiddhāntika systems; and in spite of some mutual opposition on the theoretical level the various forms of Śaivism were co-functional from the point of view of their patrons and many practitioners.
 - (g) Intertextuality:
 - i. Between the Lākula tradition of the Atimārga and the *Nīśvāsa* of the earliest phase of the Mantramārga.
 - ii. Between the Saiddhāntika and non-Saiddhāntika corpora: e.g.:
 - A. *Svacchanda* > *Siddhāntasārapaddhati* (> *Somaśambhupaddhati* etc.)
 - B. *Nīśvāsa* > *Svacchanda* > *Tantrasadbhāva* > *Kubjikāmata*.
 - iii. Between the non-Saiddhāntika corpus and the Buddhist Yoginītantras.
 - iv. Between the Saiddhāntika literature and Jaina ritual literature: *Siddhāntasārapaddhati* > *Nirvāṇakalikā*
 - v. Between the Śākta Śaiva and Jaina Mantraśāstras.
 - vi. Between the Saiddhāntika literature and Vaiṣṇava Pañcarātra literature (in this case in both directions)
5. Getting down to the ground level of praxis: Paddhatis and Vidhis. Some results:

- (a) Two kinds of Paddhati: transregional and local. The local Paddhatis tend not to conform to 'purity' of the authoritative manuals.
- (b) The eclecticism and openness of the Kashmirian tradition. Hybrid pantheons of worship: Svachchandabhairava and Aghoreśvarī (*Svacchandatantra*) + Amṛteśvarabhairava (Netranātha) and Amṛtalakṣmī (*Netratantra*), Siddhānta (before the influence of the transregional Paddhatis, claiming to derive from an otherwise unknown redaction of the *Niśvāsa*); *Jayadrathayāmala*'s Kālīs, the *Kubjikāmata*'s Kubjikā, and the *Vāmakeśvarīmata*'s Tripurasundarī in the fire-sacrifice (*Agnikāryapaddhati*); addition of later, East-Indian goddesses such as Dakṣiṇakālī.
- (c) the Nepalese (Newar) materials show a similar situation: synthetic worship of Kubjikā and Navātmabhairava, Siddhalakṣmī, Guhyakālī, and Tripurasundarī.
- (d) The centrality of Svachchandabhairava in the Kashmirian manuals (*Kalādīkṣāpaddhati*, *Agnikāryapaddhati*, *Śivanirvāṇapaddhati*, etc.) and the fading of the Siddhānta into the periphery.
- (e) The near total absence of the Trika (the ritual system expounded by Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka*) from the ritual manuals transmitted in Kashmir.
- (f) The subsistence of the Krama down to recent times.
- (g) Tripurasundarī's take-over of the Śākta domain.
- (h) The atrophy of Śaiva ritual in Kashmir: the evidence of the *Mṛtitattvānūsmaraṇa* and the marginalia in manuscripts of such works as the *Tantrāloka* and *Tantrasāra* of Abhinavagupta: Śaiva in thought and devotion alone, brahmanical in praxis.