Age of Scripture: Divine Words and Human Authors in Premodern India

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Abstract

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"Age of Scripture" charts the first-millennium emergence of new bodies of scripture within three major South Asian religious communities and considers intellectual responses to their rapid proliferation. This period witnessed an explosion in the production of textualized teachings attributed to the Buddha, Śiva, and Viṣṇu. These new corpora resemble one another in important ways, and their rise to prominence contributed to a shared sense of what it meant for a text to be "scripture." This study examines how these texts were conceptualized and analyzes them with reference to the actual practices employed in their production. In other words, it considers what it meant for these communities to attribute a definite text to a divine or awakened figure — whether the Buddha, Śiva, or Viṣṇu — and seeks to uncover how the notion of divine authorship, broadly defined, relates to the ways in which human beings actually produced and transmitted sacred texts. It shows that a similar set of presuppositions governed the creation of divine words across different communities, enabling comparable outcomes among Buddhists, Śaivas, and Vaiṣṇavas. After setting out the text-historical shape of this period, "Age of Scripture" considers the intellectual-historical reaction to these corpora. It analyzes, first of all, Mīmāṃsā attempts to deny the validity of these new texts through an anti-pluralistic philosophy that establishes, at least in theory, the Veda as the sole source of scriptural authority. And, second, it reviews various attempts to contend with Mīmāṃsā's challenge, especially through rationalized defenses of pluralism.

Table of Contents

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Note on Abbreviations and Textual Citations

I adopt, in a number of footnotes, a simplified version of a system of textual citation based on the one used by Alexis Sanderson in his article "The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism During the Early Medieval Period." In brief, I mark corrections (corr.), emendations (em.), and conjectures (conj.) with an asterisk, providing the original reading in parentheses. I also note whether the original reading is taken from a manuscript (cod.), published edition (ed.), or a source specifically identified in the footnote. I try to provide, where relevant, substantiating evidence in brackets. Sanderson's description of this system may be found on pp. 348-349 of Sanderson 2009, where fuller information is provided. I refer at times to manuscript readings with the abbreviation "ms." and to omissions with "om."

Introduction

The beginning of the Common Era was transformative for South Asian religion. New forms of practice and objects of devotion rose to prominence across a number of different communities. The old Vedic cult of sacrificial ritual, though not yet eclipsed, found itself in a world increasingly dominated by temple religion and the great theistic currents of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism. During the same period, Buddhism underwent a transformation characterized by a proliferation of new texts attributed to the religion's founder, many of which would come to be categorized as belonging to the Mahāyāna ("Great Vehicle"). From a historical perspective, they were produced long after the Buddha's final passing, but they were nevertheless held to be his words. Some centuries later, the devotees of Śiva began to produce texts that they held to embody his teachings, which, they claimed, had come down into the world through the intercession of gods and other beings. The followers of Viṣṇu followed suit and created a corpus of texts that they ascribed to their own highest god.

What exactly are all of these texts? Does anything bring them together into some sort of textual category? Does studying them as a group reveal anything important about South Asia's religious history? These questions, or at least the first among them, may seem to ignore the obvious. Whatever differences characterized these distinct collections, their definite forms are the product of distinctly human efforts, and yet they are attributed to divine or awakened beings. Are they not obviously scriptures? (We must admit, of course, that they are different, at least in some respects, from other sacred texts, both in India and elsewhere, that share this name.) The extended use of classificatory categories always demands caution, especially when applying them across cultural

and historical boundaries. In this particular case, moreover, the English word "scripture" (to say nothing of its Greek and Latin predecessors) has a prominent set of conceptual connotations, some of which I will discuss shortly. Yet, when we bracket our more theoretical concerns, it seems that the term "scripture" fits more or less intuitively with these new texts. Does it even make sense to over analyze this disciplinary category in the first place?

The most obvious response to this hypothetical question is that precisely this type of preparatory work was and continues to remain necessary in order to render South Asian scriptures comparable cross culturally; the very fact that the abstract category "scripture" includes, for example, the Veda is in no small part the product of scholarly attempts to engage with the Vedic corpus on its own terms and to bring the results of that engagement to bear on the notion of scripture more generally. One of the main reasons why "scripture" now makes intuitive sense as an analytical category for certain South Asian texts is that those very same texts have already played a role in shaping our general conceptualization of what scripture actually is. A more comprehensive account of the South Asian data would no doubt serve to refine further this general category and would, at least according to the advocates of the comparative study of religion, suggest additional avenues of inquiry for the study of scriptural corpora associated with other geographies and their communities.

There are, I would argue, stronger reasons for recognizing explicitly that scripture is not a natural category for traditional South Asia and for rethinking how it ought to be constructed with respect to that particular context. By taking this de-naturalizing approach, we may better appreciate that categorizing certain South Asian materials as scriptural involves the application of a theoretical model. Theory ought not be applied for its own benefit; rather, it should provide analytical insight into the data to which it is applied; it should raise new questions about those data; and it should be revised in light of them. Theoretically self-conscious reflection on the category of scripture reveals

important historical developments in how cultural actors thought about the sacred character of texts and prompts us to think more carefully about the textual practices that shaped how human beings engaged in producing and transmitting what they held to be divine words. One of the most critical of these developments emerges in the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era, when a common textual culture, I argue, came to govern scriptural production across a number of religious communities.

This period was, as just noted, broadly transformative for South Asian history. The spread of manuscript literacy meant that literature (*kāvya-*) and systematic philosophy (*śāstra-*) became written phenomena for the first time. Sanskrit, which had long served as the sacerdotally circumscribed language of Vedic ritual, was appropriated by rulers in service off their aesthetic claims to sovereignty, beginning a long process of linguistic democratization that would culminate in its eventual adoption by the old enemies of the Veda.[1] The Buddhists, and later others, began to write down their sacred texts, which had previously been transmitted only orally. Finally, the great theistic currents that would come to dominate Indian religiosity, both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, were stabilized as self-conscious communities for the first time. In the midst of these changes, we find that new ways of producing and thinking about sacred texts rose to prominence and that more scriptures were produced more quickly by more communities than ever before. A few centuries later, philosophical and epistemological traditions, now able to access the texts of their rivals thanks to writing, turned their attention to the problem of scriptural authority, which they debated across the boundaries that divided religious groups, discursively constituting "scripture" as a single conceptual category, however contested.[2] Taken together, these developments mark the beginning of a

[1]This period also marks the first time that Sanskrit becomes known as such. See, for example, Pollock 2006: 45.

[2]Here I do not wish to suggest that earlier religious communities did not debate with one another, but only that the rationalized and sustained criticism of the scriptures of other groups appears more prominently beginning around the fourth or fifth century of the Common Era. See, for example, Ham 2016: 21-35.

new "Age of Scripture" that defined the religious world of South Asia for the next thousand years.

0.1 Scripture and Its Discontents

It must be admitted that, with respect to premodern South Asian materials, moving from the largely unthinking use of "scripture" to a more theoretically self-conscious approach presents a number of challenges. South Asia was and is home to a number of different religious communities, each of which produced and preserved its own scriptures. Complicating matters further, some of these texts were revered by multiple communities that conceptualized them, at least at times, in different ways. South Asian scriptures sometimes (but not always, as we will see) take forms so radically different as to render all but the most general efforts to define "scripture" impractical. We are essentially stuck with a vague phenomenology of sacred textuality, at least as a starting point. And a catalogue of Sanskrit words that can sometimes mean "sacred text" would be long indeed. There is, as noted, "Veda," which means "knowledge" and may also refer to a large and internally diverse corpus of texts. (Keep in mind that the Veda was composed orally and transmitted without writing for more than a millennium, and, even after being written down, was still conceptualized as a collection of oral texts.) At other times, "Veda" may denote one among four specific collections of liturgical utterances or the combination of that collection and its expository commentaries.

There is also the problem of *śruti* ("hearing") and *smṛti* ("remembering"), two words that point to specific textual collections as well as the two different modes of accessing Vedic rules that those collections represent. In some cases, one may hear the Veda's literal words (*śruti-*), and, in others, one must refer to texts that supposedly preserve the general sense of Vedic rules that are unavailable in their original form (*smṛti-*). Moving beyond the broadly Vedic corpus, we must also account for words like *āgama* ("tradition"), *bheda* ("division"), *tantra* ("system"), *saṃhitā* ("collection"),

śāstra ("rule" or "discipline"); there are the Purāṇas ("ancient tales") and the Itihāsas ("epics"); the Buddhists have *sūtras* ("discourses"), the Vinaya ("monastic discipline"), and many other textual forms; and the Jains transmit *aṅgas* ("limbs") and *sūtras* too.[3] All of these terms might, in some contexts, be translated as "scripture," but each also has a variety of different meanings relevant to different periods and different contexts.

This type of terminological survey is ultimately only of preparatory importance; we must build upon it to get to the underlying problem of how cultural actors conceptualized the texts that they held to be sacred. What was it that made them sacred to the communities that composed and preserved them? Or, perhaps more precisely, how did those communities conceive of their sacredness? How was that sacredness realized? Did being sacred affect their production and transmission, and, if so, in what ways? To what degree did it set them apart from other types of texts? And here again we confront the problem of diversity in how the sacred character of certain texts was conceptualized and represented, though several discernible major tendencies do eventually emerge.

Taking the Veda again as our example, we may trace significant changes in the way its constituent parts were understood. The oldest hymns characterize themselves as the product of a special type of poetic vision or insight. They were collected and became the record of "ancestral visions."[4] Other types of liturgical utterance were eventually compiled into fixed collections, suggesting that they enjoyed a sacred status of some sort. Certain Vedic texts exhibit self-conscious reflection on the origins of the corpus; some describe the hymns and formulas used during ritual performance as the product of a cosmogonic sacrifice, while others say that the Veda was produced by Prajāpati, the creator god.[5] It is not always clear, however, whether these narratives explain the origins of its

[3]Of course, the term *saṃhitā* is also used in the Vedic context.

[4]In using "ancestral vision," I am following Smith Forthcoming 10, which adopts "ancestral hymnic vision" from Jamison and Brereton's translation of *Ṛgveda* 3.39.2.

[5]Smith Forthcoming and Holdrege 1996.

literal words or speak instead of some sort of primordial essence. In time, many priests came to see the Veda as eternal.[6] It was sacred precisely because it had no author, no creator, and no initial revelation.

Towards the end of the Vedic period (c. 400 BCE), there emerged another model of textual sacredness (or we might say "scripturality") that would find prominence among several ascetic communities, notably Buddhists, that rejected the authority of the Veda. The early history of Buddhism is a vexed topic; there is significant disagreement over the character of the oldest Buddhist texts, which largely present themselves as direct records of the Buddha's teaching. Are these materials more or less faithful records of actual historical events? Were they composed (or compiled) as highly edited versions of the Buddha's teachings meant to be transmitted verbatim? Or were they created within a somewhat more fluid oral tradition characterized by what Eviatar Shulman has recently called "the play of formulas?" I will consider many of these problems in Chapter 1. What matters here is that their sacred and authoritative status was and remains rooted in the belief that they were spoken by the Buddha himself (*buddhena bhāṣita-*).[7]

The appeal to the Buddha's words as the principal marker of scripturality undoubtedly resonates with some very old ideas found in the Vedic context, where the revelation of certain *mantras* was at times attributed to the insight of individual seers and where the teachings of sages like Uddālaka Āruṇi are preserved. Yet, as noted, this mode of conceptualizing the Veda's sacred character was neither dominant nor totalizing, and it was eclipsed, though never obliterated, by the position that

[6]The historical development of this idea is explored in Smith Forthcoming. See especially his point on p. 17: "The independence of the Vedas is conditioned, first, by the phenomenology of transmission that gives rise to an ontology of eternality. From its eternality, a second key feature of the ontology of the Vedas develops: authorless-ness (*apauruṣeyatva*)."

[7]I do not wish to ignore the fact that authoritative teachings could also be given by the Buddha's disciples or other divine beings. I also do not wish to oversimplify the complex makeup of these texts and their own acknowledgement of their mediated textual history. I only want to emphasize that the foundational source of authority was clearly understood to be the Buddha himself.

the Veda was eternal and was therefore independent of all forms of personal authority. For Buddhists, however, the Buddha's authority was foundational to their understanding of what it meant for a text to be sacred. Their scriptures were "the words of the Buddha" (*buddhavacana*-). As Patrick Olivelle puts it, "For the first time in India, the words of a single charismatic individual were taken as the sole fountain of authority in a religious tradition."[8]

It seems reasonable to assume that many of the earlier Buddhist scriptures contain the teachings of the so-called "historical Buddha," though the materials that have come down to us are obviously the product of editorial intervention and repeated redaction. Yet many centuries after his passing Buddhist monks were still producing *buddhavacana*. Some of these new texts, including especially those that would come to be categorized as Mahāyāna, involve certain departures from the earlier teachings.[9] But, despite being composed, at least from a critical perspective, half a millennium or more after the Buddha's death, they were still understood to embody his words. How can we understand this self-representational continuity, especially given that the monks who produced these new instances of *buddhavacana* worked anonymously and do not explicitly discuss their activities? This is a challenging question, but the fact that we see the continual production of *buddhavacana* indicates that its creation and modification were understood, at least by some, to be authorized activities.

The nature of this phenomenon raises questions about my use of words like "author" and "creation," which imply, at least in this context, a degree of personal agency in the production of a new

[8]Olivelle 2005: 27. It should be noted that *buddhavacana* was from an early date understood to include things other than the Buddha's literal words; that said, Olivelle is right to point out the dominant mode of conceptualization. See previous note.

[9]This is not to say we can always make a clear-cut distinction between the earlier *sūtras* and those that would come to be called Mahāyāna, at least during the period when the latter group first emerged. We also do not know for sure how various local communities conceptualized the different categories of *buddhavacana*. Some of these difficulties will be discussed in Chapter 1.

text. From a historical perspective, the reworking of existing oral and written traditions into a new textual form involves creative input, but it is unlikely that the monks who took part in this process of scripturalization saw their activities in this way. We may infer that the anonymous reworking of traditional materials, or those received in some sort of inspired vision, was often seen to be insignificant and editorial. Human involvement was necessary, of course, but did not rob the material of its *buddhavacana* status.[10] As Harunaga Isaacson has noted, many authors were undoubtedly "convinced that their creations were the result of direct inspiration by a Buddha" or else "teachings that had been taught by the historical Buddha or another Buddha but not transmitted in writing."[11]

The production of Mahāyāna scriptures reveals an orientation towards authority, sacredness, and textual integrity that is quite unfamiliar to a modern reader. The monks who participated in creating these texts seemingly did not see themselves as authors; they worked anonymously and did not imagine, at least insofar as we can tell, their contributions to be creative. It may be useful here to draw a comparison with the notion of God as the scriptural *auctor* ("author [in whom authority rests]") in late medieval Europe.[12] It was admitted that human beings played instrumental roles in the production of Biblical texts, but God was their true cause and source of *auctoritas* ("authority"), which made him their true *auctor*. The conceptual implications of this position were substantial. For example, Alastair Minnis tells us that Saint Gregory declared the search for the identity of the Book of Job's human author to be a waste of time; it was, according to Gregory, similar to looking for information about the pen with which the text was first written out.[13]

[10] Jan Nattier makes the important point that certain texts may have been "scripturalized" over time; in other words, a text could be composed as non-*buddhavacana* and then only later attributed to the Buddha. See Nattier 2003: 11-14, esp. n. 3 and 4.

[11] Isaacson 1997: 2. He is here speaking of Tantric scriptures, though he extends the notion to those belonging to the Mahāyāna as well.

[12] For some discussion of the notion of the *auctor*, see Ascoli: 3-12. The relevance of the medieval European case to the South Asian context is pointed out by Kragh 2013: 40 and esp. note 62.

[13] Minnis [1984] 2010: 37.

It should be emphasized that Gregory lived more than a millennium after the composition of the Book of Job. His understanding of its authorship cannot be directly compared with the conceptual conditions that governed the production of new instances of *buddhavacana*. Yet there is still an interesting resonance between the two cases, both in their radical minimization of human agency and in their emphasis on a transcendent source of authority. It is hard to get at the precise implications of this Buddhist approach towards authority, especially in terms of the textual practices used in the production and modification of the "words of the Buddha." Were there limits to these processes? Who governed them, if anyone? These are difficult questions to answer. Some Mahāyāna scriptures reveal anxieties about their own textual histories, suggesting a degree of tension with respect to the legitimacy of the textual practices responsible for their emergence. In the absence of a centralized institutional authority, it seems all but certain that the lines of acceptability varied between time, place, community, and context.[14]

Attention to the Mahāyāna scriptures is important because they provide early insight into a more widespread cultural orientation towards textual authority that engendered the extensive production of scriptures under the names of divine and supernormal figures. There are other places that one might begin a study of this broader phenomenon, including the discourses attributed to specific teachers in the Vedic corpus, the self-representative frame stories of the Purāṇas, the ascription of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* to a deified figure, or even the self-representational narrative devices found in the two epics. Each of these presents unique and important perspectives. The Mahāyāna texts have, however, the unique advantage of addressing their own authority in ways that are often far more self-conscious than these other examples. They are, moreover, preserved in early and diverse

[14]Silk 2020b mentions, albeit in a more somewhat different context, that decisions about "canonicity" are "necessarily historically and locally grounded."

manuscript traditions from across Northwest India and Central Asia, and many were translated into Chinese and Tibetan on multiple occasions. This rich collection of witnesses allows us to historicize them with some confidence and to examine their textual shape as it changed over time.

The model of scripturality that emerges to prominence in the Mahāyāna context would later rise to dominance among theistic groups as well. The Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas both came to produce enormous bodies of scriptural literature that they attributed to Śiva and Viṣṇu, respectively. (The same is true for the groups that created the Purāṇas, though here the problem of community affiliation and traditional attribution are complicated.)[15] Although it seems unlikely that Buddhist scriptures exercised a direct influence upon these corpora, we nevertheless find family resemblances in their modes of self-authorization and in the textual practices adopted by their creators. There are important differences in how exactly Buddhist and non-Buddhist scriptures develop narrative accounts of their own textual histories, but the basic authorizing function of these narratives is the same.

How can we seek to understand the complex set of historical conditions that characterized this mode of scripturality and its rise to prominence in diverse theological contexts, especially given that the people who participated in creating these scriptures remain entirely anonymous to us? Without any social or geographical context, let alone personal information, we cannot reasonably expect to uncover their intentions, at least with respect to concrete and historically localizable goals. As Quentin Skinner has argued for Renaissance Europe, it is precisely this type of information that is necessary for the investigation of authorial intention.[16] And, in the case of South Asian scripture, we are further hampered by the fact that we are dealing with texts that were produced by many

[15] Although Vyāsa is popularly described as the author of the Purāṇas, the texts themselves generally attribute their initial teaching to God (either Viṣṇu, Brahmā, or Śiva). See Bonazzoli 1980. As Williams 2017: 35-36 indicates, it is not at all clear whether the framing narratives that claim divine authorship for these materials predate the Śaiva scriptures.

[16] Skinner 2002, esp. 90-102, and 114-127.

different hands and that were changed repeatedly over long periods of time.

What we can do is compare scriptural collections produced by different religious communities and attributed to different divine or supernormal figures. Gregory Nagy notes that comparison may generally be divided into two types: one deals with historically related phenomena and another with "typological parallels" that are not historically related.[17] But here the situation requires somewhat more nuance. Although it is probable that Buddhist scriptures did not serve directly as a model for later Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ones, there is undoubtedly more than a typologically connected relationship between them. The people who produced all three types of scripture inhabited, at least at times, a common linguistic and cultural world, and, from a more concrete standpoint, employed the same types of scribal practices, participated in shared economic activities, and engaged with the same rulers in pursuit of patronage. All this indicates a historically meaningful relationship, even if only at the level of broader orientations towards authority and textual practice. As for Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava texts, these were historically connected. Alexis Sanderson has demonstrated that, after a certain point, the Pāñcarātrika devotees of Viṣṇu modeled their scriptures after those of the Śaivas. Later on, there were bidirectional intertextual exchanges between these two communities.[18]

Comparing these various bodies of scripture throws light on the emergence of a shared notion of scripturality that transcended the boundaries dividing a number of individual religious communities. The family resemblances shared by these texts allow us to take them as belonging to a single category, let us call it "scripture," and not as representative of totally incompatible visions of what sacred textuality actually is. This conceptual convergence is not only factually evident in

[17] See Nagy 1996: 2-3. He adopts this distinction from the field of linguistics.

[18] See Sanderson 2001: 35-41, 2003, and 2009: 58-70. Sanderson has also demonstrated that the Buddhists drew upon Śaiva works in producing their own *tantras*, though this began perhaps seven hundred years after the first Mahāyāna texts were composed. The very possibility of intertextuality across traditions suggests that their scriptures were seen to form a common class.

the constellation of religious communities that began to produce comparable types of scriptures; it is discursively apparent in philosophical debates from the fifth or sixth century onwards, where established scriptural categories enjoyed a newfound commensurability.[19] It was only at this time that intellectuals began to pose "scripture" as an epistemological category claimable, at least in theory, by the sacred texts of any community.

0.2 Structures of Sacred Textuality

The comparative analysis of scriptures produced by Buddhists, Śaivas, and Vaiṣṇavas allows us to infer that they are the products of a shared textual culture or, perhaps more loosely, cultural matrix that enabled comparable outcomes among different communities. Its participants understood their religious traditions to be rooted in the teachings of a god or supernatural being, and it authorized anonymous cultural actors to produce, modify, and redact new and existing scriptures, though, as is seen clearly in the Buddhist instance, the limits of this process were not universally agreed upon. We may recover some of the conceptual presuppositions and concrete textual practices that defined this common cultural matrix through close study of the scriptures themselves. In the Buddhist case, we have an especially rich set of data furnished by Northwest Indian and Central Asian manuscript witnesses dating from around the beginning of the Common Era onwards, not to mention an extensive collection of Chinese and Tibetan translations made from Indian originals from as far back as the second century CE. This wealth of resources means that we often have access to multiple versions of a single scripture that circulated at different times and in different places.

These diverse witnesses allow us to see that many of these texts were fluid during the course

[19] This is not to say, however, that these debates only addressed themselves to scriptures that were represented as the words of a divine or divinized figure.

of their transmission. As Jonathan Silk notes, we should not imagine a definitive chronological break between, on the one hand, the circulation of separate source materials, and, on the other, the compilation of those sources into a finalized scriptural redaction. Drawing on insights from the study of Rabbinical literature, Silk suggests that we think of scriptures as "macroforms," or larger works. These may take on conceptually fixed identities, but they are built out of a collection of "microforms," which are shared between "macroforms." In other words, microforms are traditional building blocks, whether formulaic sentences or longer passages, that vary in their degrees of fixity.[20] Microforms may circulate independently of macroforms and may shift within them, and macroforms are continually modified through the incorporation of new microforms.

These text critical issues are important to the broader problem of scripture in South Asia because they provide insight into the practical side of authority with respect to the production and transmission of scriptural texts. Studying the way in which scriptures grow and change provides real insight into the operation of a textual culture that is largely hidden from us. Silk makes this point clear: "The question of how to understand the *growth* of Mahāyāna scripture is, in this view, identical with the question of how to understand the *nature* of their initial composition."[21] Something similar may be said of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava scriptures because a comparable set of presuppositions appears to have governed their production.

It is important to recognize that a fluid process of scriptural production characterized by the interplay of "macroforms" and "microforms" was not a new development that began specifically with Mahāyāna texts. Similar tendencies undoubtedly governed the formation of many parts of the Vedic corpus and the early Buddhist scriptures, though, in these cases, we may speak of a clearer

[20] See especially Silk 2021: 154.
[21] Silk 2021: 153-154.

distinction between various source materials and the redacted text.[22] (The Purāṇas provide an even closer analogue, but their emergence into the textual record should be seen as connected with the same cultural matrix as the Mahāyāna, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava scriptures.)[23] Yet there is something really new, or perhaps newly visible, in the early centuries of the Common Era, in way these textual practices were realized, the nature of the texts they governed, and especially the notion of authority to which they were reconciled.

This period witnessed a rapid increase in the number of scriptures; their production was characterized by increasing dynamism; and more communities produced and transmitted their own sacred texts. Yet even as new forms of scripture emerged and new ways of thinking about scriptural authority arose, older scriptures, notably the Vedas and the earlier Buddhist texts, continued to be transmitted as before. The adherents of Mīmāṃsā, the practice of Vedic hermeneutics, worked out an entire theology meant to preserve the Veda's authority as the only eternal and unauthored scripture. They admitted, however, that other texts might enjoy a *dependent* form of scripturality provided that they could be shown to be derived from the Veda. We must therefore remember that ideas connected with the constellation of scriptural forms that emerged during the "Age of Scripture" were in constant tension with older notions of what it meant for a text to be sacred, and the intellectual response to their emergence was largely born out of this confrontation.

0.3 Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Scripture

I want to return now to the bracketed problem of "scripture" and to its suitability as a category of cultural analysis for South Asian materials.[24] Scholars of religious studies have been troubled by the

[22] Compare *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 6.1 and *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 5.1-2.
[23] See Rocher 1986: 95-99.
[24] My section title is modeled after Gregory Schopen's "Protestant Presuppositions in Study of Indian Buddhism."

etymological baggage carried by the word scripture and especially the connotations associated with post-Gutenberg era Protestant views of the Bible as the one and only "Scripture." Thomas Coburn, for example, suggests that "the Latin *scriptura*, 'writing,' and *scribere*, 'to write,' are never far from awareness in much discussion of scriptural matters." He therefore suggests that we would do well to dispense with the use of "scripture" for the study of South Asia, explaining that "there has never been a happy marriage between the holy words of India, composed and transmitted orally, and the writing process."[25]

It is true that the primacy of the written word does not always fit well with the South Asian material. The Veda was composed and transmitted without writing for more than a millennium, and its oral character remained a critical part of its identity even after writing had been widely adopted. Traditionalists claimed that to learn it from a book was "contrary to reason."[26] Even scriptures originally produced in a literate environment tend to represent themselves as an oral teaching, often by structuring themselves as an apparent dialogue, and the oral tradition can often still be felt in the background.[27] Yet the importance of orality is not unique to South Asian scriptures. The Qur'ān, which means literally "recitation," is a text that realizes its full authority only as it is recited aloud from memory.[28] Even Christians, as William Graham notes, historically engaged with their written scripture in audible ways, whether through liturgies, catechisms, or even the convention of reciting the text as it was being copied.[29]

[25]See Coburn 1989: 104 for both quotes.

[26]*Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.203, A'123: *yathaivānyāyavijñātād vedāl lekhyādipūrvakāt | śūdreṇādhigatād vā 'pi dharmajñānaṃ na saṃmatam*. For Harikai's edition of the *Tantravārttika*, I provide the page numbers to the 1929 (A) and 1970 (A') Ānandāśrama editions as listed by Harikai. I do so because the easily available online version of Harikai's work has no page numbers.

[27]See Nattier 2003: 58-59 for a discussion of the fluid boundary between oral and written texts in the Mahāyāna context.

[28]Graham 1987: 80: "…the authoritativeness of the qur'anic text is only realized in its fullness and perfection when it is correctly recited aloud."

[29]Graham 1987: 120-123.

It is undoubtedly important to emphasize the "oral dimension," as Graham puts it, of many scriptures, especially during the premodern period. Yet I wonder whether the written connotations of the word "scripture" have really led scholarship too far astray, at least in the study of South Asia. Graham begins his study of scriptural orality by criticizing Max Müller's much maligned decision to call his series the "Sacred Books of the East." Yet later in the same study he quotes Müller as saying that "manuscripts were never considered in India as of very high authority; they were always over-ruled by the oral traditions of certain schools."[30] Can we really accuse Müller of failing to appreciate the importance of the oral dimension simply because he chose a theoretically naive name for this series of "books"?[31] I think it rather more likely that the study of South Asian religions has failed to appreciate the importance of writing and has yet to confront how the adoption of writing constitutes the oral tradition as an object of theoretical reflection.[32]

Another apparent problem with the word scripture is that, in the Protestant imaginary, the Bible is understood to be a single book bound between two covers.[33] No such preconception, at least to my knowledge, makes itself felt in scholarship on South Asia, at least not in recent times. It might also be objected that traditional India lacks a single, easy equivalent of the word scripture. There are, as noted, many approximates, but each possess a unique and usually wider semantic scope.

[30] Graham 1987: 1 and 74. Somewhat separately, Graham himself demonstrates that scholars of Islam had long been sensitive to the oral and aural dimensions of the Qur'ān, quoting Stanley Lane-Poole as saying: "From first to last the Koran is essentially a book to be heard, not read." See Graham 1987: 79.

[31] Kendall Folkert raises a similar complaint about the notion that there are 45 Jain scriptures, which was, he explains, first put forward by Georg Bühler and was subsequently adopted by later scholars even though it does not agree with most literary and oral traditions. Yet Folkert then goes on to say that Hermann Jacobi chose a text from outside those 45 for his contribution of a Jain work to the "Sacred Books of the East," which seems, in my view, to demonstrate the opposite of Folkert's point. These scholars were sensitive to the artificiality of "canonical" lists in South Asia, it may just be that the style of scholarship was simply less nuanced in its expression. See Folkert 1989: 174-175.

[32] An interesting discussion of this issue in the Jewish context is given in Jaffee 2001, especially 5-7. Pollock 2006: 13 notes something similar in the context of classical Indian literature, pointing to the oral frame story of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*.

[33] Smith 1993: 13 notes the earlier movement from the Greek plural *ta biblia* to the Latin singular *biblia*, though he acknowledges that this notion became more prominent after Gutenberg. Braude 2009 sees the invention of the codex as critical in this process.

For example, the Sanskrit word *āgama* can denote something very much like scripture, but it also means "traditional knowledge" or even just "arrival." But is this fact really a problem or in any way unique to South Asia? Semantic multivalency is not specific to Sanskrit terms. Both *scriptura* and its Greek ancestor *graphe* could mean "scripture," though they more frequently refer to the writings of human authors with no sacred authority at all. And beyond the issue of fuzzy semantic boundaries, does it even make sense to expect multiple religious communities to use the same word for their scriptures?

Three decades ago, a group of scholars including Wilfred Cantwell Smith, William Graham, and Miriam Levering sought to develop a more expansive theoretical grounding for "scripture" as a widespread religious phenomenon. They argued that scripture must be understood as a "bilateral term" because it "denotes something in particular relation to something else" and may therefore be designated a "relational concept." As Graham puts it, "No text, written or oral or both, is sacred or authoritative in isolation from a community." The attention they devoted to this largely self-evident insight must be understood as a response to the academic trends of their time, when the study of Biblical texts and the Qur'ān was almost entirely focused on philological issues. In response, they argued that text-criticism was really the study of pre-scripture and that the study of scripture, properly speaking, should focus on the roles played by scriptures in the lives of the communities that held them to be sacred.[34]

The notion that scripture is a "relational concept" does not really disrupt recent approaches to the study of religion in South Asia. It simply makes explicit the operational assumptions that have governed the construction of "scripture" as an analytical category and suggests that we pay attention

[34]See Smith 1993: 3-4 and especially 78-81 for the discussion of this point with respect to the Qur'ān. A similar sentiment is expressed in Graham 1977.

to how the members of this category were received in religious life. A degree of conceptual distance has meant that the study of South Asia has managed to escape some of the deleterious influence posed by Protestant presuppositions.[35] I would argue that the intervention of W. C. Smith and others raises equally if not more serious questions about the use of "scripture" with respect to the study of non-Christian religious communities that are historically and conceptually more closely connected with Christianity. For example, the so-called Hebrew Bible is often considered *the* scripture of the Jewish people, but why? While this model seems to make sense for recent times, is it broadly true for all of Jewish history? Is there a chance that it depends on a Christian notion of scripture that only seems unproblematic because of a partially shared collection of texts?

The Hebrew Bible contains three sets of writings: the Torah ("Instruction"), Nevi'im ("Prophets"), and Ketuvim ("Writings"). Several scholars, including especially Stephen Chapman, have questioned whether this group formed a well-recognized unit for much of Jewish history. One might point to the acronym "Tanakh," which contains all three, but, as Tal Ilan has shown, this term never appears in pre-Masoretic Rabbinic literature.[36] Miqra ("Reading"), which is sometimes suggested as a Jewish approximation of scripture, generally excludes the Prophets. These difficulties are serious, and, as Chapman notes, "it is not at all clear that ancient Israel had a 'Bible' of the type that is familiar today."[37] He goes on to point out that, in the medieval context, the "authoritative core are the Torah (= Pentateuch), the Mishnah, and the Talmud." In other words, the Rabbinic tradition did not take the Nevi'im and Ketuvim as direct sources of *halakha* ("the [right] way to go" or "way of life"), though they were often cited as sources of further support.[38]

[35]Here I am drawing the term "Protestant presuppositions" from Gregory Schopen's article.

[36]Ilan 2012. She does point to the *Kitvei ha-Qodesh* ("Sacred Writings"), which includes, albeit with certain complications, these three categories. Braude 2009: 35 states that the word Tanakh was, at the earliest, invented in the sixth or seventh century CE.

[37]Chapman 2016: 38.

[38]Chapman 2016: 38.

Even the seemingly fundamental notion of "Torah" presents a number of complications. The Rabbinical sages and subsequent scholars who transmitted their teachings came to believe that God had revealed two Torahs to Moses at Sinai, one in writing and the other only orally. This "Oral Torah" or "Torah in the Mouth," as Martin Jaffee calls it, is built around the Mishnah ("Repeated Tradition"), which contains prescriptive rules or "case law" organized by topic.[39] Around this core grew up a tradition of oral exegesis that was eventually codified and redacted into the two Talmuds through a long process involving the interplay of written and oral traditions.[40] Certain Rabbinic communities eventually came, at least in practice, to direct their principal intellectual attentions towards the Talmud.[41]

So does Judaism have a scripture? Or does it have multiple scriptures, and, if so, which are they and what is the relationship among them? What is the status of the Talmud, and are there any circumstances under which we might legitimately call it scripture? Is the tendency to deny scriptural status to the Mishnah (i.e., the "Torah in the Mouth") based on a false equivalency with the *sacra traditio* entrusted to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and rejected by the Protestant proponents of *sola scriptura*? The answer to these questions depends, I think, on what work one wishes the word "scripture" to do. But the fact that they arise at all is important in and of itself.

Even the use of "scripture" in the context of Islam may be more complicated than it immediately appears. The supreme status of the Qur'ān is well known, and W. C. Smith has argued that it embodies "the notion *par excellence* of scripture as a religious item."[42] Although one might wish to ask how and when Muhammad's revelations (or "recitations") were first conceptualized as a

[39] See Jaffee 2001: 1-7 and Alexander 2006. I am here ignoring the problem of the Baraita, their exclusion from the Mishnah, and their appearance in the Gemara texts. I am also not considering the problems raised by the Tosefta.

[40] The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds share the same Mishnah but differ in their Gemara.

[41] Greenspahn 2016: 378 mentions the following quote from the sixteenth-century: "Our holy ancestors, especially the Ashkenazi pietists, saw fit to direct their sons to the Talmud alone."

[42] Smith 1993: 47.

single "Recitation," I want instead to focus on the problem of the Ḥadīth ("report [of the Prophet's sayings and actions]"). In classical Muslim theology, the Qur'ān is sharply distinguished from the Ḥadīth. As Graham explains, the former is the immutable word of God, seen to be uncreated by the later tradition, and the latter is "divinely inspired in its meaning but not verbally revealed (and hence not 'fixed' as to wording) like the Qur'ān."[43] Yet this boundary may have been somewhat less sharply defined in the first few centuries after the death of Muhammad, when the process of divine revelation and its relationship to the words of the Prophet appears to have been conceptually connected in more complex ways than are allowed by the later interpretive community.[44] The Ḥadīth contains, for instance, direct quotations attributed to God himself, which were eventually called *aḥādīth qudsīyah* or "divine sayings."[45]

What exactly is the status of these "divine sayings?" Is it meaningful that they are categorized as Ḥadīth together with material not directly attributed to God? The answers to these questions surely depends on time, place, and context. One distinction made in traditional, albeit substantially later, Muslim scholarship is liturgical: unlike Qur'ānic passages, the "divine sayings" cannot be used during prayer.[46] Yet they were still indisputably instances of the word of God. And what about the rest of the Ḥadīth, which is not God's word but which supplements it and in matters of practice serves a critical role? Is the sharp distinction made by traditional Muslims scholars between this textual collection and the Qur'ān really the same as the distinction between scripture and non-scripture? Could these ever reasonably be considered different types of scripture without distorting the inimitably sublime status of the Qur'ān in Muslim thought?[47] Here too might we be

[43]Graham 1977: 14.
[44]Graham 1977: 26-27.
[45]Graham 1977: 38.
[46]Graham 1977: 55-56. See also pp. 59-60 for a traditional classification of three forms of God's word.
[47]The situations are rather different, but one cannot help but be reminded of the relationship between *śruti* and *smṛti* in the South Asian context. Compare also the Greek *hai graphai* and Latin *scripturae*, which were used for the

misled by the Protestant rejection of Sacred Tradition?

Perhaps counterintuitively, I want to draw these types of questions out into the open in order to show that "scripture" has and remains a useful category for cultural analysis even when there are difficulties in determining precisely how it should be defined. I see it as no different from concepts like "poetry," or "literature," or, to consider categories somewhat more intimately tied to the study of religion, "ritual," or "worship," or even "religion" itself. Whether or not one finds it useful or interesting to try to define such terms in the abstract, their meaning in any specific historical or cultural context requires us to understand the historical particulars to which they are applied. The difficulties we encounter in fitting certain phenomena into disciplinary or even linguistically determined categories, when taken seriously, should help us to rethink those categories and to deepen our understanding of both the specific phenomena under study and the world in which they appear.

0.4 Searching for Boundaries

In the preceding sections of this introduction, I sought to outline a way to think about scripture during an important period of South Asian history, to delineate how it was conceptualized by cultural actors, and to trace, in broad strokes, how those conceptualizations converged, albeit only in part, across religious communities over time. There are, however, several points of unresolved tension that have emerged as I have tried to work out a framework for thinking about sacred texts in premodern South Asia. The first and perhaps most important of these relates to the problem of where exactly the boundary around sacred textuality should be drawn.

Septuagint and the writings that would come to form the New Testament. Early Christians saw the origins of these different classes of writings rather differently, and the Gospels were, at least for a time, no more than what Heikki Räisänen has called "human testimonies to God's action." Later on, some Christians would come to see their entire Bible as the direct word of God. See Räisänen 2008: 690-691.

The relatively neutral terms provided by the relational model of scripture only serve to emphasize that sacredness is a culturally and historically realized phenomenon. When we turn to the South Asian materials, we find three dominant modes of thinking. First, the Vedic corpus is often seen to be eternal and unauthored. Although it is true that the experiential side of the Veda's sacredness presents a number of complicated anthropological problems, its normative conceptualization is quite clear. Second, a text might be said to be derived from the Veda, with the precise nature of this derivation a matter of some debate. The sacred character of materials falling into this category is understandably dependent upon the Veda's unique ontological status. Third, a text may be attributed to God or some other supremely authoritative figure, and, in such cases, is often depicted as having been reduced from a cosmic exemplar into a form fit for the limited capacities of human beings.

All this seems fairly straightforward and provides a starting point from which to think about the problem of scripture in South Asia. Yet pushing deeper into these models of textual sacredness brings us to a serious complication. As Sheldon Pollock notes, nearly all disciplines of Sanskrit learning claim divine or eternally preexistent origins, to be in some way derived from the Veda, or to be another, usually fifth, Veda.[48] When, for example, a medical text states in its opening that it was revealed by God, does that make it, in some sense, scripture or scripture-like? How about a text on dramaturgy that claims both to be revealed by the creator God and to serve as a fifth Veda? What does it mean when a traditional narrative depicts all systematized knowledge, from the Veda down to animal husbandry, as reduced from an all-encompassing exemplar? Although it is not always clear how to understand these types of claims, the tendency to ascribe all texts and knowledge to a divine source suggests a permeable notion of textual sacredness that complicates the category of

[48] See Pollock 1985: especially 503 and 506-519 and 1989: 609-610.

scripture.[49]

One solution might be to insist that scripture is characterized by a close connection with a religious community. But here too we run up against a set of problems that are, if not unique to traditional South Asia, at least particularly relevant for its study. It is often not clear, first of all, where exactly the boundaries between communities should be drawn, especially for the period spanning from the beginning of the Common Era until about the eleventh or twelfth century CE. For example, initiated members of Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva ritual systems also accepted the Veda as authoritative, at least within its own sphere. Brahmins who rejected those systems and the scriptures upon which they were based might still consider themselves devotees of Viṣṇu or Śiva. Are only the former properly called Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas? What exactly is the relationship between communal identity and devotional allegiance? When temple priests, who were often affiliated with an initiatory textual tradition, preside over forms of popular devotion that make no appearance in the texts of that tradition, how are we to think of the non-initiates who visit that temple?

Complicating matters further, we must acknowledge that, at least for this period, the notion of distinct religious communities is drawn from and largely mirrors prescriptive textual sources. We speak of Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas because we have texts attributed to or associated with Viṣṇu and Śiva. The institutional and socio-cultural realities associated with belonging to one of these communities are virtually inaccessible to us, apart from in the case of certain normative descriptions of ascetic regimens and the occasional epigraphical reference to temple pontiffs. In the face of these difficulties, one might suggest that scriptures are best distinguished from non-scriptures in terms of their religious use. We might try, for instance, to look for texts that were physically worshipped

[49] Alastair Minnis reminds us that the tendency to root all forms of knowledge in a divine source appears in Christian contexts as well. See Minnis [1984] 2010: 26.

or copied in ritually regulated ways. Recent scholarship has shed light on this important side of sacred textuality, but the evidence remains extremely limited and prescriptive.[50] For this period, the manuscript record reveals no widespread special or consistent characteristics that might serve as pragmatic markers of "scripturality," and we have no historical record of how scribes worked.

Perhaps the strongest argument against taking a material- or practice-oriented approach is that it ignores the conceptual categories explicitly developed in South Asian intellectual and religious discourse, where a line is often drawn between "scripture" and "non-scripture" on the basis of subject matter. There are, on the one hand, texts that deal with mundane issues observable by ordinary people (*pratyakṣa-*), and, on the other, those that deal with matters that are "beyond the senses" (*parokṣa-*), at least insofar as people like you and me are concerned. It is this latter group that requires special consideration because it provides information that we could not otherwise know. I should be clear that I am not suggesting that we judge the content of premodern South Asian texts to determine whether they deal with issues that are properly "beyond the senses." I only mean to point out that this idealized distinction was considered fundamental by the people who produced and thought about the texts under investigation and should inform our approach to scripture in this particular context.

One of the goals of W. C. Smith's broader project was to encourage the study of what it actually means for a text to be sacred to a particular community. He was, as noted, especially interested in showing that text-critical analysis of the Bible could not tell us anything about the role played by the Bible in Jewish and Christian life after it had been turned into scripture. While the sharp distinction between pre-scriptural and scriptural phases of the Bible's history perhaps deserves further nuance,

[50]For example, see Kim 2013 and de Simini 2016.

the general point is nonetheless very important.[51] In the South Asian case, however, one is struck both by the number of scriptures, even within a single community, and the fluidity with which they were transmitted. There are exceptions: the Veda and, albeit perhaps only within one geographically isolated community, certain early Buddhist texts achieved a fixed form.[52] But other scriptures were expanded, revised, rearranged, and totally rewritten despite already being recognized as scripture, and new scriptures were constantly being produced. For many South Asian communities, these processes were not pre-scriptural; they were fundamental parts of what it meant for a text to be scripture.

One final issue that needs to be addressed is the concept of "canon." In a seminal article, Jonathan Z. Smith argued that "canon is best seen as one form of a basic cultural process of limitation and of overcoming that limitation through ingenuity."[53] Although much of his essay is concerned with non-literate societies, he is interested in what he sees as a more or less universal tendency for religious communities, first of all, to fix "a limited number of 'texts' as immutable and authoritative," and, second, to apply "exegetical ingenuity" to those texts "in an effort to manipulate the closed canon."[54] Much of the South Asian material does not fit happily within this framework. For example, certain "canonical" lists emerged, at least in Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava contexts, but their members did not possess, at least for vast periods of their history, a fixed textual shape, and many widely accepted scriptures were not included in such lists.

None of this is to say that scriptural manuscripts were not sometimes copied and transmitted faithfully from their exemplars. I only mean to suggest that varying degrees of fluidity were a

[51] See especially the arguments of Chapman 2003 and 2016.

[52] There are, in both cases, somewhat rough edges. Upaniṣads claiming to belong to different Vedic branches continued to be composed up through modern times, and the fixity of early Buddhist discourses is only certain in specific geographic contexts.

[53] Smith [1982] 2016: 160.

[54] Smith [1982] 2016: 154 and 160.

fairly constant presence. Yet exegetical traditions still approached these texts with great ingenuity and attention to detail. There was a polarity in textual practice that allowed anonymous hands completely to change the words of a scriptural passage while simultaneously encouraging exegetes to devote significant attention to precise phrasing down to the level of phonemic analysis. We may never fully understand the tension between these two approaches, but we should resist adopting notions of canon or scripture that completely obscure it.[55]

0.5 Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first, which includes Chapters 1 to 3, sets out the text-historical shape of the "Age of Scripture." It shows that, over the course of the first millennium, a shared cultural matrix governed scriptural production in many of South Asia's religious communities, focusing on the Buddhists, Śaivas, and Vaiṣṇavas. The second shifts to consider intellectual-history: how did thinkers in traditional India respond to scriptural proliferation, and what can their responses tell us about the conceptualization of "scripture" more generally.

Chapter 1 focuses on early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, which appear in the historical record around the beginning of the Common Era, and examines their relationship with older forms of the "Buddha's words," especially those belonging to the *sūtra*-class. It considers the traditional theories and practices of Buddhist scripturality, contrasting normative accounts of the historical collection of the Buddha's teachings with the actual textual practices that were used in the production and modification of early Buddhist scriptures over time. Chapter 1 seeks to show that the attitudinal factors governing the subsequent creation of Mahāyāna scriptures evolved out of earlier ways of produc-

[55] It may be that commentarial convention took on a life of its own and that this type of granular analysis was simply a genre norm. Even if so, it certainly seems that this norm governed expectations about how one could determine meaning from a linguistic statement.

ing and thinking about teachings attributed to the Buddha, and it underscores both continuities and discontinuities between these two contexts. This chapter argues that the people who composed and transmitted some, though perhaps not all, of these new Mahāyāna texts saw them as something distinct from the older type of *sūtra*, and they expressed anxiety about the reception of their compositions. It also demonstrates that these scriptural "authors" were textual specialists steeped in the traditional corpus and that their compositions were deeply conditioned by older forms of *buddhavacana*. The chapter concludes with a case study of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which demonstrates, among other things, how Mahāyāna scriptures adapted old textual forms to new doctrinal purposes.

The beginning of the Common Era was marked by the rising prominence of Śiva and Viṣṇu, two major deities that came to dominate South Asian religion. Chapter 2 traces the history of scriptures attributed to the first of these two figures, beginning with systematic teachings created by Brahmin ascetics sometime around the second century CE. It shows how narratives were used to attribute these teachings to Śiva and traces the growing theological sophistication with which such attributions were made. As in the Buddhist case, there is, at least from a critical perspective, a disconnect between the representation of these texts as divine words and their actual production by human beings. This chapter argues that the narratives explaining the descent of God's words into definite form reflect, albeit in mythologized terms, the textual practices that were used to create these scriptures. In brief, a permeable boundary between Śiva's all-encompassing knowledge and the definite forms it took in the world authorized the continual creation and recreation of material held to be his words.

Chapter 3 takes up a similar analysis of the specific class Vaiṣṇava scriptures belonging to the Pañcarātra ("Group of Five Nights"). The early history of this category is especially opaque, though this chapter attempts, albeit speculatively, to recover what some of its oldest texts may

have looked like. It then moves on to firmer footing with extant Pañcarātra scriptures, which, as Alexis Sanderson has shown, are heavily influenced by their Śaiva predecessors. Chapter 3 charts how exactly the origins of these texts were conceptualized, showing that they were almost always understood to be mediated records of divine teachings. It is argued that, as in the Śaiva case, this way of thinking about scriptures played an important role in authorizing their continual production, especially through the redaction of older scriptural materials.

Part 2 shifts from text-historical concerns to the problem of intellectual history. Thinkers working in traditional disciplines of systematic knowledge had long since been concerned with the problem of scriptural authority, especially in the contexts of Vedic hermeneutics and epistemological philosophy. Some even criticized, albeit in a haphazard fashion, the ideas and texts of their religious rivals. But, beginning around the fourth or fifth century CE, the problem scriptural authority rose, as it were, to center stage. Chapter 4 charts how intellectuals began increasingly to rationalize their accounts of why exactly scriptures could be trusted and to intensify their attacks on the text-traditions of other communities. It focuses on the work of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the staunchest defender of the Veda, who developed a philosophically sophisticated repudiation of pluralism in the context of scriptural authority. His views, though perhaps running contrary to the larger socio-religious changes of his day, were intellectually preeminent for centuries, and, like the Vedic corpus they were intended to defend, served as the standard against which all others were forced to define themselves.

Chapter 5 examines three attempts to respond to the challenge posed by Vedic exclusivism in general and Kumārila in particular. The first is developed in Śaiva scriptures and philosophical writings, where we find a pluralistic framework that affords relative degrees of validity to various scriptural systems arranged hierarchically. This way of thinking about authority comprehends a

wide swath of India's religious world, but, in the eyes of the Śaivas, the fundamental problem was clearly the relationship between their own scriptural corpus and the Veda. The second response appears in the works of a unique Kashmiri thinker named Bhaṭṭa Jayanta, who, albeit not unreservedly, suggests that we might usefully think of all well-established and socially sanctioned scriptural traditions as valid for the people who follow them. Finally, this chapter considers the attempts of Yāmunācārya, an important defender of the Pañcarātra, to establish this corpus of Vaiṣṇava texts as authoritative and its followers as true members of Vedic society.

Chapter 1: Creating a Great Vehicle

1.1 Introduction

Buddhists in traditional India maintained a vast and diverse collection of scriptures attributed to a man they called the Buddha ("Awakened One"). These texts have complicated histories. They are traditionally held to be *buddhavacana* ("the words of the Buddha"), but even the oldest among them are not direct or even lightly modified transcriptions of teachings given by a historical figure. They are the products of a complex and multilayered compositional process, and their extant forms betray the fact that they have been edited and revised over an extended period of time. Even the oldest Buddhist scriptures are, as Mark Allon puts it, "highly structured and stylized, extremely formulaic and repetitive, carefully crafted constructs, at least as we have them."[1]

The self-understandings of the early Buddhists who produced and revised *buddhavacana* are largely hidden from us by a textual culture that mandated the denial of personal creativity on the part of its participants. We may presume that the people who composed these texts saw themselves, at least in part, to be collecting, revising, and repackaging the teachings of the historical founder of their community.[2] These early scriptures came to be transmitted in different regions by different institutions in different, if often closely related, languages, and separate groups of Buddhists modified and augmented their *buddhavacana* in different ways. As a consequence, the material

[1] Allon 2021: 10.

[2] But see the alternative view proposed in Shulman 2021, where it is argued that the purpose of the early *sūtras* was to create "visions" of the Buddha.

preserved by geographically and institutionally isolated textual lineages diverged, resulting in comparable but distinct collections.[3] The modifications introduced by different groups were strikingly conservative in nature, rarely involving significant doctrinal or stylistic innovation, at least insofar as certain types of scripture were concerned.

Around the beginning of the first millennium, a new constellation of Buddhist texts emerged into the historical record. They too were presented as the words of the Buddha, though they were, from a critical perspective, composed centuries after his final passing. In time, many of these scriptures would come to be classified as belonging to the Mahāyāna ("Great Vehicle"), an important textual and doctrinal category with a complicated early history that remains poorly understood.[4] What exactly were these new texts? How many were there? How were they composed, and by whom? In what ways were they conceptualized, both as independent entities and vis-à-vis other types of *buddhavacana*? These questions are not easily answered, in part because the scriptures that would come to be classified as Mahāyāna are exceptionally diverse, to say nothing of the fact that we have virtually no text-external evidence that tells us anything about their initial composition and circulation. I will nevertheless try to address these issues as a group, necessarily beginning with an examination of historical and conceptual issues related to the older forms of Buddhist scripture. I will then consider some general problems with the category "Mahāyāna" before moving on to the scriptures that came to be seen as comprising it. I argue that the appearance of these new

[3]For a survey of the ways in which different versions of the same early Buddhist scripture diverge from one another, see Allon 2021: 47-49. I adopt the notion of "textual lineage" from Allon. I prefer it, at least in certain contexts, to "monastic order" because, as Richard Salomon notes, we do not know when exactly ordination lineages came to maintain their own distinct scriptural collections. We likewise do not have the evidence to determine how fixed textual transmission was within a single monastic lineage beyond the exceptional case of the Theravādins. See below, pp. 33 n. 11.

[4]See Karashima 2015b, which argues that "Mahāyāna" was originally a pun on *mahājñāna* ("great knowledge"); the two words were, Karashima proposes, homonyms in whatever Middle Indic dialect the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* was originally composed.

texts may be attributed to an evolution in the presuppositions governing the production of Buddhist scriptures, at least among some monks, with old ideas about the creation of *buddhavacana* finding wider application than ever before, especially in terms of the breadth of acceptable source material. I will also try to show that the production of these new texts was thoroughly conditioned by the language and structures of the older corpus.

1.2 Canonical Conundrums

We cannot speak of the emergence of Mahāyāna scriptures without first considering the context from which they arose. It is difficult, however, to recover much concrete about the earliest periods of Buddhist history. The Sinhalese tradition places the Buddha's death in the second half of the sixth century BCE, and a similar date is given by some of our earliest Chinese sources.[5] Scholars have proposed other dates, with ranges in the fourth and fifth centuries BCE proving the most widely adopted.[6] We enter the realm of historical certainty only with Aśoka, who ruled much of South Asia during the third century BCE.[7] He knew an organized monastic community (*saṅgha-*), and one of his edicts mentions several texts "spoken by the Buddha" (*budhena bhāsite*).[8] Aśokan inscriptions have nothing more to say about Buddhist scriptures, and the same is virtually true for all other epigraphical evidence dating from before the Common Era.[9]

The Buddhist *saṅgha* is said to have suffered a number of schisms in the centuries following the

[5]Palumbo 2011.

[6]Bechert 1991: 1-2 and 5. See also Cousins 1996.

[7]Strong and Tournier 2019.

[8]The Calcutta-Bairāṭ edict lists a number of Dharma-teachings (*dhaṃmapaliyāya-*) "spoken by the Fortunate Buddha." See Hultzsch 1925: 160-174 and Bloch 1950: 154-155. For a tentative effort to identify these texts, see Schmithausen 1992: 113-117.

[9]Note that a short donative record from the first or second century BCE makes reference to a textual specialist called a *peṭakin* but gives no further details. Lüders 1963: 37, A56.

Buddha's death, resulting in the emergence of independent monastic orders (*nikāya-*).[10] According to tradition, the breakup of the community sometimes involved fights over "the Buddha's words," leading to the development of distinct collections of *buddhavacana*.[11] Whether or not these stories may be taken as historical fact, it is certain that separate ordination lineages were in existence by the last few centuries BCE, and the early Buddhist scriptures that have come down to us were transmitted by institutionally and regionally distinct textual lineages. Independently preserved scriptural collections developed out of a common stock of material, but differences reveal that the texts that they contain were edited, modified, and, in some cases, produced long after the Buddha's death.

Scholars have sought critically to reconstruct the history of the early Buddhist scriptures through comparative study of parallel texts preserved by different monastic groups, and I will presently return to the results of this research. From a normative perspective, all Buddhist traditions agree that a communal recitation (*saṅgīti-*) was held at Rājagṛha during the monsoon retreat that followed the final passing of the Buddha.[12] Two of his disciples, Ānanda and Upāli, recited the Dharma and Vinaya — that is, doctrinal and disciplinary teachings — exactly as they had heard them from their teacher. Their recitations were then certified by a large group of monks, all of whom had attained the highest degree of spiritual advancement. The individual texts that make up the "Dharma" would later come to be called *sūtras*; for convenience, I will refer to them by this term.[13] The word "Vinaya" denotes a group of texts that contains, prototypically speaking, monastic rules and various

[10] Lamotte 1958: 312-319.

[11] For example, see *Dīpavaṃsa* 5.32-38, p. 36. But, as Salomon 2008: 14 notes, "We do not know with any confidence that the distribution of recensions of Buddhist texts in early times strictly followed sectarian, as opposed to, for example, geographical patterns."

[12] For a summary of various accounts, see Lamotte 1958: 136-138, Davidson 1990: 297-300, and Silk 2020b.

[13] It should be noted that the Pāli word "*sutta*" is not used this way in the early Pāli texts. The usual word is *pariyāya* ("turn [of teaching]"), while later on the term *suttanta* was preferred. *Sutta* does appear in a list of the various "limbs" (*aṅga-*) of the *buddhavacana*, yet, according to v. Hinüber 1994, it refers specifically to the *Pāṭimokkhasūtra* in this context.

associated narratives. The *sūtras* and the Vinaya respectively comprise two of the three "baskets" (*piṭaka-*) that make up the so-called Tripiṭaka ("Collection of Three Baskets"). The third is the Abhidharma ("Pertaining to the Dharma"), which evolved out of early efforts to present Buddhist teachings in a more systematic form.[14] This final division of the Tripiṭaka possesses a somewhat more ambiguous status, and its recitation is not mentioned in the oldest accounts of the first *saṅgīti*. Some later versions would, however, come to include it.[15]

Although the word Tripiṭaka is often translated as "canon," this convention is apt to create misunderstanding. In the context of religious studies, a "canon" is traditionally defined as a closed list of scriptures, each of which has an established or "canonical" form — though some scholars have recently advanced the idea of an "open canon."[16] As Jonathan Silk notes, a handful of relatively early narratives do explicitly claim that the Tripiṭaka (or at least an important part of it) was closed by the first communal recitation.[17] But, as is also noted by Silk, other traditional accounts acknowledge that a handful of authentic instances of *buddhavacana* were not incorporated into the initial collection.[18] These admissions indicate that the Tripiṭaka was, even from a notional perspec-

[14]Note that the Sautrāntikas rejected the *buddhavacana* status of the Abhidharmapiṭaka, assigning the title Abhidharma to "particular *sūtras* like the *Arthaviniścaya*." See *Abhidharmakośasphuṭārthavyākhyā* on 1.3, vol. 1, p. 13, ll. 9-18.

[15]Lamotte 1958: 197-210. See also Davidson 1990: 303-305.

[16]For an influential article on canons in general, see Smith [1982] 2016. A comprehensive account of canonicity in the Buddhist context, as well as a discussion of "open" and "closed" canons, is given in Silk 2020b. For an attempt to redefine the notion of canon in the South Asian context, see Folkert 1989.

[17]For example, see T. 1451, 407c03-07: 爾時大迦攝波告阿難陀曰。唯有爾許阿笈摩經。更無餘者。作是説已便下高座。爾時具壽迦攝波告大衆曰。汝等應知。世尊所説蘇怛羅已共結集。其毘奈耶次當結集。聞是語已咸言善哉. "At that time, Mahākāśyapa addressed Ānanda, saying: 'There are only this many Āgamic *sūtras*. There are no additional ones.' Once he had finished speaking, he then got down from his elevated seat. Thereupon, the Elder Kāśyapa addressed the *saṅgha*, saying: 'Let it be known that the *sūtras* uttered by the Fortunate One have all been collected. His Vinaya must next be collected.' Once everyone heard this, they exclaimed 'Wonderful'!" See MacQueen 1981: 306, cited in Silk 2020b, for another translation of the first part of this passage. The Tibetan version of this passage may be found at Tōh. 6, vol. 11, 314b, ll. 1-2.

[18]Anālayo 2012: 224, esp. n. 2, which cites *Papañcasūdanī* 4, p. 197, l. 2: *idaṃ pana suttaṃ dutiyasaṅgahe saṅgahītan ti*. See also the *Samantapāsādikā* in Jayawickrama 1962: 148, ll. 19-22: *tattha paṭhamasaṅgītiyaṃ saṅgītañ ca asaṅgītañ ca sabbam pi samodhānetvā ubhayāni pātimokhāni dve vibhaṅgāni dvāvīsati khandhakāni soḷasa parivārāti idaṃ vinayapiṭakaṃ nāma*. The Tibetan version of this passage may be found at Tōh. 6, f. This passage is discussed in Silk 2020b.

tive, partially open after the first *saṅgīti*, but they also convey (or are intended to convey) that the inclusion of new material was uncommon and required communal sanction.[19]

Examination of the textual record complicates these idealized depictions of the first *saṅgīti*. The most obvious problem is that different textual lineages in different regions and associated with different monastic orders transmitted distinct versions of the Tripiṭaka or, perhaps more precisely, distinct Tripiṭakas.[20] It is therefore evident that a closed canon, at least in the strict sense, was not produced after the Buddha's death. The problem of closure must be raised separately with respect to individual textual lineages and their associated collections of *buddhavacana*. Yet in most cases we have very little evidence to work with. The Theravādin Tipiṭaka, the so-called "Pāli canon," is available as a conceptually complete unit because it has been continuously handed down by the Mahāvihārins of Sri Lanka.[21] No other South Asian Tripiṭaka has come down to us; most are completely lost, but some fragmentary collections and individual texts survive in manuscripts and in translation, usually into Chinese or Tibetan. We have, generally speaking, no lists or indexes that could tell us what else these collections might have contained.[22]

As Peter Skilling notes, the Theravādins present themselves as the custodians of the "original recitation" (*mūlasaṃgaha-*) of the Tripiṭaka.[23] This notion is clearly non-historical, and scholars have questioned whether the Pāli canon was really fixed prior to the Common Era. Steven Collins argues that its closure was effected as "part of a strategy of legitimation by the monks of the Ma-

[19] Again see the discussion in Anālayo 2012: 224, where a similar point is made about changes introduced in Sri Lanka.

[20] It is important to note, however, that many, if not most, local monastic communities likely transmitted a somewhat limited number of texts. See especially the points made in Silk 2020b, though they pertain to a later period.

[21] Although the use of "Theravāda" is problematic in light of its polemical nature, I maintain this convention in the absence of a suitable alternative. For some of the issues, see Skilling 2009b.

[22] Silk 2019: 275 points out that do not even know whether most Buddhist communities even had the notion of a closed canonical collection in theory, let alone closed canons in practice. Skilling 2010 draws attention to the absence of *sūtra* catalogs.

[23] Skilling 2010: 22-23.

hāvihāra lineage in Ceylon in the early centuries of the first millennium A.D."[24] He connects the beginning of this effort with the initial writing down of the Theravādin Tripiṭaka, an event that traditional chronicles place in the first century BCE.[25] But, as Collins notes, it is only in the commentaries of Buddhaghosa (5th c. CE) that we find a putatively definitive list of *buddhavacana*. A different position is advanced by Bhikkhu Anālayo and K. R. Norman, both of whom separately seek to demonstrate that the Pāli canon was closed at an earlier date. They point out that certain well-known stories are relegated to Theravādin commentaries despite appearing in the *sūtra* and Vinaya collections of other textual lineages. This phenomenon indicates, they argue, that the greater part of the Pāli canon was closed before the beginning of the Common Era.[26]

Insofar as the other monastic orders are concerned, we have no comprehensive lists that purport to define the members of their *buddhavacana* collections. We generally do not have multiple versions of a single text transmitted at different times and in different places by the same monastic order (or regional recitation tradition), which makes it challenging to determine how fixed these texts may have been within a single textual lineage or across closely related lineages.[27] And our knowledge of these collections as a whole is likewise scanty. Later accounts suggest that some groups came to transmit not three but five or even seven *piṭakas*, yet no catalogs purporting to define the contents of these additional "baskets" have come down to us.[28] The evidence we do have, according to Richard Salomon, suggests that other monastic orders maintained Sūtrapiṭakas with

[24]Collins 1998: 89.

[25]It should be noted, however, that the evidence for this event is shaky, and, even if it is accurate, we know neither how the process worked nor what exactly was included. Cousins 2013 argues that the Theravāda canon was written down earlier in South India and only transmitted to Sri Lanka in the first century BCE. Wynne 2018 supports his argument.

[26]See Norman 1997: 139-140 and Anālayo 2012, esp. 229-230, the latter of which argues against Schopen [1985] 1997. See also Wynne 2006, esp. 46-48.

[27]Scholars have drawn divergent conclusions from the evidence that we have. See Strauch 2008: 115, Salomon 2014: 11-12, and Allon 2018: 233-240.

[28]See *Triśaraṇasaptati*, vv. 57-59, p. 50-53, which makes reference to orders that maintain seven baskets. Walser 2005: 52 draws our attention to a sixth-century report of a monastic order with five baskets.

an overall structure similar to that of the Theravādins, and the same is true, with significant qualifications, of their respective Vinayas.[29] The various Abhidharmapiṭakas are quite distinct; as they are relatively late, they will not be my focus here.[30]

The *sūtras* convey the Buddha's doctrinal teachings, and they generally open with the incidental context in which a particular discourse or set of discourses was supposed to have been delivered. All known Sūtrapiṭakas are divided into four or five subcategories; the Theravādins call them *nikāyas* ("groups"), while the other orders prefer the term *āgama* ("traditionally handed-down texts"). This latter word was used by a number of religious communities in premodern India, but, in this context, its meaning is sharply delimited to the traditional *sūtra* collections.[31] The five subgroups are the Dīrghāgama ("Group of Long Texts"), Madhyamāgama ("Group of Medium-Length Texts"), Saṃyuktāgama ("Group of Connected Texts"), Ekottarikāgama ("Group of Texts Containing Lists that Progressively Increase in Number"), and the Kṣudrakāgama ("Group of Minor Texts"), which is at times counted as a separate *piṭaka*. When speaking collectively, I will refer to these groupings as "Āgamas" or "Āgamic *sūtras*" to distinguish them from Mahāyāna scriptures.

A comparison of the extant Āgama collections reveals that they contain largely, though not exclusively, parallel texts. Mapping out correspondences is complicated because different textual lineages often transmit parallel *sūtras* within different Āgamic subgroups.[32] A text found in one community's Dīrghāgama might be found in another's Madhyamāgama. Most textual lineages also

[29]Salomon 2018: 95-99. Note that he speaks here only of the Sūtrapiṭaka.

[30]Davidson 1990: 303-305 discusses the divergent ways in which the Abhidharma texts were cast as *buddhavacana*. See also Bronkhorst 2018 for some speculative thoughts on the connection between Abhidharmic developments in Gandhāra and the emergence of the Mahāyāna.

[31]See Anālayo 2014: 4 n. 2, which gives references to lists of either four or five Āgamas given in the Vinayas of the Dharmaguptakas, Mahāsāṅghikas, Mahīśāsakas, and Theravādins. The status of the Kṣudrakāgama was somewhat more complicated, with some *nikāyas* classifying it as a separate *piṭaka* and others excluding it altogether. See Lamotte 1958: 165-167.

[32]For example, see Anālayo 2011, vol. 1: 9-10, esp. nn. 70 and 71, Bucknell 2014: 57-101, and Silk 2020b.

transmit a relatively small but still significant number of *sūtras* without any known parallel. For example, we have knowledge of three separate Dīrghāgama collections, which contain between 30 to 47 *sūtras* each. Every text in the Theravādin Dīghanikāya has a parallel in the surviving *sūtra* collections associated with other monastic orders.[33] A presumably Dharmaguptaka collection translated into Chinese in 413 CE has three totally unique *sūtras*.[34] And a Sanskrit Dīrghāgama partially preserved in Central Asian manuscripts includes eleven texts without parallel.[35]

As Mark Allon notes, the existence of unparalleled texts allows us to infer that Buddhist communities were still composing Āgamic *sūtras* "after textual lineages became separated."[36] The production of new texts was, however, governed by the content and character of the collection as a whole, and unique *sūtras* were largely created through the reformulation of material found elsewhere in Buddhist scriptural collections. The *Zengyi jing* (增一經; "Increasing by One *Sūtra*"), which is found only in the Dīrghāgama translated into Chinese, is representative of the most extreme form of textual reformulation.[37] Almost everything in its introductory section finds a parallel in the Pāli canon. I compare the opening of the *Zengyi jing* with passages taken from three Pāli *sūtras*:

> *Zengyi jing*:
> Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was residing in Śrāvastī, at Jeta's grove in Anāthapiṇḍada's park, together with a large group of monks numbering twelve hundred and fifty. At that time, the Fortunate One addressed the monks: "I shall explain the wonderful Dharma; its words are fully correct in the beginning, middle, and end; its meaning is pure and endowed with noble conduct. It is called "The Dharma that Increases by One. Listen and pay attention to it; I will explain it for you." At that time,

[33] Anālayo 2020 reports that the *Jāliyasutta* has no parallel, though this text is no more than a repetition of part of the preceding *sutta*. Bucknell 2014: 65 takes this text to be parallel with the *Mandīśasūtra* of the Sanskrit Dīrghāgama.

[34] Anālayo 2013a and 2014.

[35] For a summary of the extant Dīrghāgama collections, see Anālayo 2014: 9 and Allon 2021: 106, esp. n. 207.

[36] Allon 2021: 108.

[37] Here I am following Anālayo 2014 in taking the unique *sūtras* found in the so-called Chinese Dīrghāgama as representing translations rather than Chinese recompositions. This is, so far as I am aware, the scholarly consensus more generally.

all the monks received the teaching and listened to it.[38]

Parosahassam:

[Thus have I heard]. At one time, the Fortunate One was residing in Śrāvastī, at Jeta's grove in Anāthapiṇḍada's park, together with a large group of monks numbering twelve hundred and fifty. At that time, the Fortunate one….[39]

Desanā:

At that time, the Fortunate One addressed the monks, saying … Listen to it and pay attention; I will speak.[40]

Saṅgītisutta:

These Dharmas, which are good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, in letter and in spirit proclaim the completely fulfilled and totally pure chaste life.[41]

Translation has obscured some of the exact phrasing, but we may nevertheless detect that the opening of the *Zengyi jing* was composed through the reformulation of traditional materials commonly found in all Āgama collections. In other words, the people who produced this *sūtra* were thoroughly conservative in their use of formulaic language and content found elsewhere in the corpus. The *Zengyi jing* then moves on to the Buddha's teaching, and here too there is virtually nothing unprecedented. His discourse, as notes Anālayo, turns out to be a reorganized version of the preceding Dīrghāgama text, the *Shishang jing* (十上經), which corresponds with the Theravādin *Dasuttarasutta* ("Further Groups of Ten *Sūtra*").[42] The relationship between the *Zengyi jing* and *Shishang jing* may be demonstrated by comparing two representative passages. Here I have underlined the corresponding material:

[38]T. 1, 57b26-c01: 如是我聞。一時佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。與大比丘衆千二百五十人俱。爾時世尊告諸比丘。我與汝等説微妙法。上中下言皆悉眞正。義味清淨梵行具足。謂一增法也。汝等諦聽善思念之。當爲汝説。時諸比丘受教而聽. See Anālayo 2014: 12 for another translation, which I follow with modifications.

[39]*Parosahassam*, Saṃyuttanikāya vol 1, p. 192, ll. 8-10: *ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme mahatā bhikkhusaṅghena saddhiṃ aḍḍhatelasehi bhikkhusatehi | tena kho pana samayena bhagavā*…. See Bodhi 2000: 288 for another translation.

[40]Saṃyuttanikāya vol. 2, p. 1, l. 3 and ll. 6-7: *tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi bhikkhavo ti | … taṃ suṇātha sādhukam manasikarotha bhāsisāmīti*. See Bodhi 2000: 533 for another translation.

[41]*Saṅgītisutta*, Dīghanikāya vol. 3, p. 267, ll. 5-8: *ye te dhammā ādikalyāṇā majjhekalyāṇā pariyosānakalyāṇā sātthaṃ savyañjanaṃ kevalaparipuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ abhivadanti*.

[42]The *Dasuttarasutta* is itself seemingly a reformulation of the *Saṅgītisutta*. See Anālayo 2014: 10-11.

Zengyi jing:

The Buddha addressed the monks, saying. "These are the *dharmas* increasing by one: there is one *dharma* that does much; one *dharma* that should be cultivated; one *dharma* that should be understood; one *dharma* that should be abandoned; one *dharma* that should be realized. Which is the *dharma* that does much? It is not forsaking meritorious *dharmas*. Which is the *dharma* that should be cultivated? It is mindfulness always directed towards the body …"[43]

Shishang jing:

Monks, there is one *dharma* that does much; one *dharma* that should be cultivated; one *dharma* that should be thoroughly understood; one *dharma* that should be abandoned; one *dharma* that brings about loss; one *dharma* that brings about distinction; one *dharma* that is tough to penetrate; one *dharma* that should be accomplished; one *dharma* that should be fully cognized; and one *dharma* that should be realized. Which is the *dharma* that does much? It is being able not to relinquish meritorious things. Which is the *dharma* that should be cultivated? It is mindfulness always directed towards the body …[44]

It is immediately evident, as Anālayo has elsewhere shown, that the *Zengyi jing* is an abbreviated and reorganized version of the *Shishang jing*. The correspondence continues throughout the entire text, and there are only a handful of places where the *dharmas* mentioned in these two *sūtras* diverge slightly.[45] We may therefore infer that the *Zengyi jing* was created by adapting material taken from the *Shishang jing* and adding a small amount of additional formulaic language. A similar process was used to produce the second unparalleled *sūtra* found in the "Chinese" Dīrghāgama, which, again as Anālayo notes, is an even more abbreviated reformulation of the same fundamental teaching.[46]

[43]T.1, 57c02-04: 佛告比丘。一增法者。謂一多 (em [三; Anālayo] : omitted : Ed.) 成法。一修法。一覺法。一滅法。一證法。云何一多 (em [三; Anālayo] : omitted : Ed.) 成法。謂不捨善法。云何一修法。謂常自念身. See Anālayo 2014: 12-13 for another translation and copious notes on parallel passages. My emendations follow his suggestion on p. 12, n. 21.

[44]T.1, 53a02-06: 諸比丘。有一多 (em [三] : omitted : Ed.) 成法。一修法。一覺法。一滅法。一退法。一增法。一難解法。一生法。一知法。一證法。云何一多 (em : omitted : Ed.) 成法。謂於諸善法能不放逸。云何一修法。謂常自念身. See also *Dasuttarasutta*, Dīghanikāya 3, p. 272, ll. 9-18: *eko āvuso dhammo bahukāro eko dhammo bhāvetabbo eko dhammo pariññeyyo eko dhammo pahātabbo eko dhammo hānabhāgiyo eko dhammo visesabhāgiyo eko dhammo duppaṭivijjho eko dhammo uppādetabbo eko dhammo abhiññeyyo eko dhammo sacchikātabbo | katamo eko dhammo bahukāro | appamādo kusalesu dhammesu | ayaṃ eko dhammo bahukāro | katamo eko dhammo bhāvetabbo | kāyagatā sati sātasahagatā | ayaṃ eko dhammo bhāvetabbo*.

[45]See the notes provided in Anālayo 2014: 12-30.

[46]For a study of this text, see Anālayo 2013a and 2014: 32-35. Note that this text diverges further from the Pāli *Dasuttarasutta*. Anālayo 2013a: 10 summarizes: "While the Discourse Increasing by One is simply a straightforward extract from the *Daśottara-sūtra*, the Discourse on the Three Groups is based on such an extract in the case of its third

The final unique *sūtra* in this collection, the *Shiji jing* (世記經; "Record of the World") is of a different character. It dwarfs all other Āgamic sūtras and provides a descriptive account of the universe. Yet it too seems to be a compilation of early materials. As Anālayo puts it, "The overall impression conveyed by the discourse is as if all kinds of information on cosmological matters has been collected from various discourses and passages to form a single text that gives an exhaustive account of the world from a Buddhist viewpoint."[47]

In sum, the *Dīrghāgama* preserved in Chinese translation contains three unique *sūtras*, but the collection is basically consistent with the Dīghanikāya of the Theravādins. Its unique *sūtras* were produced through the reformulation of materials found in all early *sūtra* collections. The Dīrghāgama preserved in Sanskrit has more *sūtras* without parallel, and the fragmentary nature of the manuscript evidence means that we cannot examine them all. The texts that have come down to us appear likewise to have been derived from shared teachings and common formulae, but, unlike the *Zengyi Jing*, they tend not to be reformulations of a single source text.[48]

The unique *sūtras* that appear in various Madhyamāgama collections are likewise few in number and appear also to have been composed through the adaptation of shared teachings and formulaic language, though a small number are reworked versions of narratives concerning the Buddha's former lives.[49] The various extant Saṃyukta- and Ekottarikāgamas exhibit a greater degree of difference from one another. This phenomenon is unsurprising because these collections are structured

category, regarding what leads towards Nirvāṇa. The other two categories — what leads towards a bad or good destiny — are in part inspired by the *Daśottara-sūtra*."

[47] Anālayo 2014: 38.

[48] See Hartmann 2014. The *Mahāvadānasūtra* is somewhat unique in that the Buddha narrates the biographies of six former Buddhas. Some of the relevant texts are discussed in Skilling 2010: 33-34. See Skilling 1997b: 235-251 for a discussion of the *Māyājālamahāsūtra*. Note especially Skilling's comment on p. 249: "Thus there is nothing new or unusual in the teaching of the *Māyājāla*: it is a recapitulation of ancient doctrines."

[49] See Anālayo 2020, which notes that the Madhyamāgama preserved in Chinese has 18 texts without parallel in the *nikāya*-collections and Vinaya texts of the Theravādins. Anālayo also tells us that the Pāli collection has seven unique texts.

around sequences of brief *sūtras* composed in accordance with fixed patterns. Here is not the place to consider these sequential texts in detail. I wish only to note that their systematic arrangement and the ease with which more could be produced undoubtedly created the conditions under which these collections could easily diverge in terms of their exact content while nevertheless remaining thoroughly consistent in character.[50]

A somewhat flexible orientation towards the "words of the Buddha" is likewise visible in the divergence between parallel versions of the same *sūtra* transmitted by different textual lineages. Here too it is clear that change was generally limited to the reformulation of shared and generally formulaic textual material. For example, the following fragment from the Gāndhārī version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* ("The Buddha's Final Passing"), which has been edited and translated by Allon and Salomon, describes the funeral of a specific *cakravārtin* named Mahāsudarśana, an event that does not appear in any other version of this important text.[51] And yet this unique scene was composed by reformulating a passage that appears in all other known *sūtra* collections. Compare the following:

> Gāndhārī *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, tr. Allon and Salomon, slightly modified:
>
> They put [his body] in a vat … After an interval of a week, they took [it] out of the vat of oil and bathed the body with all fragrant liquids … They wrapped the body with [five] hundred pairs of [unbeaten] cloth. Having wrapped the body with five hundred pairs of unbeaten cloth, [they filled?] an iron vat with oil … after building a pyre of [all] fragrant [woods], they burned the body of King Mahāsudarśana. They built a *stūpa* at the crossroads.[52]

[50]See Allon 2021: 31-33 and 40-41, which discusses the Nidānasaṃyutta. The beginning of this collection may serve as an example: the first *sūtra* introduces the twelve standard links (*nidāna-*) of dependent origination. The second, after repeating them, then provides an explanation of each them. The third defines the "wrong way" by stating the links in order, hence describing the process of dependent origination. It then defines the "right way," explaining that the cessation of one link leads to the cessation of the following one. The fourth *sūtra* describes how the former buddha Vipassī realized dependent origination and its cessation. And the fifth through tenth *sūtras* repeat the fourth verbatim, replacing only the name Vipassī with the names of six former buddhas and the present Buddha. See Buddhavaggo, Nidānasaṃyutta, Saṃyuttanikāya, vol. 2, pp. 1-11. It should be noted that the system of *uddāna* verses likely limited the addition of new materials to a certain extent. See Allon 2021: 41-42.

[51]Note that the Theravādins transmit the *Mahāsudassanasutta* separately from their *Mahāparinibbānasutta*.

[52]Allon and Salomon 2000: 258: *droniye nikṣipisu satahasya acayena teladronito udhvaritvaṃ sarvagaṃdhotakehi*

Pāli *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, parallel noted by Allon and Salomon:

> How, Fortunate One, do people deal with the body of a *cakravārtin*? They wrap, Ānanda, the body of a *cakravārtin* in an unbeaten cloth, and, having wrapped it in an unbeaten cloth, they wrap it in a beaten cotton cloth. Having wrapped it in a beaten silk cloth, they wrap it in an unbeaten cloth. Having wrapped the body of a *cakravārtin* king this way five hundred times over, then placing it in iron vat with oil, enclosing it with another iron vat, then fashioning a pyre out of fragrant [woods], they burn the body of a *cakravārtin* king. They build a *stūpa* for the *cakravārtin* king at a crossroads.[53]

The passage preserved in Gāndhārī deals explicitly with the funerary preparations of Mahāsudarśana and does not appear in any known parallel version in Pāli, Chinese, Tibetan, or Sanskrit.[54] It is, however, an adapted version of a description given by the Buddha about the funeral of *cakravārtins* in general. The appearance of this reformulated passage in a new context suggests that the Gāndhārī version of this *sūtra* was consciously reworked.[55] This phenomenon was widespread; comparison of the various versions of Āgamic *sūtras* reveals that many were augmented through the addition of formulaic language. The degree to which these changes were considered acceptable appears to have been regionally and institutionally specific.

1.3 What Are the Buddha's Words?

How can we reconcile the mythology of the first council, not to mention the very notion of *buddhavacana*, with the fact that the "words of the Buddha" have complex textual histories? *Sūtras* were from the outset consciously composed materials; their wording continued to be substantially

kayaṃ śapayisu [*stra*]*yuvaśatehi kayaṃ veḍhayisu ahatehi paṃcahi vastrayugaśatehi kayaṃ veḍhitva ayaṃsadroni telena* + *.v.* + + + [*dh. n.*] *ci* [*da*] *cinitva raño mahasudarśanasya śarira japayisu catumaharpathe sthuvaṃ akarisu*. Parallel texts are provided on the following page. See Allon and Salomon's translation on p. 247.

[53] *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, Dīghanikāya, vol. 2, p. 141, l. 30 to p. 142, l. 6: *kathaṃ pana bhante rañño cakkavattissa sarīre paṭipajjantīti | rañño ānanda cakkavattissa sarīraṃ ahatena vatthena veṭhenti | ahatena vatthena veṭhetvā vihatena kappāsena veṭhenti vihatena kappāsena veṭhetvā ahatena vatthena veṭhenti | etena upāyena pañcahi yugasatehi rañño cakkavattissa sarīraṃ veṭhetvā ayasāya teladoṇiyā pakkhipitvā aññissā ayasāya doṇiyā paṭikujjetvā sabbagandhānaṃ citakaṃ karitvā rañño cakkavattissa sarīraṃ jhāpenti cātummahāpathe rañño cakkavattissa thūpaṃ karonti*. My translation follows that of Walshe 1995: 264 but with less abbreviation.

[54] Bronkhorst 2011: 219.

[55] Allon 2021: 51-121 convincingly argues that many types of changes to *sūtra* texts must have been purposefully introduced.

modified for many centuries after the Buddha's death; and totally new instances continued to be produced, albeit generally through the reformulation of preexisting material.

One place to look for answers is in traditional conceptualizations of *buddhavacana*. This word is very rare in early Buddhist texts; when it does appear, it denotes the Buddha's literal words.[56] Yet even before the technical term *buddhavacana* was popularized, the Buddha's direct speech was taken to be the touchstone of textual authority. In many early *sūtras*, the principal teaching concludes with a formulaic statement confirming that "the Buddha said this" (*idam avoca bhagavā*), after which the interlocutor is said to have "rejoiced in what the Fortunate One said" (*bhagavato bhāsitaṃ abhinandīti*).[57] It is clear, however, that, even in the early *sūtras*, the notion of "the Fortunate One's words" (*bhagavato vacanam*) is broad enough to include the preachings of his disciples. This extended meaning is justified on the grounds that the disciples derived their own teachings from his literal words.[58]

This expanded sense of "the Fortunate One's words," which includes material based on his teachings but not literally said by him, reveals something critical because it reflects the actual textual practices that governed both the growth of existing *sūtras* and the production of new ones (though we should be cautious about assuming that the original statement was meant so broadly). For example, the new passage added to the Gāndhārī *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* was derived from ma-

[56]Skilling 2013a: 18 n. 53 points us to several examples. See *Suttanipāta* 11.202, p. 35, ll. 1-2: *sutvāna buddhavacanaṃ bhikkhu paññṇavā idha | so kho maṃ parijānāti yathābhūtaṃ hi passati*; *Saññojanasutta*, Saṃyuttanikāya, vol. 4, p. 283, ll. 18-19: *lābhā te gahapati suladdhaṃ te gahapati yasse te gambhīre buddhavacane paññācakkhu kamatī ti*. See also Pāli Vinaya, Suttavibhaṇga, Pācittiya, 21.1, vol. 4, p. 54, ll. 21-24: *atha kho āyasmā cūḷapanthako vehāsaṃ abbhuggantvā ākāse antalikkhe caṅkamati pi tiṭṭhati pi nisīdati pi seyyam pi kappeti dhūmāyati pi pajjalati pi antarāpi dhāyati taṅ ñeva udānaṃ bhaṇati aññañ ca bahuṃ buddhavacanaṃ*. One other Vinaya passage uses the term *buddhavacana*; see especially Levman 2008-2009.

[57]See, for example, *Mahālisuttanta*, Dīghanikāya vol. 1, p. 158 or *Sallekhasutta* Majjhimanikāya vol. 1, p. 46.

[58]See, for example, Aṅguttaranikāya, vol. 4, p. 164, ll. 7-10: *evam eva kho devānam inda yaṃ kiñci subhāsitaṃ sabban taṃ tassa bhagavato vacanaṃ arahato sammāsambuddhassa tato upādāy' upādāya mayaṅ c' aññe ca bhaṇāmā' ti*. "In this way, Lord of the Gods, whatever is well spoken, all that is the words of the Buddha, the Arhat, the Fully Awakened One. Whenever I or others preach, what we say is derived from [his words]." The translation is from Collins 1990: 94 with some small modifications.

terial held to be *buddhavacana*. The same is equally true of the *Zengyi jing*. Despite a common commitment to the idea of the first *saṅgīti*, an important arbiter of authenticity was intertextual consistency as determined, we may presume, by the various recitation lineages. The same sort of emphasis is felt in the instructions associated with the Mahāpadeśas ("Great Authorities"), an old framework for assessing unfamiliar material represented as the Buddha's words.[59] Whenever a monk reports a new teaching to the community, whether claiming to have heard it directly from the Fortunate One's lips or mediately through another monk or group of monks, the community is required, at least normatively speaking, to compare it against the communally accepted body of *sūtras* and Vinaya texts (later versions would add a third criteria: conformity with *dharmatā* or "reality").[60] If it proves consistent, it may be declared authentic; if not, it is to be rejected. Although this framework is attributed to the Buddha, it presumably developed within an institutional setting without a definitive source of personal authority. Whether or not these standards were ever applied in a methodical fashion, they reveal a pragmatic approach towards authority that was not dogmatically limited by the notion that *buddhavacana* was collected immediately after the Buddha's death, creating space thereby for the modification and production of texts to proceed in accordance with regionally or institutionally specific boundaries of acceptability.

My hypothesis about the way in which *buddhavacana* was conceptualized is bolstered by traditional discussions concerning the standard introductory sections found at the beginning of *sūtras* (i.e., "Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was residing at such-and-such a place…"). These

[59] *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, Dīghanikāya, vol. 2, p. 123-126. The relevant passage and its subsequent reformulations have been studied in Lamotte 1947, Davidson 1990: 300, An 2002, and Skilling 2010: 4-5. A parallel is found at Aṅguttaranikāya, Sañcetanikavagga, vol. 2, pp. 167-170. The presumably Dharmaguptaka parallel from the Dīrghāgama is found at T.1, 17b29-18a22. Another version is found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya at T.1451, 389b21-390b04.

[60] Silk 2020b cautions that the terms *sūtra* and Vinaya may not have been "originally intended to specify actual textual corpora," though, as he notes, they "came to be understood in this sense by some." Note also that only the Chinese parallels make explicit that the ultimate source must be the Buddha. See T.1, 17c03-04: 我於彼村彼城彼國躬從佛聞躬受是教. See also T.1451, 389b23-25: 我從如來親聞是語聞已憶持。說斯經典說此律教。眞是佛語.

brief introductions are generally attributed to the participants in the first council.[61] But, as Gregory Schopen has shown, a passage in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya suggests that they were viewed with some flexibility. If forgotten, one could simply add a formulaic introduction and present a *sūtra* as having been taught at one of the places where the Buddha spent a significant amount of time.[62] Similar passages are found in the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya and the Ekottarikāgama preserved in Chinese.[63] The instruction to supply introductory material indicates that the perceived truth value of a teaching was more important than a commitment to historicity. The identification of *buddhavacana* was left up to communal sanction, which, being liable to change over time and place, opened up the possibility for new and existing teachings to assume *sūtra*-status and, at least logically speaking, licensed intervention into the transmission of the Buddha's words.

The Buddhist traditions rarely thematize the other *sūtra*-content that is explicitly *not* spoken by the Buddha, whether narrative elements or the words of his interlocutors.[64] There is a slippery and unexamined equivalence between complex definite texts and the distinct teachings that they contain. Some scholars have argued that monks adopted a more liberal approach to the transmission of narrative incidentals while remaining resistant to the modification of words directly attributed

[61] For example, the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya, vol. 1, p. 182, ll. 14-16 states: *tathā saṅgītikārair api sthavirais sūtrānta upanibaddhaṃ bhagavān śrāvastyāṃ viharati jetavane 'nāthapiṇḍadasyārāme iti*. This type of attribution is noted in Skilling 2010: 39.

[62] Schopen 1997, who cites and translates the Tibetan version of this passage. Note that, in this version, there are several guidelines meant to govern which location and interlocutor should ultimately be chosen. See also T.1451, 238c15-c20.

[63] Anālayo 2009: 822-823 points us to several examples. See T.1425, 497a7: 若忘説處者。是八大城趣擧一. See also T.125, 550b13-b14: 正使不得説經處。當稱原本在舍衞。吾所從聞一時事。佛在舍衞及弟子. For a Sarvāstivāda account, see T.1458, 575b29-c1: 若講誦時忘其因縁所在方處者。於六大城隨一應説.

[64] But note *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, vol. 1, p. 12, ll. 14-25: *kiṃ pan' ettha paṭhamapārājike kiñci apanetabbaṃ vā pakkhipitabbaṃ vā āsi n' āsīti | budhassa bhagavato bhāsite apanetabbaṃ nāma n' atthi | na hi tathāgatā eka vyañjanam pi niratthakaṃ vadanti | sāvakānaṃ pana devatānaṃ vā bhāsite apanetabbaṃ pi hoti | taṃ dhammasaṃgāhakā therā apanayaiṃsu | pakkhipitabbaṃ pana sabbathāpi atthi tasmā yaṃ yattha pakkhipituṃ yuttaṃ tam pi pakkhipiṃsu yeva | kiṃ pana tan ti | tena samayenāti vā tena kho pana samayenāti vā atha kho iti vā evaṃ vutte ti vā etad avocāti vā evamādikaṃ sambandhavacanamattaṃ evaṃ pakkhipitabbayuttaṃ pakkhipitvā pana idaṃ paṭhamaṃ pārājikan' ti ṭhapesuṃ*. Here Buddhaghosa admits that certain types of connecting words were added by the elders who collected the teachings and recited them at the first communal recitation, at least insofar as this part of the Vinaya is concerned.

to the Buddha, but the evidence is inconclusive.[65] There are, moreover, reasons to suspect that these types of distinctions had little bearing, at least at times, on the conceptualization of definite texts as "*buddhavacana*." Traditional accounts attribute all but the introductory sentence to the first council, constituting entire works as theoretically unified entities.[66]

I have already considered the relatively conservative transmission of the early *sūtras*, which was governed by a widely shared commitment to intertextual consistency. Whether this general attitude ever translated into a strict notion of canonicity is, in the case of most monastic orders, impossible to determine. The Theravāda is unique because the commentator Buddhaghosa provides us with a catalog of canonical texts forming the (or rather a) definitive Tripiṭaka, but even here we do not know whether or to what degree this list reflects the formalization of a preexisting consensus. As for the other orders, all that can be said is that the notional commitment to the idea of the first *saṅgīti* appears to have limited the number of new Āgamic *sūtras* that were produced and the ways in which existing ones could be modified, but we do not know whether these groups closed their collections or fixed the forms of their *sūtras*.

The problem of the Sūtrapiṭaka is further complicated by the status of the somewhat miscellaneous Kṣudraka collections. Buddhaghosa is unequivocal in assigning this material *buddhavacana* status, specifying that it includes whatever "words of the Buddha" were left over after the other four divisions were compiled.[67] From a critical perspective, it is clear that the Pāli Khuddaka contains a diverse body of material, including some very old collections of verses. It also contains a versified collection of Jātakas ("Tales of the Buddha's Former Lives") as well as more recent commentarial

[65] Anālayo 2011, vol. 2: 886-887, esp. nn. 138 and 139 advances the view that speech directly attributed to the Buddha is more stable, and Allon 2021: 73-93 and 104 complicates this position with counter examples.

[66] For example, see *Cullavagga* 9, Pāli Vinaya, vol. 2, pp. 284-308.

[67] *Samantapāsādikā* in Jayawickrama 1962: 147, ll. 10-12: *tattha khuddakanikāyo nāma cattāro nikāye ṭhapetvā avasesaṃ buddhavacanaṃ*.

material and two long hagiographical texts that appear to date from the last century or so BCE. The Vinayas of the other monastic orders often catalog the supposed contents of their respective Kṣudrakapiṭakas.[68] (Recall that this is not the case for their other Āgama collections.) Yet these may be no more than notional lists; it seems that, outside of Sri Lanka, monastic groups used this category flexibly.[69] Salomon has shown that the collection of karmic narratives known as the *Anavataptagāthā* ("Song of Lake Anavatapta") was likely taken as a *sūtra* of the Kṣudraka class in ancient Gandhāra despite not appearing in any known list of Kṣudraka texts.[70]

Buddhaghosa reveals that even among Theravādins there was a certain degree of ambivalence towards the Khuddaka. He reports that that the reciters (*bhāṇaka-*) responsible for the Dīghanikāya did not consider it part of the Sūtrapiṭaka, assigning it instead to the Abhidhammapiṭaka. They also rejected three Khuddaka texts outright: the two long hagiographies and a collection of narratives called the *Apadāna*.[71] The reciters of the Majjhimanikāya, per contra, accepted all three as *buddhavacana* and took the miscellaneous collection to be a division of the Sūtrapiṭaka. A similar ambivalence towards the Khuddaka is reflected in the *Dīpavaṃsa* (3rd or 4th c. CE), which reports that the Mahāsāṅghika order rejected a number of Khuddaka texts accepted by the Theravādins, including "a part of the Jātaka."[72] This is presumably a specific reference to the *Jātakapāḷi* — that is, the verse text accepted by Buddhaghosa as part of the Pāli canon — because the Mahāsāṅghikas clearly held their own Jātakas to be authoritative. Their Vinaya, which is preserved only in Chinese, incorporates many Jātaka-type tales narrated by the Buddha, who frequently refers his listeners to

[68] A summary of relevant sources is given in Lamotte 1958: 174-178.

[69] Lamotte 1958: 178: "Les bouddhistes du continent, quoi qu'en disent les récits du premier concile, se sont bornés à dresser des listes de Kṣudraka sans aboutir jamais à former une collection définitive."

[70] Salomon 2008: 18.

[71] *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* 42, vol. 1, p. 15. See also Adikaram 1946: 27.

[72] *Dīpavaṃsa* 5.36-37, pp. 36-37. See Cousins 2013: 113-118 for a translation and discussion of this passage.

further Jātakas not contained within the Vinaya for further edification.[73]

The Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya's incorporation of (and reference to) these types of narratives suggests that its redactors and transmitters held some of them to be authentic *buddhavacana*. Whether or not this group had some definitive list of "canonical" Jātakas is uncertain, but, unlike the Theravādins, they might not have drawn a sharp distinction between verse summaries and prose commentaries.[74] Whatever the case may be, the importance of these narratives is likewise evident in the *Mahāvastu*, which forms the first chapter of the Vinaya of the Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravādin suborder.[75] This text incorporates a great deal of narrative literature, including many Jātakas; some have parallels in the Theravāda's canonical collection but many do not. Not all monastic orders include narrative literature within their Vinaya, but the tendency was widespread.[76] The enormous Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins incorporates an especially large number of Avadānas (stories that explain the karmic consequences of certain actions) as well as other types of material, including entire *sūtras* and similar texts of uncertain genre classification.[77]

[73]For an example of a Jātaka integrated into the Vinaya, see T.1425, 446a26-b06, where the Buddha tells the story of his former life as an elephant. This and other examples are discussed in Hirakawa [1966] 2000, vol. 2: 361-369, see esp. 368. For an example of an explicit external reference to a Jātaka, see T.1425, 365b20-b21.

[74]Tournier 2017: 78 n. 319 reports that the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya refers explicitly to 25 Jātakas and that the Mahāvastu contains 44. As he points out, it is not possible for us to be certain whether these types of narratives were transmitted in a "collection autonome de récits du passé." Bhavya's *Tarkajvāla* includes a citation from the Jātakapiṭaka (*skyes pa rabs kyi sde snod*) of the Haimavata suborder of the Mahāsāṃghikanikāya. See Eckel 2008: 169 for a translation and 350-351 for the Tibetan text. The fragment appears to be translated from mixed verse and prose. See also Skilling 1997a: 607. Note, however, that the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya's account of the first *saṅgīti* at T.1425, 491c20-c21 states that the Kṣudrakapiṭaka contains versified narratives given by Pratyekabuddhas and Arhats about their previous lives.

[75]Tournier 2012 demonstrates that this text was an integral part of the Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravādin Vinaya. See also Fifield 2017.

[76]The famous translator Kumārajīva remarks on the existence of two types of Vinaya. See T.1509, 756c2-6: 略説有八十部。亦有二分。一者摩偸羅國毘尼含阿波陀那本生有八十部。二者罽賓國毘泥除却本生阿波陀那。但取要用作十部。有八十部毘婆沙解釋. "Briefly put, [the Vinaya] contains 80 sections and is of two types. The first, which is current in Mathura, includes Avadānas and Jātakas has 80 sections. The second, which is current in Kashmir, has eliminated the Jātakas and Avadānas. It retains only the essentials and contains ten sections, [though] it has an eighty-part commentary." See Sujato 2012: 136 for another translation of this passage.

[77]The standard definition of Avadāna needs to be given more nuance in light of recently discovered evidence from Gandhāra, including a number of narratives that do not appear to address the workings of *karma*. See Lenz 2010, esp. 1-14.

The histories of these materials, both as independent narrative traditions and as integral aspects of certain Vinaya transmissions, are topics of utmost importance, but I cannot do justice to their complexity here. I want only to emphasize that many Buddhist communities, including a number of groups responsible for the transmission of Vinaya material, accepted various types of narrative traditions as *buddhavacana*. We must therefore remain sensitive to the fact that a great deal of relatively fluid material attributed to the Buddha was circulating among Buddhist communities, surely not only Jātakas but other types as well, in addition to the relatively well defined corpora of Āgamic *sūtras*, especially because, as we will see, these same narrative forms seemingly served as one of the building blocks used by the authors and redactors of many Mahāyāna *sūtras*, to which I now turn.

1.4 Categorical Problems

The orientations that governed the composition and transmission of different types of *buddhavacana* stand in a degree of tension, forming a spectrum that encompasses both the largely conservative approach to Āgamic *sūtras* and the far more fluid proliferation of narrative literature. Texts standing at both poles were, at least some of the time, held to be the "words of the Buddha," and, excepting the Theravādin case, we cannot always be certain whether or in what contexts the distinction between genres mattered with respect to the problem of authority. Later scholastics tend to cite *sūtra* texts, perhaps suggesting their theoretical supremacy with respect to doctrine, though differences in content no doubt contributed to this phenomenon. We must also remember that the distinction between genres was not always clear cut. Some *sūtras* are Jātakas, and even the semantic scope of the term "*sūtra*" is, as Allon tells us, sometimes broader and less well defined than its

conventional scholarly usage might suggest.[78]

There are nevertheless ways in which distinctions between textual categories mattered in the context of transmission. A significant number Āgamic *sūtras*, though preserved by geographically and institutionally distinct textual lineages, are remarkably parallel. And although many of these texts were modified or expanded over time, the process of alteration was governed by a shared commitment to intertextual consistency and largely limited to the addition of formulaic language common to the broader Āgamic corpus. New *sūtras* were added by certain groups of reciters, sometimes seemingly through the editorial modification of popular narratives. This phenomenon no doubt points to a somewhat permeable boundary between textual categories, but we must remember that, in the case of the Dīrgha and Madhyama collections, the number of late additions is in fact very small.

Around a century or so before the beginning of the Common Era, a new mass of scriptures begins to appear in the historical record. These texts adopt certain formal genre conventions associated with the *sūtra* class, and the later tradition would call them Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Yet the use of this traditional category for historical analysis, at least for the centuries around the turn of the first millennium, is complicated by the fact that our earliest witnesses employ the term Mahāyāna sparingly and tend not to call themselves *sūtras*, though our ability to draw definitive conclusions is hampered by the fragmentary nature of early Indic manuscripts and the imprecision that characterized their translation into Chinese.[79]

Faced with this challenge, what should we do? Should we reject the category "Mahāyāna *sūtra*"

[78] Allon 2021: 6. For one example of a Jātaka in *sūtra* form, see *Ghaṭīkārasutta*, Majjhimanikāya, vol. 2, p. 45ff.

[79] For some pertinent objections to the use of this category for the period during which these texts first emerge, see Fronsdal 1998: 40-71; 95-98 and Nattier 2003: 193-197. Here I refer to witnesses rather than the texts they contain because the manuscript transmission of Mahāyāna *sūtras* was fluid and their terminology was sometimes updated over time.

out of hand? Or limit its use to a more restricted time frame? These cautious approaches lead to their own problems. Although many of these texts do not call themselves *sūtras*, the same is true of the traditional Āgamas, and, in both cases, there is no debate within the tradition over the appropriateness of this designation.[80] And these new Mahāyāna scriptures almost always open with the type of formulaic introduction that characterizes the *sūtra* genre.[81] The problems presented by the term "Mahāyāna" are perhaps more vexing. But we should not ignore the fact that many do contain this word, even if its appearance is not terribly frequent in the earliest texts, and a significant number develop the notion that the Buddhist path is divided into three *yānas* ("vehicles" or, less literally but often more appropriately, "paths"): those of the *śrāvakas* ("auditors"), *pratyekabuddhas* ("solitary buddhas"), and *bodhisattvas* ("people destined for awakening"). This last word was originally an epithet for the Buddha in his previous lives, but it came to denote all aspirants to buddhahood. In many early texts, as Egil Fronsdal notes, Mahāyāna means simply "the *bodhisattva* vehicle" (*bodhisattvayāna-*).[82]

The rise of *yāna* theology and the creation of a newly reimagined "*śrāvaka*" identity to serve as a foil for the new *bodhisattva* path are undoubtedly important issues that characterize the emergence of Mahāyāna as a conceptually coherent religious orientation, but these and other doctrinal issues will not be my focus here. Many scholars have already attempted to come to terms with the enormous and heterogeneous body of material that came to be categorized as Mahāyāna, usually taking these *sūtras* as a hazy window into some sort of loosely organized religious "movement"

[80] Skilling 2021: 36 notes that many of them call themselves by names like *paripṛcchā* ("inquiry"), *nirdeśa* ("exposition"), *samādhi* ("concentration"), *vyākaraṇa* ("prediction [of future Buddhahood]"), though, at least traditionally, these are all seen as subcategories of *sūtra*. The texts often internally use *dharmaparyāya* (also commonly used by Āgamic texts), while the tradition frequently uses *sūtrānta*.

[81] Although this opening is not strictly limited to *sūtras*, it is, as Salomon notes, at least suggestive. See Salomon 2008: 17.

[82] Fronsdal argues that we should call these early texts *bodhisattvasūtras*. See also note 4 on p. 31 for Karashima's study on the original meaning of the term "Mahāyāna."

or "movements." The dominant approach has been to look for common themes expressed in these new texts. For example, Paul Harrison suggests that these scriptures coalesce around "the doctrine of emptiness, the perfection of wisdom and the five other perfections, skill-in-means, and, above all, the career of the *bodhisattva*, the aspirant to awakening or buddhahood."[83]

What can be said, from a historical standpoint, is that, irrespective of the problems connected with the category "Mahāyāna," something new was happening with these texts. Their authors present (or at least seem to present) their compositions as *sūtras*, incorporating, as noted, certain characteristic features specific to this material. Yet, in other ways, many of these texts do not conform to certain longstanding genre conventions of that category. They seem to have no filiation with a traditional Āgama collection. Some were stylistically quite revolutionary. For example, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* ("*Lotus Sūtra*") is almost a bricolage of narratives and stories, jumping between different buddhas and concerns on a sometimes cosmic scale with versified sections running over hundreds of consecutive stanzas in length. It even grants itself near independence from the Buddha by claiming that his awakening (and indeed all awakening) follows from its study, thereby promoting its identity in a way far removed from the notion of collection by the first *saṅgīti*. The *Prajñāpāramitā* ("Perfection of Wisdom") constituted itself as a subgenre that blurred the boundaries between mental attainment and definite text, engendering a seemingly unlimited expansion and contraction of a common textual core; different versions of the *Prajñāpāramitā* eventually stretched from a single verse to 100,000 stanzas. Yet it is critical that we do not overemphasize these more revolutionary *sūtras*; a great number of other texts that would come to be called Mahāyāna hew closely, both stylistically and doctrinally, to the Āgamic corpus.[84]

[83]Harrison 1987: 73. Note that I have removed the parenthetical Sanskrit words from Harrison's quotation. A somewhat different set of core issues is given in Nattier 2003: 190-192.

[84]One might mention the *Śālistambasūtra*, *Ugraparipṛcchā*, *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*, or the *Jayamatiparipṛcchā*. Note

There is a diversity here that suggests a newly found freedom in how Buddhists engaged with doctrinal and narrative traditions when producing new instances of an important category of *buddhavacana*, though it must be emphasized that these texts remain in many ways firmly rooted in the traditional corpus. We are looking at evolution rather than revolution — an evolution that represents the triumph, at least among certain monks, of more fluid modes of textual production over the conservative tendencies that characterized the transmission of the Āgamic *sūtras*, though the attitudinal factors governing the creation of these new texts developed out of ideas present in the early tradition. What distinguishes these two contexts is, first of all, the degree to which the flexible definition of *buddhavacana* was put into practice, and, second, the scope of material that was considered appropriate for the production of scriptural texts.

There are several challenges that complicate any effort to come to terms with the early history of Mahāyāna *sūtras* (a category that I will continue to use heuristically) as a general phenomenon. It is often said, for example, that the earliest among them were composed in the first century BCE, but this date is no more than a guess based on a firm *terminus ante quem*. We have a Gāndhārī *Prajñāpārmitā* manuscript that may be dated to the first century CE, and it appears to be a copy made from an earlier exemplar.[85] We have three other first- or second-century manuscripts from Gandhāra, including two that contain texts that are otherwise unknown.[86] A number of Mahāyāna *sūtras* were translated into Chinese during the second century.[87] Many of these materials seem to presuppose a relatively long period of development, both textually and conceptually, but can we really know how long? By what method could we seek to make a judgment, especially for a period

that these texts mention *bodhisattvas* and, in the case of the latter three, advocate the *bodhisattva* path. See also Skilling 2021, esp. 163-467, which contains translations of 25 short *sūtras*, some of which challenge the notion that Mahāyāna texts diverge substantially from earlier *sūtras*.

[85]Falk 2011: 20 and Karashima and Falk 2012: 19 and 22-23.

[86]Strauch 2018: 208-211.

[87]Harrison 1987 and Nattier 2008, both *passim*.

during which Mahāyāna was yet to emerge as an expressed textual identity? The scope of the early stages of this phenomenon (or these phenomena?) is equally difficult to get at.[88] For example, the so-called Bajaur Mahāyāna *sūtra*, which I have counted above among the early Gāndhārī materials, contains extensive discussions concerning the emptiness of all *dharmas* and the *bodhisattva* career, both considered by scholars to be indicative of a Mahāyāna orientation.[89] But, given that this text never uses the term Mahāyāna, would it be safer to categorize it as containing ideas that contributed to what Mahāyāna would eventually become?[90] Is that what we mean, at least in some cases, when we call something an "early Mahāyāna *sūtra*"?

David Drewes reports that over 100 Mahāyāna *sūtras* had been translated into Chinese by the fourth century, while Daniel Boucher tells us that "by the end of the third century, translations [of Mahāyāna scriptures] number in the hundred."[91] The enormity of these figures is striking, especially given that translated texts must represent only a small fraction of the total produced within the Indian cultural sphere. (By way of comparison, the Long- and Middle-Length collections of the Pāli canon together contain 186 *sūtras*.) The situation may be more complicated given that, as Skilling notes in another context, the category-markers found in translation catalogues might sometimes be *ex post facto* impositions.[92] We should exercise caution given that we know, albeit very little, of *sūtras* that circulated outside Āgamic collections and were not affiliated with the Mahāyāna.[93] For example, the fourth- or fifth-century philosopher Vasubandhu mentions an "in-

[88] Silk 2002: 371 suggests that we "speak of these Mahāyānas in the plural."

[89] Strauch 2018.

[90] Note, however, that it is only fragmentarily preserved.

[91] Drewes 2018: 78 and Boucher 2008: xvi.

[92] Skilling 2021: 36 speaks of the addition of *mahāyānasūtra* to the titles of texts preserved within the Tibetan Kanjurs.

[93] Hallisey 1990 discusses an interesting example from Sri Lanka. Skilling 2010: 33-34 points out certain *sūtras* apparently affiliated with the Sarvāstivāda that may have been transmitted outside an Āgamic collection, though, in the absence of complete records, we cannot say for sure. Note also the **Caturdharmakasūtra*, which, as noted by Skilling, was classified as belonging to the Hīnayāna by the Tibetan catalogers. See Skilling 2021: 164.

dependent *sūtra*" (*muktakasūtra-*), though it is not clear what this designation means or whether it points to a definite text rather than a brief statement.[94] Could some of the texts that would come to be called Mahāyāna *sūtras* have fallen into this category? Is it possible that the Tibetan and Chinese tendencies to categorize nearly all non-Āgamic *sūtras* as belonging to the Mahāyāna is the product of subsequent systematizing?[95]

I cannot devote more energy to these important problems because I want to focus on the emergence of these texts themselves rather than on problems connected with the category "Mahāyāna." (The use of "Mahāyāna" in commentaries and philosophically oriented writings is another important topic that I cannot discuss here.) We have good reason to think that some of the people who produced and transmitted early Mahāyāna *sūtras* felt themselves to be dealing with material that did not fully fit within the boundaries of the traditional Āgamas. This becomes clear when we look at some of the earliest Chinese translation catalogs, where a number of "Mahāyāna *sūtras*" are qualified by the obscure category-marker *weiyueluo* (遺曰羅).[96] Seishi Karashima has recently offered a reconstruction of this term as **vevulla*, which, he suggests, evolved from an original **vedulla*, a Middle Indic variant of the Sanskrit *vaitulya*. In translation, this word is usually rendered as *fangdeng* (方等; "well balanced"), a term frequently found as a category-marker for Mahāyāna *sūtras*

[94]*Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on 3.94a, vol. 1, p. 429, l. 13: *ṣaṣṭiḥ sthānāntarāṇy asaṃkhyeyam iti muktakasūtraṃ paṭhyate*. See the related sub-commentary *Abhidharmakośasphuṭārthavyākhyā*, vol. 1, p. 429, l. 32: *muktakam iti | na caturāgamāntargatam ity arthaḥ*. Given that Vasubandhu uses the accusative (*sūtram*) rather than the locative, it seems possible that "*sūtra*" here is a discrete element of teaching that does not appear in a larger text. See the usage cited in *Abhidharmakośasphuṭārthavyākhyā* on 3.28, p. 357, ll. 19-21: *śālistambam avalokya bhikṣubhyaḥ sūtram idam uktam | yo bhikṣavaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṃ paśyati sa dharmaṃ paśyati yo dharmaṃ paśyati sa buddhaṃ paśyatīty uktvā bhagavāṃs tūṣṇīmbabhūva | tad asya bhagavatā bhāṣitasya sūtrasya ko 'rthaḥ*. But see also the sub-commentary on p. 309, ll. 17-18: *kaśmīre bhavāḥ kāśmīrakāś ca sūtraṃ paṭhantīti | muktakaṃ tat sūtraṃ ta eva paṭhanti teṣām iti vistaraḥ*.

[95]Consider the *sūtras* mentioned in Nattier 2008: 130-132. Skilling 2021: 35-36 brings up a number of important and related points. He likewise questions the unexamined application of the title *sūtra* for texts that never use it self-referentially.

[96]For an Early Han period phonetic reconstruction, see Karashima 2015a: 118. For a Late Han period one, see Schuessler 2009, cited in Karashima. Karashima 2015a: 117-132 and 136-137 provides a comprehensive analysis that demonstrates the appearance of **vedulla* and its cognates in the titles of the earliest Chinese translations of Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

in Chinese translation catalogs.

Karashima and Skilling have separately drawn attention to the fact that a number of important Mahāyāna *sūtras* originally included **vedulla* or another equivalent term in their titles.[97] For example, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* ("Lotus of the True Dharma," i.e. *Lotus Sūtra*) refers to itself as the **Saddharmapuṇḍarīkavaitulyadharmaparyāya* (正法華方等經典) in its earliest extant Chinese translation (286 CE).[98] Another important Mahāyāna text, which is commonly known as the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, was apparently called the **Vevu*[*lla*]*maṇiratnadharmaparyāya* (遺日摩尼寶經) when it was first rendered into Chinese (179 CE).[99] The oldest extant catalogue of Chinese translations tells us that Lokakṣema (fl. 147-189 CE) translated a *Prajñāpāramitā* text called the **Vevu*[*lla*]*prajñāpāramitā* (遺日說般若經).[100] And in the earliest Chinese translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (179 CE), we find the Buddha to say:

> As for the *dharmas* I have taught you, excepting the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the **Mahopāyakauśalya*, and the various **vevulla* [teachings], those that I usually teach and that you have received, supposing you were to forget them completely, even in that case, it would be no more than a minor fault.[101]

There is a degree of uncertainty to this statement. Are the first two categories also *vaitulya* texts, or do they form some separate group? Whatever the case may be, *vaitulya* teachings are explicitly set apart from the usual, presumably Āgamic, *sūtras*. This explicit claim to uniqueness

[97] See Skilling 2013b and Karashima 2015a. Karashima explains that the term *vaitulya* was often later replaced by the word *vaipulya*, or "extensive," no doubt a semantic development related to the great length of certain Mahāyāna *sūtras*. *Vaipulya* was, in turn, often replaced by Mahāyāna. The examples mentioned here are all discussed in Karashima 2015a.

[98] See, for example, T.263, 91c23-24. It also uses the similar title 法華方等正經. These and other instances are discussed in Karashima 2015a: 124-125. I follow Karashima in translating 經 as *dharmaprayāya*.

[99] Karashima 2015a: 117 emends 遺日 to 遺曰. This appears to be an abbreviated transliteration. The fuller form is given within the text itself, where we find 遺日羅, which he reconstructs as **vevulla*. See T.350, 190c15.

[100] Karashima 2015a: 126 draws our attention to Sengyou's entry at T.2145, 6b14.

[101] T.224, 468c11-c14: 我爲汝所說經。捨置般若波羅蜜。摩訶漚悉拘舍羅及諸摩訶惟曰羅。我每所說餘經。汝所受。設 (corr. [Karashima]：說：Taisho) 令悉散悉亡。雖有是。其過少耳. See Karashima 2011: 441 n. 25 and 26 for the critically edited text, another translation, and important notes on phonetic reconstructions. My translation basically follows his, though he seems to take the *Prajñāpāramitā* as a category that contains the *Mahopāyakauśalya* and the *vevulla* teachings.

is reflected in their categorization under the name **vedulla*, which, Karashima argues, originally meant something like "not comparable" or "different."[102]

The term *vaitulya* (or, more accurately, **vedulla*) is very old. We find the cognate form *vedalla* in several Pāli *suttas*, where it serves as one of the nine "limbs" (*aṅga-*) into which the Buddha's teaching is sometimes divided.[103] Unlike *vedalla*, the other members of this list are relatively transparent, for instance: *sutta* ("[*Pāṭimokkha*]*sutta*"), *veyyākaraṇa* ("explanatory teachings"), *gāthā* ("verses"), *jātaka*, and so on.[104] The Theravādin commentarial tradition equivocates over the meaning of *vedalla*, at times associating it with *sūtras* that involve a long series of questions and answers.[105] Only two Pāli *suttas* include the word *vedalla* in their title, and, as Karashima tells us, these names are likely relatively recent and do not provide definitive evidence for the original meaning of this term.[106]

Several scholars have noted that the Pāli canon contains a unique *sutta* that speaks of the future danger of *vedallakathā* ("*vedalla*-talk"), cautioning that it will cause monks to fall into a dark *dharma*.[107] It goes on to introduce a seemingly related criticism of monks who "yearn to hear those *sūtras* that are poetry composed by poets, possessed of variegated phrasing, heretical, spoken by disciples."[108] This passage poses several difficulties. It is not clear, at least from a theoretical perspective, why material "spoken by disciples" would present a problem given that the standard sources of Dharma and the extended definition of *buddhavacana* both include it as authoritative,

[102] Karashima 2015a: 137.

[103] There is some debate over the original extent of this list. See v. Hinüber 1994 and Anālayo 2016. See especially v. Hinüber's discussion on the meaning of *sutta* in this context.

[104] Here I am following v. Hinüber 1994 in interpreting the meaning of *sutta*, though others disagree with him.

[105] See Karashima 2015a: 133. See also Skilling 2013b: 86.

[106] Karashima 2015a: 133 n. 58.

[107] This passage is discussed in Skilling 2013b: 87 and Karashima 2015a: 133.

[108] Aṅguttaranikāya vol. 3, p. 107, ll. 18-21: *ye pana te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittakkharā cittavyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsitā tesu bhaññamānesu sussusissanti sotaṃ odahissanti aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhapessanti*. See Karashima 2015a: 134 for another translation.

at least under certain circumstances.[109] Yet this description reflects, in a certain sense, both the Theravādin commentarial tradition's definition of *vedalla* and the form taken by many, though not all, early Mahāyāna *sūtras*. In any event, the core criticism is clear: these texts are poetic artifices that do not adhere closely to the traditional texts and were produced by ordinary human beings.

It is striking, as Karashima notes, that several Mahāyāna *sūtras* predict that future monks will criticize them in precisely the same words, expressing thereby significant anxiety over their own reception.[110] The *Aṣṭasāhāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā* warns that Māra, the great deceiver, will disguise himself as a monk and claim that its teachings "are not the words of the Buddha; they are poetry produced by poets."[111] The *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra* ("Samādhi Standing Face to Face with the Buddhas of the Present") cautions that misguided monks will claim that, as Paul Harrison translates, "*sūtras* like this are fabrications, they are poetic inventions; they were not spoken by the Buddha, nor were they authorized by the Buddha."[112] The *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* explains that immoral beings will claim that "this teaching is not the word of the Buddha; it was spoken by Māra."[113] I will discuss a similar statement that appears in the *Lotus Sūtra* below (pp. 88-90), and more examples could be given. Critically, these types of statements are also found in relatively short texts concerning monastic discipline that contain none of the "fantastic" or "non-historical" elements often emphasized as differentiating the supposedly new Mahāyāna imaginary from that of the traditional *sūtras*.[114]

[109] See Lamotte 1947: 214-216. Graeme MacQueen and Jan Nattier have both drawn far-reaching conclusions from the fact that the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* is partially taught by a disciple named Subhūti, albeit in the Buddha's presence, and that the text expressly mentions that whatever is taught by the *śrāvakas* should be taken as the work of the Buddha himself. See MacQueen 1982 and Nattier 2010: 12-13 n. 3.

[110] Karashima 2015a: 134-135.

[111] See *Aṣṭasāhāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 17, p. 328, ll. 12. The corresponding passage in Lokakṣema's early translation is given in Karashima 2011: 309; note that here there is no reference to poets, only "external matters" (餘外事).

[112] See Harrison 1990: 56. The Tibetan may be found in Harrison 1978: 63, p. 52.

[113] *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra* 7.23, ll. 11-12. See p. 202 of Lamotte's edition for the French translation.

[114] See, for instance, the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchāsūtra* p. 28, ll. 15-16: *kavitāni haiva svamatāni pāpam ataiḥ kutīrthakamataiś ca | bhāṣeta no jina kadācit vācam imāṃ hi bhikṣuparibhāṣām*. This verse is translated in Boucher 2008:

Scholars often take this type of rhetoric as pointing to Mahāyāna's "embattled" status as a religious movement — a position that Gregory Schopen has sought to support with evidence external to the *sūtras*, noting that, prior to about the sixth century, there are no inscriptional references "to gifts or patronage extended to an explicitly named Mahāyāna or Mahāyāna groups."[115] But his argument from absence is inconclusive because, as noted, early "Mahāyāna" scriptures use this term infrequently, especially self-referentially, and there is likewise nothing to suggest that Mahāyāna groups ever formed institutionally distinct entities that might serve as recipients of pious donations. In other words, their absence from the inscriptional record is relatively unsurprising. As a consequence, we are left to interpret these prophetic warnings as expressing anxieties specifically related to these new scriptures, their doctrines, and the textual practices employed during their production. (We should take care, however, not to assume that these critical statements are relevant for all texts that would come to be called Mahāyāna.) How else can we explain the specific concern with the accusation that these texts are mere poetry?

Trying to understand what exactly provoked this anxiety about the reception of certain Mahāyāna *sūtras* is complicated by the fact that the conditions governing their composition and reception probably depended on regional- and community-specific conditions that are entirely hidden from us. (Note Jonathan Silk's suggestion that we begin by thinking of each Mahāyāna *sūtra* as pointing to a different community of authors.)[116] We ought not simply ignore the fact that most textual

137. *Ratnarāśisūtra* 7.25 in Silk 1994: 382, 500-501, and 633-634 states (in Silk's translation): "But nevertheless, when they hear such teachings they understand that they have offended against what I established, and they think to slander it saying: 'These are not what was spoken by the Buddha, but rather they are one's own personal fabrications, or created by Māra to cause havoc." Tola and Dragonetti 1996: 237 cites a passage from the *Adhyāśayasaṃcodana*. See T.310, 528b11-b13: 說如是言。此諸經典皆是世俗。善文詞者之所製造。非是如來之所宣說. "[Māra, disguised as a monk] said these words: 'All these scriptures are nothing but worldly prattle. They are the compositions of people skilled with language (**kavi* ?). They are not the words of the Tathāgata."' Tola and Dragonetti provide a slightly different translation.

[115]Schopen 2000, esp 12-13. See also Walser 2005: 16. For some nuanced thoughts on the issue of Mahāyāna's status during the early period, see Ruegg 2004: 17-18 and esp. n. 23.

[116]Silk 2002: 369-370. I should note that Silk raises a number of important questions about the methodological

lineages modified their traditional *sūtras*, augmented their Vinayas, and composed Abhidharma works, at least a certain points in time. Other types of material, for instance Jātakas, were seemingly transmitted, composed, and recomposed somewhat freely. (We also do not know how the redaction of a particular version of a Jātaka into a Vinaya text might have affected the authority of other versions of the same narrative.) It is therefore reasonable to ask why certain Mahāyāna *sūtras* were different, at least in the rhetoric that they adopt.

Vasubandhu provides us with a vantage point for thinking about this problem, though it is admittedly anachronistic. His work, moreover, is far removed from the context of scriptural production and was likely motivated by very different goals. His *Vyākhyāyukti* ("Proper Arguments for Exegesis"), preserved only in Tibetan, is chiefly concerned with the exegesis of Āgamic *sūtras*, but it also contains a lengthy excursus on the status of Mahāyāna scriptures, which it identifies with the *vaipulya*-limb (a later variant of *vaitulya*) of the Buddha's teachings.[117] Vasubandhu raises a hypothetical objection: Mahāyāna texts cannot be identified with one of the limbs of the Buddha's teaching, indeed cannot be called the "words of the Buddha," because they contradict the *buddhavacana* accepted by all monastic orders.[118]

Vasubandhu's objector focuses on the problem of intertextual consistency in matters of doctrine, adducing several passages from Mahāyāna scriptures, including: "All *dharmas* have no inherent nature. They are neither arisen nor destroyed. All *dharmas* are tranquil from the beginning. They are by their very nature completely liberated."[119] He argues that this set of notions contradicts the

viability of taking the rhetoric of Mahāyāna texts as reflective of some underlying "historical reality." See Silk 2019: 273-274.

[117] *Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 159, l. 27 to 156 l. 1. Vasubandhu's definition of *vaipulya* is discussed and translated in Skilling 2000: 320-321 and mentioned in Cabezón 1992: 226.

[118] *Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 176, ll. 1-7: *shin tu rgyas pa'i sde ni theg pa chen po yin no* | *zhes gang bshad pa yang lung dang 'gal ba yin te* | … | *ji ltar sangs rgyas kyi gsung ma yin zhe na* | *'gal ba'i phyir te* | *de ni sde pa thams cad la grags pa'i sangs rgyas kyi gsung dang 'gal ba yin no*. This passage is discussed in Skilling 2000: 322.

[119] *Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 176, ll. 9-11: *chos thams cad ni rang bzhin med pa* | *ma skyes pa ma 'gags pa* | *chos thams cad*

teachings of the Āgamic *sūtras*, which regularly emphasize the arising and ceasing of conditioned factors. Much of the *Vyākhyāyukti*'s fourth chapter is devoted to showing why this contradiction is only apparent. The objector also makes an argument on the basis of what might be called canonicity, explaining that Mahāyāna texts cannot be *buddhavacana* because they are not included within the material generally accepted as such by all monastic orders (here, unlike above, emphasizing the putative boundaries of the collection itself rather than its content).[120] But, as Vasubandhu points out, this definition cannot work because the orders simply do not transmit the same set of texts.[121]

Vasubandhu's opponent presupposes an idealized sense of canonicity that does not, as Vasubandhu notes, correspond with reality. This same disconnect is again emphasized when the objector tries to argue that Mahāyāna scriptures do not conform with the *sūtras*, are not consistent with the Vinaya, and contradict reality (here employing the traditional criteria for judging *buddhavacana* mentioned on p. 45). When pressed on what exactly is meant by *sūtra* and Vinaya, the objector specifies that he means specifically the material compiled at the first *saṅgīti*.[122] Yet again Vasubandhu points out that the original collection is lost and the monastic orders transmit their own collections, each of which is organized differently and contains different materials.[123] The implication, at least, seems to be that the Mahāyāna *sūtras* might have been collected at the first

ni gzod ma nas zhi ba | *rang bzhin gyis yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa*. This citation is discussed and translated in Skilling 2000: 322. Cabezón 1992: 228-230 calls this type of position an "argument from content."

[120]Cabezón 1992: 226-228 calls these "structural arguments."

[121]*Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 227, ll. 12-23. Vasubandhu points out that certain *sūtras* are not accepted by the Saṃmitīyas and Mahīśāsakas. He also notes that the Vinaya and Abhidharma texts diverge from one another. Gold 2015: 119-120 translates the beginning of this passage.

[122]*Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 228, ll. 11-13: *yang dag par sdud par byed pa rnams kyis mdo sde 'am* | *'dul ba yang dag par bsdus pa gang yin pa dang* | *de gnyis *la* (corr. [D.107a1] : *las* : Ed.) *grags pa'i chos rnams kyi mtshan nyid kyi chos nyid gang yin pa'o*. More precisely, Vasubandhu speaks of the **dharmas* (*chos rnams*) that are established in the texts collected at the *saṅgīti*. See Cabezón 1992: 231-232 for a discussion of this passage and translations of some relevant parts.

[123]Vasubandhu responds by noting that he has has already demonstrated that the basis of the original recitation is lost, which refers back to *Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 209, ll. 1-9. Cabezón 1992: 227 discusses this passage.

saṅgīti or that the communal recitation was not exhaustive.[124]

It is hard to know what to infer from Vasubandhu's arguments. He never suggests that any of the monastic orders transmits Mahāyāna works as authorized *buddhavacana*, though other thinkers present a more complicated view.[125] He is undoubtedly preoccupied with the problems of scriptural loss and the historical preaching of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, but he ultimately deemphasizes these types of concerns as practically irrelevant given the limited state of our knowledge. He accepts, according to José Ignacio Cabezón, an extremely broad and seemingly non-historical definition of *buddhavacana*: it is whatever we find to be consistent, in terms of its overall import, with the *sūtra* concerning the Four Noble Truths, whatever appears within the Vinaya that serves to discipline the afflictions, and whatever does not contradict the reality of dependent origination.[126]

The *Vyākhyāyukti* gives the impression that, with respect to Mahāyāna scriptures, the chief point of contention, at least from the abstract standpoint of intellectual discourse, was doctrinal, though notions about what exactly comprised the institutionally sanctioned "words of the Buddha" also played an important role. Contemporary scholars often emphasize stylistic issues, but the Mahāyāna's hypothetical detractors seem, at least on an explicit level, unconcerned with this aspect of the texts that they reject.[127] In pointing this out, I do not mean to suggest that intertextual stylistic consistency did not play a role in the reception of Mahāyāna *sūtras*; rather, I wish only to suggest that, much like historical criteria, these concerns were largely subordinated to matters of doctrine.

[124]The commentaries and philosophical works of later thinkers express many divergent views on the origins of Mahāyāna texts. A number are given in Davidson 1990: 307-308.

[125]See especially the notions of the *bodhisattvapiṭaka* and *vaipulyapiṭaka* attested in Bhāviveka's *Tarkajvālā*, translated in Eckel 2008: 167-169. See also Walser 2005: 52-54 and Skilling 1997a.

[126]*Vyākhyāyukti*, p. 228, ll. 20-22. This passage is translated and discussed in Cabezón 1992: 232, and I follow his understanding here.

[127]Karashima 2015a: 143-144 discusses and translates a non-hypothetical objection aimed at Vasubandhu the "*vaitulika*." See *Vibhāṣāprabhāvṛtti* on *Abhidharmadīpa* 138, p. 101, l. 4; on 299, p. 257, l. 4 to 258, l. 8; on 315, p. 276, l. 4-8.

(Recall that even some of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* that remain stylistically close to the Āgamas also express anxiety about their reception.)

Vasubandhu's relatively flexible definition of *buddhavacana* is carried further in later works, where it is famously claimed that "everything well said was spoken by the Buddha."[128] Yet it must be emphasized that this sentiment is not new — almost precisely the same phrase appears in a Pāli *sūtta* (see n. 58 on p. 44). In that context, it is directly tied to the notion of deriving teachings from the Buddha's literal words, whereas here it seems to be universalized, at least in theory. In other words, this elastic definition of *buddhavacana* is properly understood as the expansion of a conceptual orientation present in the oldest part of the Buddhist corpus, and the same may be hypothesized about the textual practices that drove the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, though the specifics, in both cases, are obscure.

The relationship between Vasubandhu's largely idealized arguments about doctrine and the actual corpus that would come to be defined as Mahāyāna is more or less clear. Many of these new texts emphasized, to varying degrees, the *bodhisattva* path and, perhaps more revolutionarily, the ontology of emptiness. It is more difficult to assess what the objector's attempt to define *buddhavacana* with reference to the the recitation lineages associated with various monastic orders can tell us about historical circumstances. Bracketing the specifics, we might nevertheless note that the transmission, modification, and production of the traditional *sūtras* were all seemingly carried out by well-organized groups of reciters called *bhāṇakas*. Could it be that Mahāyāna *sūtras* were produced outside these circles? Is it possible that independence from these traditional lineages of recitation afforded certain monks greater latitude in the production of *sūtras* while simultaneously

[128] See, for instance, the citation of the *Adhyāśayasaṃcodanasūtra* given in the *Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā* on 9.43, p. 431, l. 16 to p. 432, l. 12, esp. *yat kiṃcin maitreya subhāṣitaṃ sarvaṃ tad buddhabhāṣitam*.

depriving them of communal authority, thereby provoking anxiety about their reception?

Although intuitively appealing, this hypothesis is purely speculative. We know virtually nothing about *bhāṇakas* beyond that they were monks.[129] We know neither how large these groups may have been nor how they may have been organized within a monastery or between monasteries. We do not know how their activities may have varied between time and place. And we cannot say how or whether these traditional *bhāṇakas* had either individual or institutional connections with *dharmabhāṇakas* ("Dharma reciters"), a seemingly distinct group of textual specialists, as David Drewes calls them, mentioned in and perhaps responsible for the transmission of many Mahāyāna *sūtras*.[130] *Dharmabhāṇakas* do not appear in Āgamic *sūtras* or, generally speaking, later Pāli sources. In Mahāyāna *sūtras*, as Drewes again notes, they are always depicted as human preachers of Mahāyāna scriptures.[131]

A number of scholars have suggested that *dharmabhāṇakas* played an important role in the emergence of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, though we know almost nothing of them as historical figures.[132] The title "*dharmabhāṇaka*" is clearly modeled after the traditional *bhāṇaka* designation. It should

[129]Our knowledge of these figures comes primarily from Sri Lanka. They are attested in Sri Lankan inscriptions from about the second century BCE, but these records give no indication of specializations in particular corpora. See Norman 1989: 33 and 1997: 47. Norman's work is discussed in Drewes 2011: 333. Whether or not there were similarly named figures in India is a subject of some dispute. There are Indian epigraphical references to unspecialized *bhāṇakas* beginning from the first century BCE, but no commentarial literature from India mentions them. See, for example, CII 2:2 A39, A54a, A59, A61, A62, and A63. This list, along with several others, are given by Nance 2008: 149 n. 7. Drewes 2011: 333 n. 6 gives further references. Salomon 2018: 95-99 has argued that the particular character of recently discovered manuscript evidence from Gandhāra indicates that oral transmission was likely the principal mode through which Āgamic *sūtras* were preserved in India until around the second or third century CE. In the Theravāda tradition, *bhāṇakas* eventually came to specialize in the oral transmission of one of the five *sūtra* collections, so we find references to groups such as *dīghabhāṇakas* and *majjhimabhāṇakas*. See Adikaram 1946: 24-32 and Mori 1990: 123-129.

[130]These figures have been examined in MacQueen 1982, Nance 2008, and especially Drewes 2011. His use of the term "textual specialistss" may be found on p. 345 — in this he is following M. Shizutani. See also Strauch 2018: 236, which points out that an early and otherwise unknown Mahāyāna text does not seem to mention these figures at all.

[131]Drewes 2011: 337-338. See also p. 338 n. 22 for a discussion of the term *chos brjod pa* in the *Ugraparipṛcchā*, which Nattier 2003: 274 and 347 translates as *dharmabhāṇaka*.

[132]A small number of much later manuscript colophons and inscriptions attest to the fact that people did assume this title. See v. Hinüber 2012, especially 55-56 and 61.

come as no surprise that Mahāyāna *sūtras* would present themselves as entrusted to an adapted type of *bhāṇaka* specially authorized to preserve and propagate Mahāyāna texts.[133] At the same time, it is critical to note a difference between how these two groups were represented. The Āgamic *sūtras* never refer to *bhāṇakas*, and their existence within the structure of monastic institutions appears to have been taken for granted. *Dharmabhāṇakas*, conversely, are repeatedly mentioned in the texts they were presumably responsible for transmitting. This phenomenon suggests an attempt to construct a *dharmabhāṇaka* identity through the composition of scriptures or perhaps scriptural passages.

David Drewes in particular has argued that the *dharmabhāṇakas* composed the Mahāyāna *sūtras*.[134] Whether he is right or not, the people who produced Mahāyāna *sūtras* were textual specialists thoroughly versed in the older *sūtra* corpus and broader body of narrative traditions. Mahāyāna texts share a good deal of conceptual vocabulary, together with what we might call an "expressional syntax," with the traditional *sūtras*. To give just one example, the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* ("Rāṣṭrapāla's Questions"), a text that was translated into Chinese during the third century CE, includes a discussion of the properties of a *bodhisattva* comprising a number brief lists with four members each. The form of this section is structured by the principles similar to those that govern parts of the Saṃyukta- and Ekottarikāgamas. Compare the formal structure of the following two passages:

> *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*:
>
> Rāṣṭrapāla, a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* who is possessed of four qualities obtains purity. With which four? With behavior connected with good intentions and purposes, with equanimity towards all beings, with the contemplation of emptiness, and by acting in accordance with one's words. Rāṣṭrapāla, a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* who is possessed of these qualities obtains purity.[135]
>
> *Aṅguttarnikāya*, *Bhaṇḍagāmavagga*:

[133] Drewes 2011: 362. See also pp. 345-346.

[134] Drewes 2011: 362-363.

[135] *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* 1, p. 10, ll. 6-9: *caturbhī rāṣṭrapāla dharmaiḥ samanvāgato bodhisatvo mahāsattva etāṃ pariśuddhiṃ pratilabhate | katamaiś caturbhiḥ | yad *utāsayādhyāsayapratipattyā* (em. [Boucher 2008: 219, n. 75]

> Monks, a person who is possessed of four qualities is said not to be fallen from this Dharma and Vinaya. With which four? Monks, a person who is possessed of noble conduct is said to not be fallen from this this Dharma and Vinaya. Monks, a person who is possessed of noble concentration …. Monks, a person who is possessed of noble wisdom … Monks, a person who is possessed of noble liberation is said to not be fallen from this this Dharma and Vinaya. Monks, a person who is possessed of these qualities is said not to be fallen from this Dharma and Vinaya.[136]

It is evident that the Aṅguttara passage is substantially more repetitive. Yet the *Rāṣṭrapālapṛccā* still makes use of a skeletal structure that is derived from the same type of formulaic wording — one that appears throughout the traditional Āgamic material — though it employs it in service of its own doctrinal program (note especially that these statements are addressed to a *bodhisattva*). Other similar passages in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* more closely mirror the less abbreviated style of the Aṅguttara passage, though the syntax may vary slightly in other respects.[137] All this is expected; across the entire body of Buddhist literature, this type of formulaic repetition was expanded and contracted with a fair degree of fluidity during the course of textual transmission. I do not wish to give the impression that every Mahāyāna *sūtra* uses lists in this way, though a great many do; rather, I want to highlight that the texture of these newer compositions was, as Jonathan Silk puts it, "permeated by the phrase, formulae and structures found in the earlier — that is to say, what is generally considered pre-Mahāyāna — Buddhist literature."[138] This phenomenon neither reveals the identity of the *dharmabhāṇakas* nor clarifies their relationship with traditional recitation lineages. It does,

: Ed.) *sarvasattvasamacittatayā śūnyatābhāvanatayā yathāvāditathākāritayā | ebhī rāṣṭrapāla caturbhir dharmaiḥ samanvāgato bodhisattvo mahāsattva etāṃ pariśuddhiṃ pratilabhate*. See Boucher 2008: 121. I follow his translation with small modifications.

[136]Aṅguttaranikāya vol. 2, p, 2, ll. 15-22: *catuhi bhikkhave dhammehi samannāgato imasmā dhammavinayā apapatito ti vuccati | katamehi catuhi | ariyena bhikkhave sīlena samannāgato imasmā dhammavinayā apapatito ti vuccati | ariyena bhikkhave samādhinā samannāgato pe ariyāya bhikkhave paññāya samannāgato pe ariyāya bhikkhave vimuttiyā samannāgato imasmā dhammavinayā apapatito ti vuccati | imehi kho bhikkhave catuhi dhammehi samannāgato imasmā dhammavinayā apapatito ti vuccatīti.* See Bodhi 2012: 388 for another translation. My translation of technical terms largely follows his.

[137]For example, *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* 1, p. 13, ll. 16-17: *catvāra ime rāṣṭrapāla bodhisatvānām ananutāpakaraṇā dharmāḥ | katame catvāraḥ | śīlākhaṇḍanatā rāṣṭrapāla bodhisatvānām ananutāpakaraṇo dharmaḥ*.

[138]Silk 2021: 154.

however, draw attention to the fact that the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras* presumably involved a process that resembled, at least in many respects, the creation of other types of *buddhavacana*.

1.5 Revelation and Tradition

The Buddhists who produced the bulk of the traditional *sūtras* seemingly saw themselves as collecting, editing, organizing, and elaborating upon the teachings of a historical figure. Even when creating new Āgamic materials, they almost never deviated from the wording and doctrine of the established corpus. But how did the monks who composed and redacted early Mahāyāna (or *vaitulya*) works conceptualize their activities?[139] Did they also see themselves as editing teachings that the Buddha delivered at some point in history? Or was something substantially different happening here? I do not think the evidence allows us to answer these questions definitively, and I doubt whether we ought to look for a single explanation for such a diverse body of texts. But some indications, if inconclusive, are nevertheless available.

Scholars commonly advance two interrelated explanations for the emergence of these new *sūtras*, both of which emphasize the importance of new or newly prominent textual practices for their production. One concentrates on the idea of *pratibhāna* ("inspired eloquence"), a concept of considerable importance even within the earlier Āgamic *sūtras*, where it refers specifically to the moment when the Buddha engenders a flash of clarity in one of his disciples, allowing him or her to deliver a teaching on a particular doctrinal topic. At the conclusion of the disciple's lecture, the Buddha usually certifies its correctness. Graeme MacQueen argues that the authors of Mahāyāna *sūtras* believed themselves to be working under the power of *pratibhāna* and did not see their com-

[139]The old lay-origin theory has been convincingly and repeatedly refuted. See, for example, Harrison 1987 and 1995: 57-63. Others have proved that the Mahāyāna never existed as a monastic institution. See, for example, Silk 1994, esp. 10. I have not considered the "Forest Hypothesis" here. See Harrison 2003, Boucher 2008, and Drewes 2018.

positions as the words of the Buddha in a literal sense. He draws attention to what he calls striking deviations between the older and newer *sūtras*, stating that "If deception were the aim we could expect a decent attempt at protective mimicry."[140]

MacQueen is perhaps right to note the importance of *pratibhāna*, but his conclusions are too strong given that he considers only certain rhetorical aspects of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* and *Lotus Sūtra*. There are plenty of short Mahāyāna works, preserved especially in Chinese and Tibetan, that, contrary to his claim, "harmonize in style and length with the traditional *sūtras*."[141] It also seems certain, as we will see especially in the case of the *Lotus Sūtra*, that the production of these texts was in part effected through the redaction of traditional materials. In this respect, they are not so different from the early *sūtras*, which are not simply transcripts of a historical events; they are highly edited textual products, some of which were produced long after the Buddha's death. We have little reason to think that structuring oral traditions into definite texts was considered "deceptive," no matter what form they eventually took. More evidence concerning *pratibhāna* is provided by Harrison, who points out that several Mahāyāna *sūtras* speak of *dharmabhāṇakas* receiving inspiration from deities, especially those "who previously saw the Buddha," apparently providing a sort of second-order contact that facilitated *pratibhāna* in the absence of the Buddha himself.[142] Evidently some form of physical proximity with the Buddha was still considered important for *pratibhāna*, at least in these examples.

There is a difficult passage in the tenth chapter of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* that deals

[140]MacQueen 1982: 51.

[141]For the quoted material, see MacQueen 1982: 51. One might point to, for example, the so-called **Mahallikāparipṛcchā* preserved in both Chinese and Tibetan. See T.559, T.560, T.561, and Tō. 171. This text is cited in Sāramati's **Mahāyānāvatāra* (入大乘論) T.1634, 40a24 and 40a28. See Nattier 2007: 529 n. 5.

[142]Harrison 2003: 125-126. For the first, see *Nārāyaṇaparipṛcchā* in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, cited p. 125 n. 14: *dharmakāmānāṃ vimalatejaḥ bodhisatvānāṃ pūrvabuddhadarśinyo devatā buddhapratibhānam upasaṃharanti*. For the second, see the *Ratnarāśisūtra* in Silk 1994: 355, 472 and 617. Harrison (pp. 136-137) also notes an interesting passage in the *Svapnanirdeśa*. See T.310, 81c04-05.

with something like inspiration, though it indicates that the process was imagined as an elaborative form of scriptural engagement. According to the Buddha, other *sūtras* "that pay reverence to this *Prajñāpāramitā* will spontaneously approach, reach, and fall upon" *bodhisattvas*.[143] What exactly is meant here is not clear, especially because the versions preserved in Sanskrit and Chinese diverge substantially. In the earliest Chinese translation, Śāripūtra asks: "Is it possible to produce scriptures from the [six] perfections?" The Buddha then answers: "Those sons and daughters of good family who have entered deeply into the *Prajñāpāramitā* will understand it on their own, produce profound teachings one after the other, and turn them into scriptures."[144] This response seems to reflect the idea that textual engagement with the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature may serve to inspire its agents to produce new scriptures. The Sanskrit is far less explicit with respect to the notion of scriptural composition, so it is questionable how much may be inferred from this single statement.[145] Yet it is notable that the Chinese version resonates with the way in which the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature multiplied, with expanded and contracted versions produced out of a common textual core.

The second practice scholars often tie to the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras* is the revelation of teachings through visionary experiences and dreams.[146] Certain scriptures teach meditative practices that are supposed to enable practitioners to see and/or hear the Buddha preach the Dharma. A small number of texts explicitly instruct monks who receive visionary teachings thereafter to expound them to others.[147] It is difficult to judge whether and in what ways these types of practices

[143]*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 10, p. 230, l. 6-8: *yāny api ca tato 'nyāny api sūtrāṇi enām eva prajñāpāramitām abhivadanti tāni caiṣāṃ svayam evopagamiṣyanti upapatsyante upanaṃsyante ca*.

[144]T.224 446c13-c15: 舍利弗問佛。從是波羅蜜中。可出經卷耶。佛語舍利弗。是善男子善女人深入般若波羅蜜者。於是中自解。出一一深法。以爲經卷. See Karashima 2011: 230-231 for the critically edited text and another translation in n. 324, which I follow with modified phrasing.

[145]*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 10, p. 230, ll. 14-19: *evam ukta āyuṣmān śāriputro bhagavantam etad avocat | ime eva kevalaṃ bhagavaṃs teṣāṃ kulaputrāṇāṃ kuladuhitṛṇāṃ ca ṣaṭpāramitāpratisaṃyuktāḥ sūtrāntā upapatsyante upanaṃsyante nānye | bhagavān āha | ye cānye 'pi śāriputra gambhīrāḥ sūtrāntā bhaviṣyanti te 'pi teṣāṃ kulaputrāṇāṃ kuladuhitṛṇāṃ ca svayam evopapatyante svayam evopanaṃsyante ca*.

[146]For example, see Fronsdal 1998: 133-147, Harrison 2003 123-129, and Osto 2018.

[147]See Harrison 1978: 28 and T.418, 905a26-27 for an example in which *bodhisattvas* emerge from meditation and

might have served as catalysts in the production of new scriptures. Scholars have particularly sought to connect the *Sukhāvatīvyūhasūtra* with meditative visionary practices. There is, as Rupert Gethin points out, an undated meditation manual from Central Asia bears at least some resemblance to this text, though it is not affiliated with the Mahāyāna:

> The so-called *Yogalehrbuch*, tr. Gethin with small changes to phrasing:
>
> As [the meditator] progresses with breathing in and out, the world and his body appear to be made of crystal. From his head stands a jeweled tree spreading over the endless world-systems. Among the thick-leaved branches upon that tree appear Buddhas teaching the Dharma. A multi-colored rain of jewels, flowers, and lotuses emerge from their mouths and scatter all over the world. The roots of the tree, which are hollow and shine like beryl, appear established in the golden circle together with the soles of the practitioners feet.[148]
>
> *Sukhāvatīvyūha* attr. Zhi Qian but likely of Lokakṣema's immediate circle:[149]
>
> In the lecture halls, monasteries, and dwelling places of Amitābha, the various *bodhisattvas*, and *arhats*, upon the inner and outer bathing pools, there are trees made of the seven precious substances; trees of pure gold, trees of pure silver, trees of pure crystal, trees of pure beryl, trees of emerald (?), tress of pure coral, trees of pure amber, trees of pure *musāragalva* … beryl trees with beryl roots, crystal stems, beryl branches, crystal leaves, beryl flowers, and crystal fruits.[150]

These two passages conjure a similar type of visual landscape. Yet a scene far closer to the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, as Gethin also notes, is found in the *Mahāsudassanasutta* of the Pāli canon:[151]

> *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, p. 34, ll. 4-7:
>
> *vaiḍūryamayāṇāṃ vṛkṣāṇāṃ vaiḍūryamayāṇi mūlaskandhaviṭapaśākhāpatrapuṣpāṇi phalāni sphaṭikamayāni* | *sphaṭikamayānāṃ vṛkṣāṇāṃ sphaṭikamayāny eva mūlaskandhaviṭapaśākhāpatrapuṣpāṇi phalāni ca musāragalvamayāni*.

teach the *dharmas* they learned.

[148]Schlingloff [1964] 2006: *punar āśvāsapraśvāsāt vāhayataḥ sphaḍikamayo* [*l*]*okaḥ ā*[*śraya*]*ś ca dṛśyaṃte* | [*ta*]*t*[*o*]*mūrdhn*[*a*]*ḥ* [*rat*](*namayo vṛkṣa*)*ḥ anaṃtā lokadhātavaḥ sphāritvā tiṣṭhati* | *tasmiṃ vṛ*[*k*](*ṣ*)*e ghanapa*[*t*](*r*)*aśākhāsu buddhā dṛśyaṃte dharmaṃ deśayaṃtaḥ taṃmukhaniḥsṛtai* [*rat*]*na*[*p*]*u*[*ṣ*]*papadmavarṣair* [*n*]*ā*[*n*](*ā*)*varṇair loko* (*vyava*)[*k*](*ī*)*ryate* | *vṛkṣamūlāni ca vaiḍūryābhāṃny antaḥsuṣirāṇi* + + + + *y*(*o*)*gācārapādatalaiḥ kāṃcanacakre pratiṣṭhitā dṛśyante*. See Gethin 2006: 97 for a translation of this passage, which I follow with small modifications.

[149]For a discussion of the attribution, see Harrison 1998: 556-557 and Nattier 2008: 86-87.

[150]T.362, 305a05-13: 阿彌陀佛及諸菩薩。阿羅漢。講堂精舍所居處舍宅中。內外浴池上。皆有七寶樹。中有淳金樹。淳銀樹。淳水精樹。淳琉璃樹。淳白玉樹。淳珊瑚樹。淳琥珀樹。淳車渠樹 … 琉璃樹者。琉璃根。水精莖。琉璃枝。水精葉。琉璃華。水精實.

[151]Gethin 2006, esp. 94, where he notes that Rhys Davids had already noticed the verbatim correspondence between these two texts; see also p. 95 n. 67.

Mahāsudassanasutta, Dīghanikāya vol. 2, p. 171, ll. 14-17:

veḷuriyamayassa tālassa veḷuriyamayo khandho ahosi phalikamayāni pattāni ca phalāni ca | phalikamayassa tālassa phalikamayo khandho ahosi veḷuriyamayāni pattāni ca phalāni ca.

I do not wish to dispute the connection between the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* and visualization practices. There are good reasons to suppose that this text served to inspire meditation or even was perhaps itself inspired by visions. I want only to highlight a representative instance where the *Sukhāvatīvyūha* shows textual dependence on an earlier scripture because this phenomenon tells us something about how it was probably composed. When speculating about the origins of Mahāyāna scriptures, we must be careful not to give too much weight to visionary or inspirational experiences because both are somewhat removed from textual practices that we know were actually involved in their production.[152] These texts are the product of significant editorial effort, both in terms of content and linguistic shape. Certain passages and textual units are shared, in variously adapted forms, between more than one text, attesting to the fact that these materials are, more than anything else, the product of a textually focused culture. Many are layered compositions with strata dating to different centuries.[153] Can we reasonably posit individual experience as the chief driver of textual production when the texts before us are clearly the accretive outcome of intentional activity undertaken by many hands over a long period of time?[154] Even if inspiration or visionary experiences did at times provide underlying source material for or authorization of the compositional process, the content of those visions or inspired utterances was still conditioned by the broader textual environment; it still had to be edited into an acceptable literary form; its details were often recast in verse; and the whole "experience" had to be set within a larger narrative context.

[152]Note, however, that Harrison 2003: 135 provides some persuasive ways to think about the connections between visionary practices, especially related to dreams, and their textual bases.

[153]For example, see Karashima 2015b: 163-166 and Nattier 2003: 36-37 and 62, esp. n. 29.

[154]See p. 13 for an important point made by Silk.

There is one final explanation commonly advanced for the emergence of Mahāyāna scriptures, though it is of a rather different nature from the preceding two. Many scholars have suggested that writing played an important role in facilitating the creation of these new texts. Richard Gombrich, for example, argues that without writing "texts which deviated from or criticized the canonical norms … could not survive because they were not included among the texts which the Sangha preserved orally."[155] This suggestion is certainly intriguing, especially given that many Mahāyāna *sūtras* urge their listeners (or perhaps I should say readers, though see below) to "copy them into a book."[156] But it also depends on an insufficiently nuanced view of Buddhist textuality that is rooted in the outdated notion that Theravāda orthodoxy is broadly representative of all Buddhist monastic orders.[157]

Gombrich also draws attention to the scholarly consensus that Mahāyāna texts go back to the second or first century BCE, which would make their emergence coeval with the widespread adoption of writing in South Asia.[158] Yet I see no reliable way to determine whether Mahāyāna *sūtras* arose at the same time as writing or whether they were simply important enough to be written down as soon as writing was adopted. And several scholars have more recently suggested that the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Lotus Sūtra* were composed and, at least during their formative stages, transmitted only orally, though here too the evidence is largely circumstantial.[159]

Whether or not certain Mahāyāna texts enjoyed an early stage of exclusively oral transmission,

[155]Gombrich 1988: 21.

[156]This exhortation appears in our earliest witness, the Gandhāran *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript. See Falk and Karashima 2013: 124: *yo prañaparamidae postao parasa lihita* [*daea*]. See also pp. 146, 148, 152, 156, and 160. A comprehensive catalogue of these references in other *sūtras* would be very long; some are given in Drewes 2011.

[157]For instance, Gombrich 1988: 26 states that "it must have been difficult, if not impossible, to slip a new text into the curriculum" after monks "had decided what was to be memorized." Yet, as we have seen, this position does not reflect what actually happened with respect to early *sūtra* transmission in India, not to mention that of other types of *buddhavacana*.

[158]Gombrich 1988: 29. See also McMahan 1998: 251, Harrison 2003, Walser 2005: 133-142, and Osto 2018: 190-191.

[159]Falk and Karashima 2013: 99-100 and Karashima 2015b: 164 n. 4. See also Drewes 2015.

it is clear that writing was from the first century onwards conceptually and practically important for the producers and transmitters of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. We have very early physical evidence in the form of first- and second-century birchbark manuscripts from Gandhāra. Many Mahāyāna *sūtras* encourage the donation of writing implements to those responsible for their transmission.[160] And, as noted, these texts frequently encourage their readers to copy, donate, and sometimes worship manuscripts. This new technology presumably enabled the production of larger texts than had ever been created before.[161] Yet even as these scriptures became increasingly conceptualized as written documents, whether in the context of their transmission or the emergence of book worship, they remained the objects of memorization and oral instruction. Their continued production and modification, moreover, was presumably governed by an enormous oral tradition that is now lost to us.[162]

1.6 The *Lotus Sūtra* and the Buddha's Words

Can we make better sense of the textual practices encountered in the study of Mahāyāna *sūtras* by considering them in the context of the normative claims they make about their own authority? Can these normative claims be better understood when compared against the textual practices involved in the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras*? Unfortunately, a comprehensive treatment of these questions is beyond the scope of this study. I will instead attempt to analyze a single exemplary case: the *Lotus Sūtra*. My reasons for choosing this particular *sūtra* are largely practical. It is, or at least parts of it are, early, possibly dating from the first century CE, and its popularity in Central and

[160] See, for example, *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* in Braarvig 1993, vol. 1: 23, l. 8-9: *'di lta ste | chos smra ba rnams la gro ga dang smyig gu dang snag tsha dang glegs bam sbyin pa*. Braarvig 1993, vol. 2: 473 translates: "The gift of birch-bark for writing, ink and books to the preachers of religion [i.e., *dharmabhāṇakas*]."

[161] Though this the phenomenon was not limited to the Mahāyāna.

[162] A close relationship between written and oral traditions is suggested by Nattier 2003: 58-59.

East Asia have ensured us an abundance of evidence in the form of several geographically distinct manuscript traditions as well as a number of translations completed during different periods.[163]

The *Lotus Sūtra* was originally composed in a Middle Indic language.[164] Its wording was subsequently brought more in line with the standards of classical Sanskrit. The prose of the extant manuscripts has been more or less completely Sanskritized, while the verse portions retain more Middle Indic features.[165] This phenomenon is typical of Mahāyāna *sūtra* manuscripts from at least the fifth or sixth century onwards. The linguistic divergence between verse and prose may be explained by the exigencies of meter, which made versified sections resistant to more comprehensive revision. In the case of the *Lotus Sūtra*, Sanskritization appears to have been effected after the text had been transmitted to different areas; in certain cases, the differences between regional recensions may be attributed to the divergent ways in which Middle Indic features were (or were not) effaced.[166]

The bearing of these linguistic features on the *Lotus Sūtra*'s status seem minimal. In South Asia more generally, specific linguistic registers were at times connected closely with scriptural status (this is certainly true in the case of Vedic Sanskrit), but Middle Indic was used for many contemporaneous forms of Buddhist textuality and was not uniquely connected with the *sūtra* genre

[163]The absolute dates of the strata of this text remain elusive. Yoshirō Tamura has suggested that the earliest portion was compiled around 50 CE; his work is cited and discussed in Kajiyama 2000: 72-73.

[164]Karashima 2015b.

[165]Though it should be noted that the verses were also brought closer in line with standard Sanskrit over time. Compare the following half stanzas, one from the Lüshan manuscript collection and the other from the Nepalese manuscript tradition. Lüshan Fragment B-5v, p. 121, ll. 1-2: (*ke*) *cātra lekhā*(*n*)*i li*[*kha*]*nti kāryye keci* (*pra*)[*yogāni*] *prayojayanti*. SDhP-KN, p. 112, l. 12: *kecit tu lekhān api lekhayanti kecit prayogaṃ ca prayojayanti*.

[166]To give just one example, compare the shape of verse 2.33 as it appears in several recensions. A Nepalese manuscript, ULC MS ADD 1682, 13r, ll. 3-4, reads as follows: *vispaṣṭa bhāṣasva narendrarājā santīya parṣāya sahasra prāṇināṃ* | *śraddhāḥ prasannāḥ sugate sagauravāḥ jñāsyanti ye dharmam udāhṛtan te*. Gilgit MS-A transcribed by Shoko Watanabe (SDhPG-A) reads similarly, p. 24: *vivaṣṭu bhāṣasva narendrarājā santīha pariṣāya sahasra prāṇināṃ* | *śraddhā prasannāḥ sugate sagauravā jñāsyanti ye dharmam udāhṛtaṃ te*. But SDhP-O, p. 22, 43a, ll. 5-6 reads: *vispaṣṭa bhāṣāhi narendrarājā santīha parṣad bahuprāṇakoṭayaḥ* | *śraddhā prasannāḥ sugate sagoravā jñāsyaṃti ye dharmam udāhṛtaṃ te*. Note in particular *bhāṣāhi* instead of the standard *bhāṣasva*. Kern also reports that some Nepalese manuscripts read *jināna uttamā* instead of *narendrarājā*.

or *buddhavacana* more generally. The same might be said for the subsequent Sanskritization of the text, which mirrors, broadly speaking, shifts in non-Buddhist inscriptional discourse. In some cases, however, the intentions behind linguistic choices may have been complicated by locally or institutionally specific ideas about the form *buddhavacana* was supposed to take.[167] The *Lotus Sūtra*'s use of mixed verse and prose is consonant with some Āgamic *sūtras*, and this particular format was clearly considered appropriate for *buddhavacana* more generally, but likewise reveals nothing specific.[168]

Scholars are virtually in agreement that the *Lotus Sūtra* consists of several historical layers, each of which possesses unique linguistic and lexical features.[169] On the basis of earlier scholarship, Karashima divides the text into three strata with reference to a variety of criteria, including: lexicon, references to copying, the identity of the interlocutors, and mentions of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The first stratum, which includes Chapters 2 through 9, is subdivided into two substrata; the first is made up of verses composed in *triṣṭubh-jagatī* meter, and the second consists of *śloka* verses and prose. The second stratum includes Chapters 11 through 20 as well as Chapters 1 and 28.[170] The third and final stratum contains the remaining chapters, 21 through 27, and the latter half of Chapter 11.[171]

The *Lotus Sūtra* teaches that there is really only one vehicle through which awakening may be obtained, and, as a corollary, that everyone has the capacity for buddhahood. This doctrine stands in contrast with the traditional view that followers of the Buddha would not themselves become

[167] Silk 2009 tentatively discusses an interesting case in which the verses of a Mahāyāna *sūtra* might have been intentionally given an artificially archaic or Middle Indicized register, but he ends the article by expressing doubt about this possibility.

[168] For example, see Norman 1983: 66-67, 74, and esp. 82. He notes that "In the oldest stratum of Buddhist literature the *triṣṭubh-jagatī* metre was used for narrative verse, while at a later date the *anuṣṭubh* (*śloka*) replaced it." Some scholars have argued that the same trend may also be seen in the textual development of the *Mahābhārata*.

[169] For example, Kōgaku Fuse 1934, Yoshirō Tamura 1969, Yuichi Kajiyama 2000, and Karashima 2015b: 163-166. The opinions of Fuse and Tamura are discussed in Kajiyama.

[170] Karashima 2015b: 163 also tentatively places the latter part of Chapter 5 in this stratum.

[171] Note that Karashima 2015b makes several other small divisions and qualifications.

buddhas. The *Lotus Sūtra* rarely attempts to justify this position. Instead, it concerns itself with reconciling its own teachings with those of Āgamic texts. From this emphasis, we may infer that the *Lotus Sūtra* understands *buddhavacana* as a status that is necessarily claimed in the context of a larger body of texts and teachings. Discrepancies with other instances of *buddhavacana* therefore require some sort of harmonization. The authors of the *Lotus Sūtra* set out to demonstrate that the apparent discontinuity was illusory. The text explains that the Buddha drew upon his "skill in means" (*upāyakauśalya-*) to teach beings whose capacities differed; as a result, he expounded a graded system of knowledge for those unable to face the challenge of complete, perfect awakening. This means that contradictions between the *Lotus Sūtra* and earlier texts are superficial; all other teachings are no more than soteriologically useful fictions.[172] This position is usually set out in generalizing allegories, but one passage specifically casts the phenomenon of *upāyakauśalya* as the ultimate basis for the diverse types of textualized *buddhavacana*:

> Hear from me, son of Śāri, how this teaching was realized by exemplary men and how those buddhas, the guides, describe it through hundreds of skillful means.[173]
>
> Of the tens of millions of beings here in the world, I can perceive their conduct, intentions, and varied inclinations, knowing their many actions and the merit made previously by them.
>
> With varying explanations and reasons, I lead them to the [teaching]; through logical expositions and hundreds of examples, I delight all beings.
>
> I teach *sūtras* and stanzas (*gāthā*), as well as narratives recounted thus (*itivṛttika-*), stories of my past lives (*jātaka-*) and miraculous happenings (*adbhuta-*), along with summary works (*nidāna-*) with thousands of striking allegories. I also teach songs (*geya-*) and instructional formulations (*upadeśa-*).
>
> For those ignorant ones obsessed with lowly things, who have maintained no course of religious conduct for tens of millions of buddhas, I illustrate *nirvāṇa*, for they are stuck in the mundane world and truly miserable.

[172] Nattier 2003: 154-156 notes that in other early texts *upāyakauśalya* "tactical skill" refers to "the ability to practice states of deep meditative absorption while staving off what would be their natural karmic result: rebirth in one of the *rūpadhātu* heavens, or worse, the attainment of enlightenment as an Arhat."

[173] Kern appears to translate *puruṣottamehi* as "highest man," though the reading is plural. SDhP-O reads *puruṣottamena*. The Chinese readings are indeterminate, with Dharmarakṣa (T.263, 70a13) appearing to read a singular and Kumārajīva (T.262, 7c19) clearly reading a plural.

The self-existent one contrives this device to awaken them to the Buddha knowledge; he cannot at any point tell them that they will become buddhas here on this earth.

Why is that, [you ask]? Attending to the time, the protector speaks only after perceiving the right moment. This is that moment, gotten with difficulty, at which I declare the definitive way things are.

My dispensation, composed of nine limbs (*aṅga-*), has been set out in accordance with the strengths and weaknesses of beings; I have set forth this method in order to introduce them to the knowledge of the bountiful one.

Those children of the Buddha here, who are always pure, clever, virtuous, chaste and who have done their duty for many tens of millions of buddhas — for them I teach the *vaitulyasūtras*.[174]

Here the *Lotus Sūtra* sets out a specific vision of *buddhavacana* that brings us back to the nine *aṅgas* into which the Buddha's teaching was sometimes divided. It is evident that the first eight collectively denote the traditional corpus, which is contrasted with the *vaitulya*-class of *sūtras*. In making this differentiation, the *Lotus Sūtra* provides evidence for the hypothesis that the authors of these new texts (or at least the author of this section) saw their compositions as distinct from the Āgamic *sūtras* and explicitly sought to emphasize that distinction by categorizing their works under the name *vaitulya*, though we must remember that the category itself almost certainly predates the emergence of these materials. And although the *Lotus Sūtra* does not here explicitly classify itself as a *vaitulya* text, it does so elsewhere, including in the *triṣṭubh*-section of its seventh chapter.[175]

[174] SDhP-KN: 2.42-50, pp. 45-46: *śṛṇohi me śārisutā yathaiṣa saṃbuddha dharmaḥ puruṣottamehi* | *yathā ca buddhā kathayanti nāyakā upāyakauśalyaśatair anekaiḥ* || *yathāśayaṃ jāniya te cariṃ ca *nānādhimuktiṃ* (em. [SDhP-G] : *-muktān* : Ed.) *iha prāṇakoṭinām* | *citrāṇi karmāṇi viditva teṣāṃ purākṛtaṃ yat kuśalaṃ ca tehi* || *nānāniruktīhi ca kāraṇehi saṃprāpayāmi ima teṣa prāṇinām* | *hetūhi dṛṣṭāntaśatehi cāhaṃ tathā tathā toṣayi sarvasattvān* || *sūtrāṇi bhāṣāmi tathaiva gāthā itivṛttakaṃ jātakam adbhutaṃ ca* | *nidāna aupamyaśataiś ca citrair geyaṃ ca bhāṣāmi tathopadeśān* || *ye bhonti hīnābhiratā avidvasū acīrṇacaryā bahubuddhakoṭiṣu* | *saṃsāralagnāś ca suduḥkhitāś ca nirvāṇa teṣām upadarśayāmi* || *upāyam etaṃ kurute svayaṃbhūḥ bauddhasya jñānasya prabodhanārtham* | *na cāpi teṣāṃ pravade kadācid yuṣme 'pi buddhā iha loke bheṣyatha* || *kiṃ kāraṇaṃ kālam avekṣya tāyī kṣaṇaṃ ca dṛṣṭvā na tu paśca bhāṣate* | *so 'yaṃ kṣaṇo adya kathaṃci labdho vadāmi yeneha ca bhūtaniścayam* || *navāṅgam etan mama śāsanaṃ ca prakāśitaṃ sattvabalābalena* | *upāya eṣo varadasya jñāne praveśanārthāya nidarśito me* || *bhavanti *ye* (em. [SDhP-G] : *me* : Ed.) *ceha sadā viśuddhā vyaktā śucī sūrata buddhaputrāḥ* | *kṛtādhikārā bahubuddhakoṭiṣu *vaitulyasūtrāṇi* (em. [SDhP-O; SDhP-DhR] : *vaipulya-* : SDh-G; Ed.) *vadāmi teṣām*. The various recensions are basically in agreement insofar as the meaning is concerned. See Kern 1884: 44-46, vv. 41-49 for another translation.

[175] SDhP-KN, p. 193, l. 7: *idam eva saddharmasupuṇḍarīkaṃ vaipulyasūtraṃ bhagavān uvāca*. The older usage of [*mahā*]*vaitulya* is attested in SDhP-DhR 93c03-04: 顯揚宣布。斯正法華。普雨講説。大方等經。若干千頌。不可思念. See also SDhP-O, p. 96, 186a l. 7 and 186b, ll. 1: *hetusahassrair upadarśayanta vaitupulyasūtraṃ* (sic.) *bhagavān prakāśayi*. These examples, together with more from prose sections, are given in Karashima 2015a: 124-125.

1.7 Dharmabhāṇakas and the Revelation of Tradition

One of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s principal concerns, at least in its early chapters, is to establish that its teachings, and perhaps implicitly the teachings of *vaitulyasūtras* more generally, are the only source of awakening. Unlike Āgamic *sūtras*, which present themselves as the record of teachings produced by an awakened being, the *Lotus Sūtra* claims to be the very means by which the Buddha and all other buddhas became and will become awakened, thereby placing itself at the center of a recursive process of enlightenment. This recursivity creates interesting and seemingly unresolved implications for the *Lotus Sūtra*'s own self-representation because its teachers (or perhaps revealers) are likewise said to have gained awakening through its words.[176] It also presents an opportunity for the current transmitters of the text to claim future buddhahood.

In Chapter 7, which forms part of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s oldest stratum, the Buddha recounts the story of a former buddha named Mahābhijñājñānābhibhū (hereafter Mahābhijña), who is said to have eventually achieved awakening under the Bodhi tree.[177] His sixteen sons come and urge him to "turn the wheel of Dharma."[178] After the arrival of a number of celestial beings, Mahābhijña proceeds to teach what are perhaps Buddhism's two most recognizable doctrines: the four noble truths and the chain of dependent arising.[179] These two teachings, which collectively comprise the first "turning of the Dharma wheel," are followed by a second, third, and fourth "exposition of the Dharma."[180] From these narrative elements it is evident that Mahābhijña's life story is supposed to mirror that of the present Buddha, who, it should be kept in mind, is the narrator of this story. Both

[176] Silk 2020b goes so far as to state that "the *sūtra* effectively places its own revelation out of time, rendering it both timeless and authorless."
[177] SDhP-KN, pp. 158, ll. 13ff. This section of the text is discussed briefly in Drewes 2011: 348.
[178] SDhP-KN, p. 162, ll. 9-11.
[179] SDhP-KN, p. 178, l. 14 to p. 179, l. 4.
[180] SDhP-KN, p. 180, ll. 1-4.

figures achieved awakening in the same place, and both came to reveal the same set of teachings.[181]

We are subsequently reintroduced to Mahābhijña's sixteen sons, all of whom become monks and entreat their father to teach "that Dharma having to do with unsurpassable perfect awakening."[182] In response, he reveals, over the course of many *kalpas*, the *Lotus Sūtra*, that great *vaitulya* text, itself.[183] Mahābhijña then predicts the future buddhahood of his sixteen sons and subsequently secludes himself within a monastery.[184] His sons then take up the teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which they preach to a congregation of innumerable beings for 84 thousand *kalpas*. Their father then comes out of his seclusion and proceeds to extol their virtues.

At this point, the narrative frame breaks, and the Buddha, who has been recounting the story, speaks directly to the putative audience of the text. He tells us that Mahābhijña's sixteen sons have all attained awakening and, moreover, that he was one of them in a previous life.[185] The Buddha then tells the audience that they were the very people to whom the sixteen had formerly preached the *Lotus Sūtra* and that they too would eventually attain complete awakening. This recursive pattern raises all sorts of interesting questions about the *Lotus Sūtra*'s self-understanding. Is the story of Mahābhijña supposed to have been in the version of the text that he preached? Or are we to assume that the text has taken on different forms over time? Whatever answer we might propose, it is surely more important that these problems seem not to have interested the authors of the text. They were instead concerned with placing the *Lotus Sūtra*'s revelation at the heart of the process

[181] Note the similarity with the Nidānavagga of the Saṃyuttanikāya, where six former buddhas and the present Buddha are presented as realizing dependent origination in exactly the same way with a series of identical *sūtras* that change only their names. The *Lotus Sūtra* is of course distinct in placing itself into the basic patter of awakening. See footnote 176 above.

[182] SDhP-KN, p. 180, ll. 7-16.

[183] SDhP-KN, p. 181, ll. 4-7. Note that the Kern and Najio edition reads *mahāvaipulya*, but SDhP-O, p. 91, 175a, l. 1-2 reads *mahāvaitulya*. Our oldest witness, SDhP-DhR, 91c24, also reads *vaitulya* (方等).

[184] SDhP-KN, p. 182.

[185] SDhP-KN, p. 184, l. 3 to p. 185, l. 4.

of awakening. In doing so, they adopted, with some modifications, the standard framework of a Jātaka tale, in which the Buddha prototypically tells a story about one of his own previous lives, usually including another figure from his present life. Here, however, he makes himself a subsidiary figure.[186]

The connection between this story and the traditional Jātaka format is not simply thematic. This type of narrative often employs a specific pattern that begins with a standard introduction and ends with the Buddha declaring the present identities of its principal figures, often using formulaic language. Compare the beginning of this section of the Lotus Sūtra with a Jātaka preserved in the *Mahāvastu*:

> *Lotus Sūtra*, SDhP-KN, p. 156, ll. 1-3:
>
> *bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo 'tīte 'dhvany asaṃkhyeyaiḥ kalpair asaṃkhyeyatarair vipulair aprameyair acintyair aparimitair apramāṇais tataḥ pareṇa paratareṇa yad āsīt tena kālena tena samayena mahābhijñānājñānābhibhūr nāma tathāgato 'rhan samyaksaṃbuddho loka udapādi.*
>
> *Mahāvastu*, Rāhula Jātaka, p. 221; Senart 3.172:
>
> *bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo 'tītaṃ adhvānaṃ vaidehe janapade mithilāyāṃ rājadhānyā brāhmaṇo rājā abhūṣi.*[187]

Although the brief formula opening these two texts may not seem immediately probative, consider the fact that it opens around 40 *jātakas* in the *Mahāvastu*. The *Lotus Sūtra* uses it elsewhere several times, including at the beginning of a more prototypical narrative concerning one of the Buddha's former lives. Yet the *Lotus Sūtra* also introduces new aspects, including more prolix wording and, perhaps more importantly, employs this traditional narrative form for its own purposes. The whole point of the narrative is to create a recursive loop: Mahābhijña heard the *Lotus*

[186]Note that this chapter is traditionally called the "Pūrvayogaparivarta." The term *pūrvayoga* is not infrequently used for Jātaka-type tales. See Tournier 2017: 78 n. 319.

[187]For an older and more abbreviated version of this formula, see *Ghaṭīkārasutta*, Majjhimanikāya, vol. 2, p. 45, ll. 11-12: *bhūtapubbaṃ ānanda imasmiṃ padese vebhaḷiṅgaṃ nāma gāmanigamo ahosi*.

Sūtra in the past, became awakened, and taught the text. The audience is hearing the *Lotus Sūtra*; they will therefore become awakened and serve as its future preachers, and so on.

It is only in the second stratum that the *Lotus Sūtra* begins to deal in earnest with its present and future preachers as a distinct group called *dharmabhāṇakas*, a phenomenon that is perhaps suggestive of the gradual concretization of their identity and self-understanding over time.[188] Once introduced, *dharmabhāṇakas* become central to many of the remaining chapters, where they are frequently mentioned in connection with textual and pedagogical practices related to Buddhist teachings in general and the *Lotus Sūtra* in particular.[189] One is depicted as having "memorized the peerless Dharma that the Guardian of the World proclaims," while others are said to have "memorized this *sūtrānta*." A *dharmabhāṇaka* "copies this Dharma discourse, and, having put it into a manuscript, carries it over his shoulder."[190] *Dharmabhāṇakas* are shown "expounding the Dharma, whether memorized or from a manuscript."[191] *Dharmabhāṇakas* are also frequently depicted as objects of veneration. Yet in spite of the frequent exhortations to honor and respect *dharmabhāṇakas*, there are a number of passages that suggest, both directly and indirectly, that these figures partic-

[188] As is noted in Karashima 2015b: 165 n. 4, the word *dharmabhāṇaka* appears only twice in the first stratum of the text, once in a single verse in Chapter 2 and once in the prose of Chapter 7. The antiquity of the first is particularly uncertain because SDhP-O reads *dharmadeśaka* and SDhP-DhR does not include Dharmarakṣa's usual translation for *dharmabhāṇaka*. See SDhP-KN 2.14, p. 326, ll. 6; cf. SDhP-O, p. 20, 39a, l. 7 and SDhP-DhR, 68b15-b17: 新學發意。諸菩薩等。假使供養。無數億佛。講説經法。分別其誼。復令是等。周滿十方. The second appears in both SDhP-KN and SDhP-O, where it describes the sixteen sons of Mahābhijña on one occasion. See SDhP-KN, p. 184, l. 4; SDhP-O, p. 93, f. 178a, l. 4; and Drewes 2011: 348. I have found no equivalent word in the corresponding passages in the translations of Dharmarakṣa and Kumārajīva, though the nature of these witnesses renders the evidence inconclusive. See SDhP-DhR, 92a20-a22 and SDhP-KJ, 25b23-b25.

[189] David Drewes has already drawn attention to the fact that figures called *dharmabhāṇakas* appear frequently in the *Lotus Sūtra*. See especially Drewes 2011: 347-348.

[190] SDhP-KN, p. 25, ll. 9-10, v. 77: *yaṃ caiva so bhāṣati lokanātho ekāsanasthaḥ pravarāgradharmam taṃ sarvam ādhārayi so jinātmajo varaprabho yo abhu dharmabhāṇaka*. SDhP-KN, p. 227, l. 5: *yaś ca teṣāṃ tathārūpāṇāṃ dharmabhāṇakānām asya sūtrāntasya dhārakāṇāṃ*…. SDhP-KN, p. 343, ll. 9-10, v. 57: … *dharmabhāṇakam* | *dhārayantam idaṃ sūtraṃ*…. SDhP-KN, p. 227, ll. 8-9: *ya imaṃ dharmaparyāyaṃ likhitvā pustakagataṃ kṛtvāṃsena pariharati*. This line does not include the word *dharmabhāṇaka*, but the context makes clear that this figure serves as the referent.

[191] SDhP-KN 282, l. 11: *sa sukhasthitaś ca dharmaṃ bhāṣate kāyagataṃ vā pustakagataṃ vā*. Here we do not have the word *dharmabhāṇaka*, but its appearance in the following sentence makes clear that these figures are the subject of this statement too. Drewes 2011: 339 notes a parallel passage from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*

ipated in and were the subject of some controversy. The Buddha tells us that it is a greater sin to speak ill of a *dharmabhāṇaka* who has memorized this *sūtra*, regardless of whether it is true or untrue, than to speak some unutterable thing in front of the Tathāgata himself.[192] The Buddha promises to send emanations of monks, nuns, lay-men and women to hear the Dharma, and they will neither contradict nor reject what has been said by the *dharmabhāṇaka*.[193] These statements, as Drewes notes in his discussion of Mahāyāna *sūtras* more generally, seem to suggest that *dharmabhāṇakas* felt anxiety about facing individuals who spoke ill of them or objected to their public teachings. This anxiety is particularly noticeable in the most recent stratum of the text, where buddhas and celestial figures are depicted as angered by those who violate *dharmabhāṇakas* who have memorized this *sūtrānta* and as giving spell-words for the benefit of *dharmabhāṇakas*, for their happiness, out of pity for them, and in order to protect, shield, and preserve them.[194]

One way the *Lotus Sūtra* resolves these anxieties is by making an explicit connection between *dharmabhāṇakas* and the generalized pattern of awakening, here again with a narrative that bears close resemblance to a Jātaka (or perhaps by reworking an existing Jātaka-type narrative).[195] In Chapter 1, the Buddha tells Maitreya that there was once a buddha called Candrasūryapradīpa.[196] After a period of intense meditation, Candrasūryapradīpa revealed the *Lotus Sūtra* to a *dharma-*

[192]SDhP-KN, p. 227, ll. 4-7: *yaḥ khalu punar bhaiṣajyarāja kaścid eva sattvo duṣṭacittaḥ pāpacitto raudracittas tathāgatasya saṃmukhaṃ kalpam avarṇaṃ bhāṣet | yaś ca teṣāṃ tathārūpāṇāṃ dharmabhāṇakānām asya sūtrāntasya dhārakāṇāṃ gṛhasthānāṃ vā pravrajitānāṃ vā ekām api vācam apriyāṃ saṃśrāvayed bhūtāṃ vā abhūtāṃ vā | idam āgāḍhataraṃ pāpakaṃ karmeti vadāmi*. Drewes 2011: 345 cites this passage as evidence that *dharmabhāṇakas* could be either monks or householders.

[193]SDhP-KN, p. 235, l. 2: *nirmitāṃś ca bhikṣubhikṣuṇyupāsakopāsikāḥ saṃpreṣayiṣyāmi dharmaśravaṇāya | te tasya dharmabhāṇakasya bhāṣitaṃ na pratibādhiṣyanti na pratikṣepsyanti*. Drewes 2011: 339 discusses another part of this passage.

[194]SDhP-KN, p. 397, ll. 3-4: *te sarve buddhā bhagavantas tena drugdhāḥ syur ya evaṃrūpān dharmabhāṇakān evaṃrūpān sūtrāntadhārakān atikrāmet*; 398 l. 8 to 399, l. 1: *atha khalu vaiśravaṇo mahārājo bhagavantam etad avocat | aham api bhagavan dhāraṇīpadāni bhāṣiṣye teṣāṃ dharmabhāṇakānāṃ hitāya sukhāyānukampāyai rakṣāvaraṇaguptaye*. Drewes 2011: 343 n. 35 makes reference to this passage in noting that many Mahāyāna *sūtras* contain similar concerns.

[195]Drewes 2011: 348 notes that many Mahāyāna *sūtras* claim that various buddhas were *dharmabhāṇakas* in their previous lives.

[196]SDhPKN 17, l.9-10. The story of Candrasūryapradīpa is discussed in Drewes 2011: 347-348.

bhāṇaka named Varaprabha and entered extinction. Varaprabha then memorized and propagated the dispensation of the Fortunate One who had become fully extinguished.[197] The Buddha tells Maitreya that Candrasūryapradīpa's eight sons, who had earlier become *dharmabhāṇakas*, studied under Varaprabha, who "prepared them for complete awakening," which they eventually attained; one of them was Dīpaṃkara, a well-known former buddha.[198] Another, named Yaśaskāma, is said to have been particularly difficult, being obsessed with profit and honor and unable to retain what he had memorized. The Buddha then proclaims:

> Perhaps, Maitreya, you have some doubt, or uncertainty, or hesitation about whether there was another *dharmabhāṇaka* at that time, a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* named Varaprabha. But you should not see it that way. Why, you ask? Because I was the *dharmabhāṇaka* at that time, a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* named Varaprabha. And as for the slothful *bodhisattva* named Yaśaskāma, it was in fact you, Maitreya, who was at that time a slothful *bodhisattva* named Yaśaskāma.[199]

The fact that this narrative is modeled, in some ways, after a Jātaka is again not simply thematic. It is structurally visible when we compare the underlying Sanskrit of the opening of this passage with the conclusion of a Jātaka narrative preserved in the *Mahāvastu*:

> *Lotus Sūtra*, SDhP-KN, p. 22, ll. 8-12:
>
> *syāt khalu punas te 'jita kāṅkṣā vā vimatir vā vicikitsā vā* | *anyaḥ sa tena kālena tena samayena varaprabho nāma bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'bhud dharmabhāṇakaḥ* | *na khalu punar evaṃ draṣṭavyaṃ* | *tat kasya hetoḥ* | *ahaṃ sa tena kālena tena samayena varaprabho nāma bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'bhud dharmabhāṇakaḥ*.
>
> *Mahāvastu*, vol. 2, Mañjarījātaka, p. 89; Senart 2.63-64:
>
> *syāt khalu punaḥ bhikṣavo yuṣmāka evaṃ asyād* | *anyaḥ sa tena kālena tena samayena nārado nāma riṣi abhūṣi kauśikasagotro* | *na khalv etad evaṃ draṣṭavyaṃ* | *tat kasya*

[197] For the revelation of the *Lotus Sūtra* to Varaprabha, see SDhP-KN, p. 20, l. 16 to p. 21, l. 21. Candrasūryapradīpa's complete extinction, see SDhP-KN, p. 21, ll. 16-17. Varaprabha identifies himself as a *dharmabhāṇaka* at SDhP-KN, p. 22, l. 9 and is so labeled by the text at SDhP-KN, p. 25, l. 4, v. 74d.

[198] SDhP-KN, p. 22, ll. 1-3. Candrasūryapradīpa's sons become *dharmabhāṇakas* at SDhP-KN 19, ll. 8-9: *sarve cānuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim abhisaṃprasthitā dharmabhāṇakāś cābhūvan*.

[199] The first part of this passage is cited in the text above. For the remainder, see SDhPKN, p. 22, ll. 11-13: *yaś cāsau yaśaskāmo nama bodhisattvo 'bhūt kausīdyaprāptaḥ* | *tvam evājita sa tena kālena tena samayena yaśaskāmo nāma bodhisattvo 'bhūt kausīdyaprāptaḥ*.

hetoḥ | *ahaṃ so bhikṣavas tena kālena tena samayena nārado nāma riṣi abhūṣi kauśi-kasagotro*.[200]

Here I only underline exact or nearly exact correspondences, though it should be noted that the portions I have not underlined are almost entirely parallel in terms of their function. It is clear that the authors or redactors of the *Lotus Sūtra* were either incorporating Jātaka-type materials or attempting to present narratives in a format modeled after a Jātaka. We find similar phrasing, to say nothing of basic narrative structures, used frequently throughout the rest of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which suggests that this type of material was crucial for its production.[201] And however these narratives might have been produced, the *Lotus Sūtra* uses them to cast itself as part of the process of awakening, with the above-mentioned example serving also to solidify the identity of the *dharmabhāṇaka* by making this figure an ideal-type on the path to awakening. Past buddhas were *dharmabhāṇakas*, the present buddha was a *dharmabhāṇaka*, and the future buddha was a *dharmabhāṇaka*. The message is that the preachers of the *Lotus Sūtra* are future buddhas, guaranteeing, if perhaps implicitly, the authenticity of the textual practices they undertook.

The appearance of traditional narrative structures is not surprising given that the *Lotus Sūtra* is replete, at least insofar as its prose sections are concerned, with formulaic phrasing that it shares with Āgamic *sūtras* and other types of Buddhist texts.[202] In Chapter 4, to give just one representative example, a number of the Buddha's direct disciples respond lethargically to the new teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*, explaining that they are content with *nirvāṇa* and too old and tired to pursue

[200]This particular passage is just an example. The antiquity of the basic structure of this phrasing is guaranteed by its appearance in Pāli *suttas* that include Jātaka-type narratives. For example, see *Ghaṭīkārasutta*, Majjhimanikāya 2, p. 54, ll. 16-19: *siyā kho pana te ānanda evam assa* | *añño nūna tena samayena jotipālo māṇavo ahosīti* | *na kho pan' etaṃ ānanda evaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ* | *ahaṃ tena samayena jotipālo māṇavo ahosīti*.

[201]For example, SDhP-KN, p. 258, ll. 12ff; p. 381, l. 8ff.; p. 414, l. 4ff.; p. 432, l. 1ff.; 469, l. 11ff.; p. 470, l. 4-9 and 9ff. Other similar but slightly less close instances could also be given.

[202]This phenomenon has been noted with respect to Mahāyāna *sūtras* more generally by both Silk and Harrison. See above, esp. pp. 66-67.

buddhahood for themselves. In their self-description, we can see, on a very basic level, the use of shared formulaic language:

> *Lotus Sūtra* Ch. 4, p. 100, ll. 8-9:
>
> *vayaṃ hi bhagavañ jīrṇā vṛddhā mahallakā asmin bhikṣusaṃghe sthavirasaṃmatā jarājīrṇībhūtā nirvāṇaprāptāḥ sma iti.*
>
> *Soṇadaṇḍasutta*, Dīghanikāya, vol. 1, p. 114, ll. 14-15:
>
> *bhavaṃ hi soṇadaṇḍo jiṇṇo vuddho mahallako addhagato vayo anuppatto.*[203]

This passage undoubtedly uses stock language, but it does so in order to make a point very specific to the Lotus Sūtra: the venerable tradents of the old tradition are surprised and overwhelmed by the new revelation (or, perhaps more precisely, newly revealed but very old revelation) embodied by the *Lotus Sūtra*. This reflects a pattern common across Mahāyāna *sūtras*. In terms of textual building blocks and expressional syntax, they share much with the Āgamas, though they often employ these materials to express doctrines foreign to (though connected with) the traditional texts. Other types of stock formulae are specific to the Mahāyāna corpus, especially those that concern new doctrines. And some blend both new and old elements, placing something new within a recognizable linguistic frame. The internal repetition of stock phrases in the *Lotus Sūtra* is so frequent as to require no further discussion; here instead I provide an example formula that appears, albeit in somewhat modified form, across Mahāyāna *sūtras*:

> *Lotus Sūtra*, Ch. 10, p. 226, ll. 3-6:
>
> *yaḥ khalv asmād dharmaparyāyād antaśa ekagāthām api dhārayet kaḥ punarvādo ya imaṃ dharmaparyāyaṃ sakalasamāptam udgṛhṇīyād dhārayed vā vācayed vā paryavāpnuyād vā prakāśayed vā likhed vā likhāpayed vā likhitvā cānusmaret | tatra ca pustake satkāraṃ kuryāt gurukāraṃ kuryāt mānanāṃ pūjanām arcanām apacāyanāṃ puṣpadhūpagandhamālyavilepanacūrṇacīvaracchatradhvajapatākāvādyāñjalinamaskāraiḥ praṇāmaiḥ.*
>
> *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* Ch. 3, p. 83, ll. 8-14:

[203]The formula is common. See, for instance, Dīghanikāya vol. 1, p. 130, ll. 24-25; vol. 2, p. 100, ll. 12-13; p. 232, l. 29 to p. 233, l. 1; and elsewhere in the other Pāli *nikāyas*. Note that a Sanskrit version of this formula has been preserved in a Cenral Asian manuscript fragment of the *Caṅgīsūtra*. See Harmtmann 2002: 9: *jīrṇṇehi vṛddhehi mahallakehi adhvagatavyam anuprāptehi*.

kaḥ punarvādo yaḥ enāṃ prajñāpāramitāṃ likhiṣyati udgrahīṣyati dhārayiṣyati vācayiṣyati paryavāpsyati pravartayiṣyati deśayiṣyaty upadekṣyaty uddekṣyati svādhyāsyati satkariṣyati gurukariṣyati mānayiṣyati pūjayiṣyati arcayiṣyati apacāyiṣyati puṣpair dhūpair gandhair mālyair vilepanaiś cūrṇair vastraiś chatrair dhvajair ghaṇṭābhiḥ patākābhiḥ samantāc ca dīpamālābhiḥ bahuvidhābhiś ca pūjābhiḥ pūjayiṣyati.

Basic stock formulas were flexible. This is unsurprising given that the prose sections of Mahāyāna *sūtras* were often modified and expanded over time, and different versions of the same text show substantial deviation from one another, both in terms of how exactly they are phrased and what exactly they contain. It is telling that this same passage appears differently in the *Lotus Sūtra* manuscript fragments discovered near Kashgar. That version uses the future conjugation rather than the optative (i.e., *dhārayiṣyanti*) and includes the verbs *deśayiṣyanti* and *pravartayiṣyanti*, both of which find parallels in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* passage but are missing in the version contained in the Nepalese recension of the *Lotus Sūtra* reflected in Kern and Nanjio's edition.[204]

Mahāyāna *sūtras* were produced by textual specialists who rendered narratives and doctrinal teachings in a formalized register. The degree to which this process involved the redaction of larger units into a unitary framework as opposed to their outright composition presumably varies between scriptures and even within individual scriptures, though I think we would do well to consider these two possibilities as forming a continuum rather than standing in opposition with one another.[205] The initial part of the compositional process, if we can really speak of such a thing, is likely to remain obscure, and it seems certain that the barrier between scriptural and non-scriptural materials was in any event somewhat porous. The flexibility with which individual Mahāyāna *sūtras* were sometimes transmitted also provides insight into broader attitudes about *buddhavacana*; many Buddhists apparently saw the modification of a *sūtra*'s phrasing to be unproblematic, while others

[204] SDhP-O, 214a, l. 7 to 214b, l. 7, p. 111.

[205] Apple 2015 discusses an instance where a short *sūtra* has been redacted into a larger one. Note again the points made in Silk 2021.

apparently accepted the addition of entirely new chapters to an existing and well-circulated text.

In the particular case of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the flexibility with which the prose sections were treated, especially in terms of their gradual and divergent expansion, may be contrasted with the conservative transmission of the corresponding verse sections. This is not to say that the verses were not changed over time. Like the prose, their language was brought into closer, if only partial, alignment with the norms of classical Sanskrit, though the degree to which this transformation was effected varied regionally. There is also evidence that suggests, as Tilmann Vetter notes, certain *triṣṭubh-jagatī* verses were added long after the prose sections had been composed.[206] But the nature of versification meant that a tendency to move towards increasing prolixity over time was not operative. The degree to which the versified sections of the *Lotus Sūtra* correspond with those found in other Buddhist texts, whether Mahāyāna or not, awaits further study, but, impressionistically speaking, close intertextual correspondence appears somewhat more limited.

There is little more we can say about the initial composition of the verses that form the core of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s teachings, though their emergence out of a monastic textual culture that produced many other types of versified material is not surprising. The use of versified teachings together with prose summaries (often introductory) is common to many forms of Buddhist scripture, and we find it frequently in the context of Jātaka type narratives. What is clear, however, is that the authors of at least one part of the *Lotus Sūtra* directly express anxiety about the reception of their teachings.[207] The meaning of this important passage was clarified by Karashima, whose understanding I follow here:[208]

[206] Vetter 1999: 130-131.

[207] This passage is delivered by a group of *bodhisattvas* discussing the propagation of the *Lotus Sūtra* after the Buddha's passing.

[208] Karashima 2001: 161-162 has demonstrated that this passage has been misunderstood by the Chinese commentators and a number of modern scholars. My translation largely follows his, albeit with modifications. I diverge especially in my understanding of v. 11cd, which he translates along with the Sanskrit, while I have adopted a reading from the

Obsessed with profit and honor, they will speak of us in this way:
"These are no more than heretics who preach their own poetry.

Acting in service of profit and honor, they compose their own *sūtras*
and proclaim them in the assembly." They will slander us[209]

among kings, princes, and ministers, as well as among
brahmins, householders, and other monks.

Of us they will say the unutterable: "They spread a heretical doctrine!"
We will brave all of this; for the great seers deserve esteem.

We shall wholly endure those wicked-minded ones who are angry with us,
at that time [mockingly] saying of us "They are buddhas!"[210]

In those violent, terrifying days, dreadful and horrific, many monks
looking like *yakṣas* will slander us.

Out of esteem [for you], Chief of the World, we will bear it,
though it be difficult. Donning the girdle of patient endurance
we shall propagate this *sūtra*.[211]

O Guide, we've no use for life or limb.
In bearing your assignment we seek only awakening.

The Fortunate One alone knows that there will be wicked monks of this sort
in the final days, those who fail to understand his intentional language.

We will bear their sharp frowns, repeated abjuration,
being driven out of monasteries, and various reproaches.

Bearing in mind the order of the Chief of the World, during the final days
we will confidently proclaim this *sūtra* in the assembly.[212]

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recensions preserved in Chinese. I also take SDhP-O as my base text, while Karashima uses SDhP-KN. See also the translation provided in Kern 1884: 260-261.

[209]For some of the complications related to the interpretation of this verse, see Karashima 2001: 163 n. 96.

[210]Both Chinese translations seem to support this reading. See the seemingly poorly translated T.263, 107a19: 以斯佛所說。悉當呵教之. "Taking this thing spoken by the Buddha, they admonish it." Much closer is T.262, 36c12: 爲斯所輕言。汝等皆是佛. "They will deride us as follows: 'You all are buddhas.'"

[211]SDhP-O reads *prakāśaye*, but Kumārajīva renders 我等. See T. 262, 36c16.

[212]SDhP-KN 12.8-18, p. 272, l. 9 to p. 274, l. 4. I follow here the transliterated version of the so-called Kashgar manuscript because it seems to retain better readings, especially for verse 12. SDhP-O, p. 133, f. 261b, l. 4 to f. 262b, l. 6: *asmākaṃṃ eva vakṣyaṃti lābhasatkāraniśritā* | *tīrthikevādi 'me bhikṣū svāni kāvyāni deśayī* || *svayaṃ sūtrāṇi granthitvā lābhasatkārahetavaḥ* | *pariṣāya madhye bhāṣyanti asmākam parikuṭṭakāḥ* || *rājānāṃ rājaputrāṇāṃ rājāmātyāna ca tathā* | *brāhmaṇagṛhapatīnāṃ ca anyeṣāṃ cāpi bhikṣuṇām* || *asmākāvarṇa bhāṣanti tīrthikāṃ vāca cārayī* | *sarvaṃ vayaṃ kṣamiṣyāma goraveṇa maharṣiṇaḥ* || *ye cāsmāṃ kupayiṣyaṃti tasmiṃ kālesmi durmatī* | *ime buddhā 'ti vakṣyaṃti adhivāsiṣyāma sarvaśaḥ* || *kalpasaṃkṣobhi bhikṣmasmin dāruṇasmiṃ mahābhaye* | *yakṣarūpā bahu bhikṣa asmākaṃ paribhāṣakāḥ* || *goraveṇā ti lokendra utsahāma suduṣkaram* | *kṣāntīya kakṣyāṃ bandhatvāṃ sūtram etaṃ prakāśaye* || *anarthakāḥ 'sma kāyena jīvitena ca nāyaka* | *arthikā vaya bodhāya tava nikṣepadhārakāḥ* || *bhagavann eva jānāti yādṛśāḥ papabhikṣavaḥ* | *paścime kāli bheṣyaṃti sandhābhāṣyam ajānakāḥ* || *bhṛkuṭī tīvrrā sauḍhavyā aprajñaptiḥ punaḥ punaḥ* | *niṣkālanā vihārebhyo upākrrauśā bahūvidhāḥ* || *ājñaptiṃ lokanāthasya smaranta kāli paścime* | *bhāṣiṣyāma idaṃ sūtraṃ pariṣanmadhye viśāradāḥ*.

I have already discussed several similar passages. Here too the accusation that figures responsible for teaching this type of scripture "composed their own *sūtras*" and "preach their own poetry" speaks to the contested nature of the textual practices underlying the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras* in general and the *Lotus Sūtra* in particular. To properly understand the nature of these anxieties, it is necessary to remember that Āgamic *sūtras* were also composed and edited by Buddhist monks, though it is not entirely clear when especially the first of these processes stopped. We are not dealing, at least not in simplistic terms, with a direct record of the Buddha's teachings on the one hand and an inauthentic textual invention in the form of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* on the other. The lines of acceptability were far more complicated and must have varied between different regions and communities. The production of Mahāyāna *sūtras* was made possible by an evolution of the ideas and practices that characterized the creation of the earlier *sūtras*. Yet the authors of these new texts drew on a broader set of sources and expressed new ideas, often creating, as Harrison notes, something both substantially new and thoroughly traditional in the process.[213]

1.8 Summary and Conclusions

The appearance of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* indicates the rising prominence of tendencies that have a long history in the Buddhist thought-world. It is undeniable that a shared commitment to the notion of the first *saṅgīti* affected the transmission of early scriptures, but, both practically and theoretically, Buddhist communities, especially prior to the beginning of the Common Era, accepted that the words of the Buddha, as well as the texts in which they were contained, needed to be

[213] See Harrison 2003: 134, who explains that "these works are packed full of the clichés and formulas of Mainstream scriptures, the parallel structures, repetitions, numerical lists and so on, but these components are used to express new ideas, like building materials pillaged from an old structure to erect a new one." It should be noted that Harrison takes a relatively strong view on the role of writing in the emergence of early Mahāyāna. And again on p. 142: "[Mahāyāna *sūtras*] are in fact the creative recasting of material already accepted as authentic *buddhavacana* by the wider community."

edited, modified, elaborated, and sometimes created long after the Buddha's death. *Buddhavacana* was conceptualized in an expansive enough manner to accommodate derived materials, and the standards of authority were rooted in communal sanction and intertextual consistency.

Beginning around the first century BCE, a new type of *sūtra* appears in the historical record. According to the oldest Chinese translation catalogues, many of these texts called themselves something like **vevulla* or, in more Sanskritized registers, *vaitulya*. This title indicates that the authors of these works viewed their compositions as different from traditional Āgamic material. Some of what made them different may be found in the diversity of doctrine contained in these new texts. The *vaitulyasūtras* — or, perhaps we should say, the Mahāyāna *sūtras* that would come to absorb and extend that category — often present theological frameworks somewhat foreign to those of their predecessors. They likewise extend the formal textual standards that governed the production of the *āgamas*, exhibiting greater freedom in terms of their compositional possibilities.

It seems that, by a certain point, the authors of many Mahāyāna *sūtras* envisioned themselves as forming a separate category of textual specialist, the *dharmabhāṇaka*. It may never be possible to understand how exactly the authors of Mahāyāna *sūtras* understood their activities, though it seems that both visionary experiences and inspired eloquence were seen, at least by some, as accepted means of obtaining new information about the Buddha's dispensation. Far more important, however, was the reworking of preexisting oral- and text-traditions into new textual forms. Yet the authors of Mahāyāna *sūtras* frequently betray their anxieties about the textual practices they undertook. In response, they authorized themselves by claiming to be future buddhas, ensuring thereby the authority of their activities.

Chapter 2: Śiva's Words Enter the World

2.1 Introduction

From the outset, Buddhist monastic communities defined themselves through the preservation of a corpus of scriptures they understood to embody the "word of the Buddha." Their adoption of innovative and dynamic textual practices around the beginning of the Common Era enabled new types of scriptures to be produced quickly and in great numbers. Several centuries later, a revolution in Indian scriptural production began as devotional currents associated with India's major gods started to compose their own bodies of scripture for the first time. The earliest and arguably most historically consequential corpus was produced by the devotees of Śiva.

Texts held to be revealed by Śiva were central to the self-understanding of premodern Śaiva communities; these groups categorized themselves (and often others) in terms of their affiliation to various "streams" (*srotāṃsi*) of scripture. Even the word "Śaiva," which scholars generally take to mean "related to Śiva" or "a worshipper of Śiva," was often used in the more specific sense of "a scripture taught by Śiva" or "a person who knows or studies a scripture taught by Śiva."[1] We

[1]Hanneder 1998: 5, esp. n. 8. See *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 1.65ab, p. 103: *sarvajñānakriyāvyaktir muktiḥ śaive 'pi bhāṣitā*. Sanderson 2015b: 196-197 draws our attention to Aparāditya's commentary on *Yājñavālkyadharmaśāstra* 1.7, which uses the name of the scriptures to derive the name of the community: *api tu tena proktam ity aṇi kṛte śivena proktaṃ śāstraṃ śaivaṃ | punaś ca śaivaśabdāt tad adhīte tad veda ity utpannasyāṇaḥ proktāl luk iti luki kṛte śaivaṃ vetty adhīte vā śāivaḥ*. "[The word] Śaiva, which means 'a systematic teaching promulgated by Śiva, [is derived] after applying the affix *aṆ* [to the word Śiva according to *Aṣṭādhyāyī* rule 4.3.101] in the sense of 'Promulgated by him.' Subsequently, the affix *aṆ*, which attains after the word *śaiva* by [*Aṣṭadhyāyī* rule 4.2.59] in the sense of 'One who studies or knows that,' is deleted by [*Aṣṭadhyāyī* rule 4.2.68: 'The affix *aṆ*] is deleted after [a word derived by the application of *aṆ* in the sense of] 'Promulgated [by him].' This results in the form Śaiva in the sense of 'one who studies or knows a Śaiva text." Kṣemarāja uses the term Śaiva to refer specifically to the followers of the Mantramārga. See *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 4.391, vol. 2, p. 247, ll. 8-17.

may therefore take the attribution of a text to Śiva as the prototypical determinant of scripturality in the Śaiva context. His authority underwrites the injunctive character adopted by these texts, which largely concern themselves with the elaboration of specific ritual observances. Yet what exactly it means for a text to be "spoken by Śiva" is not entirely straightforward. These scriptures often contain self-representational narratives that present complex textual histories involving condensation and redaction from an archetype held to be vast, indeed all encompassing.

The first Śaivas to create something like their own independent scriptures were Brahmin ascetics who came to be known as Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas. Over the course of the second or third centuries CE, they sought to codify a textual foundation for a system of observances that required special initiation and often contravened the normative social standards of the Vedic community. They did not position their principal text, which they attributed, at least by a certain point, to Śiva, as a rejection of the Veda; rather, they presented it as transcending the Veda by offering the unlimited reward of final emancipation through union with Śiva (something never envisioned in Vedic theology).

Although the textual record is fragmentary, it is clear that these early efforts were massively expanded and diversified over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. Ascetics and householders together produced an enormous corpus of teachings that they attributed to Śiva and saw as authorizing diverse modes of religious practice, including more popular forms of non-initiatory religion, expanded renunciatory observances, and the complex ritual systems that have come in modern scholarship to be called "Tantra," a word about which I will have more to say later. By the eighth century, the Śaiva scriptural corpus had branched into many parts. Two of the most important were the relatively Veda-congruent Siddhānta ("Orthodoxy"), which survives to this day in South India, and the more diverse set of non-Saiddhāntika works that rejected many of the norms of

Vedic society and adopted ever more antinomian practices in increasingly goddess-focused cults.[2]

2.2 Embodied Divinity and Divine Emanation

Śaiva scriptures often engage with the problem of how Śiva was supposed to have revealed his teachings, with many delving into a number of related theoretical issues in a theologically sophisticated manner. But the earliest narrative to connect Śiva with the promulgation of a particular text does so in straightforward terms: Śiva assumed a human form, descended into the world, and taught the *Pañcārthasūtra* ("Manual on the Five-Fold System"), a text that scholars usually call the *Pāśupatasūtra* ("Manual on Paśupati's Method").[3] This humanized form of Śiva, known by the later tradition as Lakulīśa or Lakuleśa, was held to be the founder of the Pāñcārthika Pāśupata lineage, a group of Brahmin ascetics who sought liberation through practices that contravened the social and cultural norms of their caste group and who revered Śiva, albeit under the name Rudra, as the ultimate godhead.

It is not clear whether the *Pañcārthasūtra*'s attribution to Śiva originates in its compositional context (2nd c. CE?). No such claim appears within the text itself, and there is little to suggest that its authors or compilers wanted to present their work as coming from a divine source.[4] As a consequence, it is possible, though perhaps unlikely, that a compiled form of the *Pañcārthasūtra* first circulated as a work of human authorship. Yet it was clearly invested with a scriptural status by its commentary, the *Pañcārthabhāṣya* ("Commentary on the *Pañcārtha*[*sūtra*]"), which was com-

[2]Note, however, that the Siddhānta did not initially develop in South India and was probably established there around the eleventh century.

[3]For the name of this text and the meaning of the term "*pañcārtha*," see Bisschop 2014, esp. 30 n. 9. For some very brief remarks regarding the place of this text in the larger *sūtra* genre, see Bisschop 2005: 530.

[4]But note that one *sūtra*, at least as it has been traditionally interpreted, may point to a putatively divine origin of the text. See *Pañcārthasūtra* 5.8: *rudraḥ provāca tāvat*. Kauṇḍinya understands this statement to mean that the *Pañcārthasūtra* itself was uttered by Rudra. See *Pañcārthabhāṣya* on 5.8, p. 115, ll. 14-15: *kiñ cānyad idam athaśabdādi śivāntaṃ pravacanaṃ rudraproktaṃ tāvat sarvatantrāṇāṃ śreṣṭam*. See also p. 7, ll. 17-18.

posed by Kauṇḍinya in the fourth or fifth century.[5] I will therefore first provide some speculative thoughts on the early status of the *Pañcārthasūtra* and then examine Kauṇḍinya's account of its putative origins.

The *Pañcārthasūtra* details the practices required of a Pāñcārthika ascetic through the provision of a number of *sūtras* (here meaning, quite differently from in the Buddhist context, "aphoristic statements"), with some famously requiring practitioners to intentionally attract public censure.[6] Its teachings were supposed to lead to release from the cycle of rebirth through union with Śiva.[7] The *Pañcārthasūtra*'s exact extent, as well as the number of *sūtras* it contained, may have been unstable. Although Kauṇḍinya's commentary more or less fixed the text that has come down to us, there are reasons, as Nirajan Kafle shows, to suspect that other versions continued to circulate even after his systematizing efforts.[8]

The sharply circumscribed nature of the *Pañcārthasūtra*'s content, together with its abbreviated style, makes it difficult to determine how exactly its author (or compiler?) understood its origins or wished for it to be perceived. Some tentative conclusions might arguably be drawn from its genre. Both David Brick and Patrick Olivelle have argued that *sūtra*-texts, at least within the early Dharmaśāstric tradition, present themselves as scholarly works produced by human beings (though often mythic seers who could not have contributed to their actual composition).[9] Could the *Pañcārthasūtra*'s style similarly suggest that its authors or compilers intended it to taken as the product of human, rather than divine, effort? The value of this comparison is at best limited. Unlike the

[5]See Bisschop 2014: 27 n. 1 for a brief discussion of Kauṇḍinya's date.

[6]Hara 2002: 126-138.

[7]*Pañcārthasūtra* 5.41. See also Sanderson 1988: 664-665.

[8]A section of the *Niśvāsamukha* presents a summary of the *Pañcārthasūtra*. Many of the verses are straightforward reformulations of the the *Pañcārthasūtra*, while some appear to be totally different, which suggests the redactors of the *Niśvāsamukha* may have worked with a version different from the one that has come down to us. See Kafle 2015: 46-49.

[9]Olivelle 2005: 25-29 and Brick 2006: 298-299.

Dharmasūtras, which register the voices of various teachers and admit to disagreement over certain issues, the *Pañcārthasūtra*, at least as we have it, is univocal.

It should also be noted that the *Pañcārthasūtra*'s orientation towards the Veda and Veda-aligned cultural practices is different from the one that characterizes most other *sūtra*-texts. Other works of this genre notionally or practically subordinate themselves to the Veda, but the *Pañcārthasūtra* presents itself as transcending the soteriological benefits offered within the Vedic mainstream. This orientation is evident from its claim to possess the unique means whereby a practitioner may achieve liberation, thereby devaluing the religious methods available to the broader community of Brahmins. This position is articulated most directly in a verse, recently highlighted and translated by Peter Bisschop, that spans three separate *sūtras*: "an exceptional (*ati-*) gift, an exceptional sacrifice, and an exceptional course of austerity deliver [the practitioner] to the exceptional goal."[10] The point here is that the basic methods taught in the Dharmaśāstras, both for householders and ascetics, are surpassed by the exceptional forms of practice taught in the *Pañcārthasūtra*. Kauṇḍinya makes this notion especially explicit when he describes the Pāśupata system as " the stage beyond [the socio-cultural norms of the system of four life-stages]" (*atyāśrama-*)."[11]

Although there is little we can confidently say about the status of the *Pañcārthasūtra* during its initial compilation and early circulation, it became customary, by the time of Kauṇḍinya at the latest, to attribute the text to Śiva, who was supposed to have taken on a human body for the ex-

[10] *Pañcārthasūtra* 2.9-11 (numbering following Bisschop 2006b): *atidattam *atīṣṭaṃ yat* (conj. [Bisschop 2006b: 9]: *atigūḍham* : Ed.) *atitaptaṃ tapas tathā | atyāgatiṃ gamayate tasmād bhūyas tapaś caret*. Note that Bisschop does not emend the *sūtra* in his edition; he does, however, suggest that *atīṣṭam* is the original reading and that "a relative *yat* after Kauṇḍinya's *atīṣṭam* has dropped out." See Bisschop 2020: 17 for another translation of these *sūtras*.

[11] See *Pañcārthabhāṣya* on 1.1, p. 4, ll. 1-2: *atyāśramaprasiddhaṃ liṅgam āsthāya pravacanam uktavān*. See also the commentary on p. 8, ll. 11-13: *sthūlopāyapūrvakatvāt sūkṣmavidheyādhigamasya *pūrvāśramayamaniyamapratiṣedhārtham* (em. [Sanderson 2012, Handout 2: 2] : *-pūrvāśramaniyama-* : Ed.) *atyāśramayamaniyamaprasiddhyarthaṃ ca prāg vidhiḥ prathamaṃ vyākhyāyate*. Sanderson 2012, Handout 2: 2 quotes and translates these two passages. Bisschop 2020: 16-17 briefly discusses the *atyāśrama*.

press purpose of revealing his teachings to the world. Through this narrative, the *Pañcārthasūtra* is invested with an explicitly scriptural status in a manner that resembles the Buddhist model of scripturality, though the text itself is quite distinct from anything ever attributed to the Buddha. In Kauṇḍinya's version, which is perhaps the earliest that has come down to us, Śiva takes up the body of a Brahmin and descends into Kāyāvataraṇa. After walking to Ujjayinī, he adopts the external markings fit for the *atyāśrama*, and he takes up residence in an altar-enclosure demarcated by ashes.[12] He teaches the *Pañcārthasūtra* in response to the arrival of a student:

> Thereupon, the blessed Kuśika, impelled by Rudra, arrived. Having seen in the *ācārya* [i.e., Śiva] the characteristic attributes of preeminence, such as complete contentment and satisfaction, and in himself the opposite [qualities], Kuśika took hold of his feet and declared his *jāti, gotra*, Vedic learning, and absence of debt in accordance with convention. The student [i.e., Kuśika], remaining there like a sick man, asked the teacher, who was standing like a doctor ready at hand: "Blessed one, is there a definitive and available resolution for all types of suffering, including those that arise from the self, from the phenomenal world, and from the gods?"[13]

Śiva replies to Kuśika's request by declaring "[the teaching beginning with] *atha*," [i.e., the *Pañcārthasūtra*].[14] What makes this traditional account of the *Pañcārthasūtra* unique, at least when compared to those found in later Śaiva scriptures, is that it makes no attempt to place the text's ultimate origins in a transcendent source. Śiva promulgated the *Pañcārthasūtra*, but he did so in a manifestly human form at a particular point in history and to a particular person. This basic narrative

[12] *Pāñcārthabhāṣya* on 1.1, p. 3, l. 15 to p. 4, l. 12: *tathā śiṣṭaprāmāṇyāt kāmitvād ajātatvāc ca manuṣyarūpī bhagavān brāhmaṇakāyam āsthāya kāyāvataraṇe avatīrṇa iti | tathā padbhyām ujjayinīṃ prāptaḥ | kasmāt | śiṣṭaprāmāṇyāt cihnadarśanaśravaṇāc ca | atyāśramaprasiddhaṃ liṅgam āsthāya pravacanam uktavān bhasmasnānaśayanānusnānanirmālyaikavāsograhaṇād adhikaraṇaprasiddyarthaṃ ca svaśāstrokte āyatane śiṣyasambandhārthaṃ śucau deśe bhasmavedyām uṣitaḥ*. See Hara 1966: 156-157, cited in Williams 2017: 161 n. 415, for a translation of this entire passage, including the parts cited in the following two notes. Sanderson 2012, Handout 2: 2 also cites and translates part of this passage.

[13] *Pāñcārthabhāṣya* 1.1, p. 4, ll. 5-10: *ato rudrapracoditaḥ kuśikabhagavān abhyāgatyācārye paripūrṇaparitṛptyādyutkarṣalakṣaṇāni viparītāni cātmani dṛṣṭvā pādāv upasaṃgṛhya nyāyena jātiṃ gotraṃ śrutaṃ anṛṇatvaṃ ca nivedayitvā kṛtakṣaṇam ācāryaṃ kāle vaidyavad avasthitam āturavad avasthitaḥ śiṣyaḥ pṛṣṭavān bhagavan kim eteṣāṃ ādhyātmikādhibhautikādhidavikānāṃ sarvaduḥkhānām aikāntiko 'tyantiko vyapoho 'sty uta neti*. My translation largely follows Hara's in sense, albeit with some modifications.

[14] *Pāñcārthabhāṣya* 1.1, p. 4, ll. 10-12: *athoktaparigrahādhikāralipsāsu parāpadeśenopadeśe sacchiṣyasādhakapāṭhaprasiddhyarthaṃ kāraṇapadārthādhigamārthaṃ cātmani parāpadeśaṃ kṛtvā bhagavān evoktavān atheti*. I cannot make full sense of this sentence, but the ending is clear enough.

was seemingly widespread. An analogous but somewhat more complicated version is found in the old *Skandapurāṇa*, a historically layered text that may be dated the sixth or seventh century CE.[15] The relevant portion of this text has been edited and summarized by Peter Bisschop.[16]

The *Skandapurāṇa* begins its discussion of the origins of the Pāśupata community with a description of a place called Kārohaṇa, to which Śiva descends in every era in order to favor pure-minded Brahmins.[17] In discussing the current Kali age, the *Skandapurāṇa* tells us that Śiva emanated four men from his four faces and ordered them to travel to earth after taking on the form of mendicant Brahmins.[18] Each of these divine emanations then took up residence in a different city. The one named Kauśika, presumably the same figure as Kauṇḍinya's Kuśika, is associated with Ujjayanī. Śiva then assumed a white-limbed form and subsequently traveled to the house of a Brahmin named Somaśarman.[19] He initiated Somaśarman together with his family and then sets out for Ujjayanī. Having arrived, Śiva entered a charnel ground and smeared himself with ashes before accepting Kauśika as his first student. He thereupon took his other three emanations as students in their respective cities. He "granted them his doctrine and declared his method," which is identified as "this highest secret called the Pañcārtha," seemingly a reference to the *Pañcārthasūtra*.[20]

Much like Kauṇḍinya's version, the *Skandapurāṇa*'s account of the *Pañcārthasūtra*'s promul-

[15]The dating here applies to the text as it is found in old Nepalese manuscripts. See Bisschop 2006a: 3-4 and Bakker 2014: 10-11.

[16]*Skandapurāṇa* 167, vv. 112-138 in Bisschop 2006a: 102-103. See especially the discussion of this section given in Bisschop 2006: 40 and the synopsis on 69-70.

[17]*Skandapurāṇa* 167, vv. 110-117 in Bisschop 2006a: 102-103.

[18]*Skandapurāṇa* 167, vv. 119-120ab in Bisschop 2006a: 103: *vartamāne kalau cāpi jñātvā duḥkhārditaṃ jagat* | *catvāraḥ puruṣān sṛṣṭvā svasmān mukhacatuṣṭayāt* | *provāca parameśāno lokānugrahalipsayā* || *yūyaṃ yāta mahīṃ sarve dvijā bhūtvā tapasvinaḥ*. This passage is briefly summarized in Sanderson 2014: 9.

[19]*Skandapurāṇa* 167, vv. 122-124 in Bisschop 2006a: 103: *ujjayanyāṃ gurujyeṣṭhaḥ kauśiko nāma nāmataḥ* | *dvitīyo gārgya ity eva jambūmārge satāpanaḥ* || *tṛtīyaś cābhavan mitro mathurāyāṃ mahāmanāḥ* | *brahmacārī caturthas tu kuruṣv eva sugotrajaḥ* || *bhagavān api deveśaḥ paramaiśvaryasaṃyutaḥ* | *atrivaṃśaprasūtasya nāmnā vai somaśarmaṇaḥ* | *rūpaṃ kṛtvā sitāṅgaṃ tu jagāmātrigṛhaṃ śubham*. The part of the passage concerning Somaśarman is discussed and translated in Bakker 2019b: 295.

[20]*Skandapurāṇa* 167, vv. 125-130 in Bisschop 2006a: 104.

gation still takes place entirely within the human world and present age. But, in addition to making reference to previous *yugas*, it also removes a degree of human involvement from the formative stages of the text's transmission by depicting Kauśika as a divine emanation rather than a divinely inspired human being. It also complicates our image of the nascent Pāśupata movement by introducing four additional figures, including three other divine emanations: Gārgya, Mitra, and an unnamed *brahmacārin*.

Very few other Pāñcārthika texts are extant. Several that survive may have been invested with a scriptural status, but our ability to assess them is compromised by their relative obscurity. Apart from the *Pañcārthasūtra* and Kauṇḍinya's commentary thereon, we have four short versified rule-books (*vidhi*-) of uncertain date, all of which are preserved together in a single manuscript. Three of them have been recently studied by Diwakar Acharya.[21] They deal, respectively, with an initiation ritual (*saṃskāra*-), regulations pertaining to begging bowls (*pātra*-), expiations (*prāyaścitta*-), and a funerary rite (*anteṣṭi*-). All four are verse compositions. There is some indication that they were understood to take the form of a dialogue, though the teacher and interlocutor are never named.[22] Alexis Sanderson argues that these works were probably held to be "revelation" because their language diverges from "the norms expected of writing claimed by authors as their own." (The appearance of a register of Sanskrit marked by frequent solecisms is an important phenomenon about which I will have more to say towards the end of this chapter). Insofar as this particular collection of texts is concerned, the linguistic evidence is persuasive, though perhaps not entirely conclusive. Sanderson cites, among other examples, a verse from the *Pātravidhi* ("Handbook for the Purifica-

[21] Acharya 2007, 2010, and 2012. The *Prāyaścittavidhi* is yet to be edited.

[22] See, for instance, the use of *pravakṣyāmi* in Acharya 2007: 29, v. 8 and *vakṣye* in Acharya 2010: 137, v. 1. This type of interjection appears more frequently in the *Anteṣṭividhi*. Several verses in the *Pātravidhi* are attributed to Manu. For instance, see Acharya 2012: 9, v. 43.

tion of a Begging Bowl"), which reads "*śūdrād gṛhya*" instead of the expected "*śūdrād gṛhītvā*."[23] Yet this particular verse, as Acharya notes, finds a word-for-word parallel in a Brahmanical *dharma* text, and, as a consequence, it seems certain that both texts are simply making use of a popular maxim that contained this particular non-standard form.[24] An analogous type of grammatical irregularity is found in Kauṇḍinya's commentary, undoubtedly intended to be a work of human authorship, where *nivedayitvā* is once used instead of the standard *nivedya*.[25] But the frequency with which such solecisms appear in these rulebooks lends credence to Sanderson's hypothesis.

Sanderson brings our attention to another piece of relevant evidence. The colophon of the *Prāyaścittavidhi* contains the claim that it was "taught by the venerable Gārgya" (*gārgyapādopadiṣṭa-*), presumably identifiable with the Gārgya who was emanated from one of Śiva's four faces in the *Skandapurāṇa*. Sanderson argues that the use of "taught" (*upadiṣṭa-*) instead of something like "composed" (*viracita-*) suggests that this work was not seen as the product of human authorship.[26] Assuming he is correct, we might say that, at a certain point, the Pāñcārthikas conceived of these four manuals as scriptural, but we cannot be totally sure whether they were composed as scripture or later invested with that status through the emergence of new narratives about their origins. Two more Pāñcārthika texts are extant: the *Gaṇakārikā* ("Categorical Verses") and its commentary.[27] Sanderson argues on similar linguistic grounds that the first of these was likely held to be scripture.[28] He also points out that the commentary presents it as Śiva's answer to a disciple's question.

The idea that one of Śiva's divine emanations revealed a set of definite texts shares a certain

[23]Sanderson 2014: 8 n. 29. See also *Pātravidhi*, v. 3 in Acharya 2012: 2-3. Acharya notes that this verse is parallel with *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra* 1.6.9, which concerns the use of a water jug (*kamaṇḍalu-*).

[24]Acharya 2012: 3 n. 4.

[25]*Pañcārthabhāṣya* on *Pañcārthasūtra* 1.1, p. 4, l. 7. *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 7.1.38 notes that this type of usage is acceptable in Vedic literature (*chandasi*), though I doubt Kauṇḍinya is artificially archaizing his language here.

[26]Sanderson 2014: 9 also notes the *Skandapurāṇa* narrative discussed above.

[27]The text is eight stanzas long, though the commentary is fairly extensive.

[28]Sanderson 2014: 8-9, esp. n. 29

degree of similarity with the notion that Śiva took up a human body in order to teach the *Pañcārthasūtra*. Both narratives grant full agency to figures that were, at the very least, supposed to have existed in time and space.[29] As we will see, this paradigm is different from the self-representational narratives found in most non-Pāñcārthika texts; other Śaiva scriptures generally depict themselves as the product of primordial knowledge's gradual descent into a definite realization. This process is usually imagined to involve various gods and divine figures operating, at least at the initial stages of the process, outside the realm of ordinary existence. Although human beings are sometimes introduced as mediating figures, their activities are represented as entirely editorial, not fundamentally generative.

It should also be emphasized that the scripturalizing attributions associated with Pāñcārthika texts are all external to the texts themselves, being found only in commentaries, colophons, and other texts that aggregate various types of traditional narratives. The absence of any internal claim to divine provenance might be the product of a variety of historical conditions or underlying presuppositions. For example, the *Pañcārthasūtra* follows, at least in certain respects, a pattern shared with the *sūtra*-texts of various Brahmanical disciplines of systematized knowledge.[30] It is not customary for *sūtras* to provide an account of or reflection upon their own authority. Could it be that the authors or compilers of the *Pañcārthasūtra* were simply adhering to this genre norm?

However the *Pañcārthasūtra* may have been initially conceived (to say nothing of the other surviving Pāñcārthika texts), the emergence of narratives explicitly attributing its promulgation to Śiva indicates that these types of authorizing claims were important. It is interesting that the dates proposed for Kauṇḍinya (4th or 5th centuries CE) roughly correspond with the emergence of an

[29]Sanderson 2014: 9 n. 33 points us to a relevant thirteenth century inscription published in EI 1:32, pp. 271-287.

[30]See Acharya 2013 and Bisschop 2018b, which discuss how Vedic passages were incorporated into the *Pañcārthasūtra*. This process is common to and far more widespread in the *śrautasūtras*. See, for example, Fushimi 1998: 2.

entirely unprecedented type of Śaiva scripture among another group of Pāśupata ascetics. These texts, to which I now turn, might have presented themselves as divine in origin; it seems therefore possible, though not certain, that the increasing prominence of Pāñcārthika representations of their own textual corpus developed under the influence of these new materials.

2.3 A New Scriptural Paradigm?

Sometime around the fourth century, a new group of Pāśupata ascetics emerged. They practiced something called the "world-transcending observance" (*lokātītavrata-*) or "great observance" (*mahāvrata-*), and, as Sanderson has shown, were known variously as Lākulas, Kapālavratins, Kālamukhas, and Kālavaktras.[31] Their system of practice was set out in texts called Pramāṇas ("Authorities"). Later exegetes inform us that the Lākulas had eight Pramāṇas in total.[32]

Almost nothing remains of the Pramāṇas. Their dating is uncertain, though the earlier among them cannot be much later than the fourth century CE. No complete or partial manuscript of any of these texts has come down to us. All that we have is a single, seven-verse citation of a text called the *Pañcārthapramāṇa* ("Authority on the Pañcārtha"). This fragment is quoted by a tenth- or eleventh-century Kashmiri exegete named Kṣemarāja, who includes it his commentary on the *Svacchandatantra* ("The System of Svacchanda[-Bhairava]"), a later scripture that I will discuss in detail subsequently. For now, I want to concentrate on the *Pañcārthapramāṇa*-fragment itself, which, according to Sanderson, contains "an analysis of the Aghoramantra," that is, one of the five principal mantras of the Pāñcārthika ascetics and, it seems, the Lākulas.[33] The quoted verses are composed in *anuṣṭubh* meter and contain the second-person injunctive form *śṛṇu* ("listen"),

[31] Sanderson 2006.
[32] A summary of the relevant evidence is given in Sanderson 2006: 169-174.
[33] Sanderson 2006: 175.

indicating that the text probably assumed the form of a dialogue.[34] It is therefore reminiscent of later Śaiva scriptures, which are almost invariably composed in *anuṣṭubh* and often present themselves as a dialogue between Śiva and the Goddess.[35]

Kṣemarāja elsewhere provides evidence that the Pramāṇas were held to have a transcendent origin, though his understanding may be anachronistic. The relevant comment pertains to a long section of the *Svacchandatantra* that deals with cosmography and includes a list of the eight Pramāṇas. As Sanderson notes, the *Svacchandatantra* presents these texts in a personified (or perhaps I should say deified) form, claiming that their names point to eight Rudras who rule over various levels of the universe.[36] Kṣemarāja explains that "these Rudras caused the Pāśupata scriptures (*śāstra-*) bearing their names to descend into the world."[37] From the specific meaning of the qualifier "causing the descent of the scriptures" (*śāstrāvatāraka-*), we may infer, if speculatively, that these Rudras were not held to be the ultimate source of the Pramāṇas and were seen chiefly as mediating agents responsible for bringing them down from some primordial source, presumably Śiva, into the human realm.

Kṣemarāja lived many centuries after the Pramāṇas were composed, and we cannot be sure whether his interpretation reflects their own self-representation. Yet the notion that there were eight Pramāṇa-Rudras ruling over eight levels of the cosmos appears to be far older than Kṣemarāja — Sanderson has shown that it is derived from the Lākula's own cosmographical system.[38] It is

[34] See *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 1.41-43, vol. 1, p. 38, ll. 4-17.

[35] It is also common for Śaiva scriptures to present themselves as a mediated form of a conversation between Śiva and the Goddess retold in abbreviated form through the dialogue of two lesser divine or sagely figures.

[36] *Svacchandatantra* 10.1133cd-1135ab, vol 5.2, p. 477. See Sanderson 2006: 170.

[37] *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 10.1134-1135ab, vol 5.2, p. 477, ll. 16-17: *ete rudrā etannāmakapāśupataśāstrāvatārakāḥ*. See Sanderson 2006: 176 for another translation.

[38] The relationship between the *Svacchandatantra*'s cosmography and that of the Lākulas has been demonstrated in Sanderson 2001: 24-29 and Sanderson 2006: 163-176. See also Kafle 2015: 281-290 for a translation of a relevant portion of the *Niśvāsamukha* and Goodall et al. 2015: 302.

therefore conceivable that at least some of the Pramāṇa-texts assigned these figures a role in their own revelation.

This type of divine involvement in textual production raises important questions. How, for example, did the people who composed and edited scriptural material understand their activities? And to what degree was human agency admitted as part of the process whereby scriptures assumed a definite textual form? I will consider these problems in more detail when examining later Śaiva texts; the Pramāṇas are almost completely unavailable and cannot serve as an object of sustained examination. But before moving on to better preserved bodies of Śaiva scripture, I want to examine another point Kṣemarāja makes about the Pramāṇas in a passage that has been closely studied by Sanderson:

> Among [the eight Pramāṇas], the one known as the *Hṛdaya* contains six Pramāṇas that are chiefly concerned with ritual, namely: the *Purakalpa*, *Kanaka*, *Śālā*, *Niruttara*, *Viśva*, and *Prapañca*. These differ from the previously mentioned eight Pramāṇas that are chiefly concerned with gnosis. Musulendra, a student of Lakuleśa [i.e., Śiva's earthly embodiment], extracted [these six Pramāṇas] from the *Hṛdaya* and used them as an initial teaching for neophytes. They are not separately enumerated [in the *Svacchandatantra*]. As a consequence, it is said that the system has two parts, the Lākula and Mausula.[39]

Certain aspects of this brief narrative call its antiquity into question. For example, Kṣemarāja here speaks of Lakuleśa (otherwise known as Lakulīśa); this is the name traditionally given to the earthly form of Śiva who is held to have initiated the various Pāśupata lineages. Bisschop has shown that "Lakulīśa" and its parallels are found in neither Kauṇḍinya's commentary nor a fourth-century inscription that deals with a lineage of Pāñcārthika teachers.[40] Yet it remains possible

[39] *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 10.1134-35b, vol. 5.2, p. 477: *tatra ca hṛdayākhyaṃ yat pramāṇam uktaṃ tasyāntarbhūtāni yāni purakalpakanakaśālāniruttaraviśvaprapañcākhyāni ṣaṭ kriyāpradhānāni pramāṇāni proktajñānapradhānapramāṇāṣṭakavilakṣaṇāni hṛdayākhyāt pramāṇāl lakuleśaśiṣyeṇa musulendreṇoddhṛtyārurukṣūṇāṃ prathamaṃ pradarśitāni na tānīha pṛthag gaṇitāni evaṃ lākulaṃ mausulaṃ caiva dvidhā tantraṃ prakīrtitam*. See Sanderson 2006: 176-177, which cites and translates this passage. I follow the essence of Sanderson's translation, though I have made some modifications, especially in terms of style.

[40] Bisschop 2006a: 45-47, cited in Williams 2017: 163.

that Musulendra was an important figure in the relatively early propagation of Śaiva asceticism. A seventh-century inscription from Malhar mentions that a certain Musalīśa was initiated by Śiva's earthly incarnation.[41] If this figure is identifiable with Musulendra, as Hans Bakker argues, then his connection with the Śaiva ascetic tradition must predate Kṣemarāja by four or five centuries. We do not know, however, whether he was imagined to be a divine emanation, like Gārgya, or fully human.

What makes Kṣemarāja's brief comment significant is that Musulendra is said to extract (*uddhṛtya*) six additional Pramāṇas from the *Hṛdaya*. There is a certain degree of ambiguity with respect to the precise meaning of extraction here. On the one hand, the resulting texts are said to be "contained within" (*antarbhūta-*) the *Hṛdaya*, perhaps meaning that they were originally chapters or sections of that work. Yet, on the other, "extraction" is regularly used to describe the process whereby the essence of a divine exemplar is condensed into a textual form of a more limited size. As a consequence, the idea may be that Musulendra took relevant details from the *Hṛdaya* and reformulated them into new texts.

Text-critical studies of Śaiva scriptures, most notably by Alexis Sanderson, have greatly advanced our understanding of the process by which these materials were sometimes composed. As he has shown, redactors often took passages, even whole chapters, from existing texts and reworked them into new scriptural compositions, sometimes barely changing the appropriated materials and sometimes making substantial doctrinal and stylistic modifications. To give just one example, take the following passages from the *Svacchandatantra* and a somewhat later scripture called the *Tantrasadbhāva* ("Essence of the Tantras"). Both open a consideration of the interpretation of dreams:

[41] The inscription has been published several times. For the most up-to-date versions and translations, see Bakker 2019b: 289-293. Hans Bakker proposes that the Mugalisa mentioned in the inscription is the same person as the Musulendra mentioned by Kṣemarāja.

Svacchandatantra 4.3-7:[42]	*Tantrasadbhāva* 9:[43]
śubhasvapnāṃ pravakṣyāmi	śubhāṃ svapnāṃ pravakṣyāmi
aśubhāni varānane ǀ	aśubhāni varānane ǀ
svapne tu madirāṃ pītvā	svapne ca madirāpānaṃ
āmamāṃsaṃ prabhakṣayet[44] ǁ 3 ǁ	mastyamāṃsaprabhakṣaṇaṃ ǁ
kṛmiviṣṭhānulepañ ca	kṛmiviṣṭhānulepañ ca
rudhireṇābhiṣecanaṃ ǀ	rudhireṇābhiṣecanaṃ ǀ
bhakṣaṇaṃ dadhibhaktasya[45]	bhakṣaṇaṃ dadhikbhaktasya
śvetavastrānulepanaṃ ǁ 4 ǁ	śvetavastrānulepanaṃ ǁ
śvetātapatraṃ mūrdhnisthaṃ[46]	śvetātapatraṃ[47] mūrdhnisthaṃ
śvetasragdāmabhūṣaṇaṃ[48] ǀ	śvetasragdāmabhūṣaṇam[49] ǀ
siṃhāsanaṃ[50] rathaṃ yānaṃ	siṃhāsanaṃ[51] rathaṃ yānaṃ
dhvajaṃ rājābhiṣecanaṃ ǁ 5 ǁ	dhvajaṃ[52] rājābhiṣecanam ǁ
ratnāṅgābharaṇāṃ[53] dīptāṃ	ratnāṅgābharaṇāṃ dīptāṃ
tāṃbūlaphalam eva ca ǀ	tāmbūlaphalam eva ca ǀ
darśanaṃ śrīsarasvatyoḥ[54]	darśanaṃ śrīsarasvatyoḥ[55]
śubhanāryāvagūhanaṃ ǁ 6 ǁ	śubhanāryāvagūhanaṃ ǁ
narendrair[56] ṛṣidevaiś ca	narendrair[57] ṛṣidevais ca
siddhavidyādharair gaṇaiḥ	siddhavidyādharair[58] gaṇaiḥ ǀ
ācāryaiḥ saha saṃvādaṃ	ācāryaiḥ saha saṃvādaṃ
kṛtvā svapne prasiddhyati ǁ 7 ǁ	kṛtvā svapne prasiddhyati ǁ

Sanderson has already established the priority of the *Svacchanda* to the *Tantrasadbhāva*.[59] Here I wish only to provide a representative instance in which the author of a Śaiva scripture has clearly

[42]Here following the version preserved in NAK 1-224, NGMPP B28/18, f. 27v, l. 4 to f. 28r, l. 1. The verse numbers correspond with those found in the published edition. See *Svacchandatantra*, vol. 2, p. 2-3.

[43]A = NAK 1-363, NGMPP A44/1, f. 82r, l. 4 to f. 82v, l. 1, exposures 86/87 and B = NAK 5-445, NGMPP A 44/2, f. 44r, l. 6 to f. 44v. l. 1, exposures 47/48.

[44]Conj. Ms: *āmamāṃsa bhakṣayet*.

[45]Em. Ms: *dadhibhaktaṃ ca*.

[46]Em. Ms: *śvetātapatra mūrdhnistha*. The addition of grammatical endings may here and elsewhere be unjustified given that *prātipadika* forms are often used in this type of scripture, though it appears that scribes may have added them rather haphazardly during the course of transmission. See Kiss 2015: 75, though he is speaking of the *Brahmayāmala*.

[47]A and B: *śvetātapatra*. See note above.

[48]Em. Ms: *-bhūṣaṇaḥ*.

[49]B: *sragdāmabhūṣitaṃ*.

[50]Em. Ms: *siṃhāsana rathaṃ*? I am not sure how to read the ligature following *śi* in the manuscript.

[51]B: *siṃhāsana rathaṃ*

[52]Em. A and B: *dhvaja rājābhiṣecanaṃ*.

[53]Em. Ms: *ratnāgābharaṇā dīptāṃ*.

[54]Em. Ms: *śrīsarasvatyā*. See published version, though perhaps I am misinterpreting the manuscript reading?

[55]Em. Ms: *śrīsarasvatyāṃ*.

[56]Em. Ms: *narendrai*.

[57]Em: A and B: *narendrariṣidevaiś*.

[58]A: *siddhavidyādharai gaṇaiḥ*.

[59]Sanderson 2001: 32 n. 34.

redacted materials verbatim from an earlier scriptural source. It was not customary to discuss or describe this process of compilation and redaction directly, whether in scriptures or exegetical works. Yet in Kṣemarāja's discussion of Musulendra, we have what seems to be a reference to this very type of activity, albeit one articulated in vague and likely mythologized terms. Importantly, editing and redaction did not mean that these six new Pramāṇas needed to be re-categorized as some other type of text. They retained their scriptural status. This narrative is at least suggestive of a textual culture in which human activities, such as the editing and repurposing of a putatively divine source text, were not necessarily taken to invalidate the scriptural character of their products.[60]

It remains possible that Musulendra was considered a divine or semi-divine being. Were this the case, it would perhaps account for the willingness to admit his involvement in editing scriptural material. But Kṣemarāja does not seem to make this claim, at least not explicitly. In commenting on the *Svacchandatantra*, Kṣemarāja explains that the Mausulas and Kārukas follow observances taught "by Lakuleśa's student Musulendra" and "another person who descended to the region of Kārohaṇa," respectively.[61] Kṣemarāja thereby imputes a divine or semi-divine status to the promulgator of the Kāruka texts, which are entirely lost, while leaving Musulendra's status indeterminate.

A precise understanding of the Pramāṇas remains beyond our reach because we cannot directly examine how these texts represented themselves. The evidence suggests that their authors may have portrayed them as ultimately originating with Śiva, but this hypothesis remains speculative. It is likely, however, that the Pramāṇas introduced textual innovations that would become standard in other types of Śaiva scripture, including versification and a dialogic form. Although the brief

[60]There appears to have been some disagreement over the status of these six Pramāṇas. Alexis Sanderson 2006: 172 reports that the *Jayadrathayāmala*, a Śaiva scripture with a layered textual history, assigns them to six additional Rudras.

[61]*Svacchandatantroddyota* on 11.71cd, vol. 6, p. 52, l. 17 to p. 53, l. 2: *śrīlakuleśaśiṣyeṇa musulendreṇa kārohaṇasthāvatīrṇena ca apareṇa māyātattvagatakṣemeśabrahmasvāmiprāptihetukriyābahulāḥ sve sve śāstre vrataviśeṣā uktā iti māyātattvam eva tatra paraṃ padam*.

fragment of the *Pañcārthapramāṇa* does not give us enough information to determine who exactly its interlocutors were supposed to be, subsequent Śaiva scriptures often present themselves as either a dialogue between Śiva and the Goddess or as the retelling of that dialogue, though some texts involve discussions between other seers and divine beings.

2.4 Divine Authors and Human Editors

The enormous and varied scriptural corpus that emerged after the Pramāṇas and adopted their innovations may be divided roughly into three groups. The first is composed of the texts of another ascetic tradition, the Somasiddhāntins (i.e., Kāpālikas), who traced their spiritual lineage back to Lakuleśa and adopted extreme forms of antinomian practice. Their scriptures, which are often grouped together with Pāñcārthika and Lākula works as part of a broader category called the "Atimārga" ("Way Beyond [the Normative System of Caste and Life-Stage]") are entirely lost, though Sanderson has suggested that some were redacted into the texts of other groups.[62] The second is called the "Mantramārga" ("Mantra Way"), which is composed of scriptures written for a community of initiates that includes householders and ascetics and emphasizes both knowledge and ritual in the pursuit of spiritual advancement. The earliest Mantramārgic text, the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, is heavily indebted to the Pramāṇas and likely reused passages from one or more of them.[63] The last group is different in that it is concerned with devotional practices appropriate for non-initiates, who scholars sometimes call "lay Śaivas."

The Mantramārgic corpus is complex and many of its scriptures contain theologically sophisticated accounts of their own scriptural character. I will therefore first consider the less complicated

[62] Sanderson 2014: 11-12.
[63] Sanderson 2001: 29.

but broadly similar narratives found in texts composed for non-initiates before returning to the Mantramārga. Among the principal scriptures of the "lay" category are a variety of Purāṇic texts, though they will not be my focus here.[64] We also have the so-called Śivadharma corpus, which refers to a historically stratified collection of texts transmitted together in Nepal.[65] The oldest two of these, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* ("Śiva's Dharma Code") and the *Śivadharmotta* ("Supplement to Śiva's Dharma Code") may be dated to the sixth or seventh century.[66] Only these two, as Florinda de Simini notes, are widely attested in India, and they will serve as my principal object of examination.

The *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Śivadharmottara* are both composed in *anuṣṭubh* and divided into twelve chapters. The first emphasizes the importance of devotion (*bhakti-*), especially, as Bisschop tells us, through practices involving the *liṅga* (i.e., the aniconic representation of Śiva that serves as the primary object of his popular worship).[67] Although largely injunctive in nature, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* also contains a narrative concerning the origin of the *liṅga* and a long *mantra* intended to pacify threats to a kingdom.[68] The *Śivadharmottara* is similar in terms of its general character, though it touches on a broader variety of issues, including the ritualized manufacture and worship of manuscripts.[69] Both texts incorporate certain ideas and practices held in common with other religious communities, albeit expressed in a specifically Śaiva idiom.[70] For example, they regularly exhort their listeners to "feed devotees of Śiva and satisfy Brahmins" or to

[64]See Sanderson 2014: 3-4 for a brief discussion. The self-representation of the Purāṇas in general is considered in Williams 2017: 34-46.

[65]de Simini 2016b. Note that late medieval doxographies often categorize the *Śivadharmaśāstra* as a subsidiary Purāṇa (*upapurāṇa-*); see Rocher 1986: 228. In terms of textual self-representation and content, it is rather different from most Purāṇic material.

[66]Bisschop 2018a: 9-25.

[67]Bisschop 2018a: 9 states that "The bulk of the work may be characterised as a manual for *liṅga* worship."

[68]Bisschop 2018a: 44.

[69]This topic is discussed in *Śivadharmottara* 2, pp. 43-75; see de Simini 2016a, esp. 83-226 and 374-391 for a translation of the relevant section.

[70]I adopt the term "Śaiva idiom" from Sanderson 2009: 233.

"feed Brahmins devoted to Śiva," clearly an adapted form of the more general practice of feeding Brahmins that is amply attested in the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* ("Manu's Dharma Code"), the *Mahābhārata*, and elsewhere.[71] (Note, however, that Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin have suggested that the focus on Brahmins in this context may be "an artifact of the guest-reception language" upon which these sections are modeled.)[72] The *Śivadharmaśāstra* even re-envisions the classical "collection of four life stages" (*caturāśrama-*) as modes of Śiva-oriented religious practice, albeit with significant modifications.[73]

Both of these texts make a self-conscious claim to scriptural status by presenting themselves as a retelling of a teaching given by Śiva. The *Śivadharmaśāstra* is composed as a dialogue between Nandikeśvara, the principal member of Śiva's divine host (*gaṇa-*), and the semi-divine seer Sanatkumāra. Nandikeśvara's answers are ultimately said to be derived from a teaching that Śiva previously revealed to his son, the god Skanda, and the Goddess.[74] The *Śivadharmottara* contains a similar claim in its opening section, which begins with the famous seer Agasti (i.e., Agastya) requesting that Skanda teach modes of religious discipline (*dharma-*) suitable for all beings. Skanda replies with the principal teachings of the *Śivadharmottara*, which, he explains, were formerly taught by Śiva to the Goddess.[75]

[71] See the *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645, f. 22v, l. 4 and Add. 1694, f. 24v, l. 1, here following 1645: *bhojayec *chivabhaktāṃś* (corr. [1694] : *chivabhaktāś* : Cod.) *ca *viprāṃś* (corr. [1694] : *viprā* : Cod.) *śaktyā ca dakṣayet*. See also the same folio, l. 6 and 1694, f. 24v, l. 4: **śivabhaktaṃ* (corr. [1694] : *śivabhakti-* : Cod.) *dvijaṃ samyag bhojayitvā vidhānavit*. For the relevant section of *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, see 3.224-246 in Olivelle 2005: 489-494.

[72] Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin 2021: 36-39, see p. 39 for the quoted text. The authors emphasize here and elsewhere that this text opens religious observance to Śūdras, though, as they point out, limiting their engagement, it seems, to the service of others.

[73] See Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin 2021: 20-31.

[74] For Sanatkumāra's initial questions, see the *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645, f. 1v, ll. 2-3 and Naraharinath 1998: 1, vv. 1.7-9. For Nandikeśvara's specification that he is teaching in accordance with the direct prescriptions of Śiva, see ULC MS Add. 1645 1.12-13 f. 1v, l. 4: *śrūyatām abhidhāsyāmi sukhopāyaṃ mahatphalaṃ* | *paramaṃ sarvadharmāṇāṃ śivadharmaṃ śivātmakaṃ* || *śivena kathitaṃ pūrvaṃ pārvatyāḥ ṣaṇmukhasya ca* | *gaṇānāṃ devamukhyānām asmākāṃ ca viśeṣataḥ*.

[75] *Śivadharmottara* 1.2-5, p. 25: *jñānaśaktidharaṃ śāntaṃ kumāraṃ śaṅkarātmajam* | *devāriskandanaṃ skandam*

Certain aspects of these two scriptures, including their names and the use of the term *dharma* to describe the programs of practice they encode, indicate that their authors understood themselves to be producing material somehow related to the Dharmaśāstric tradition. It seems therefore plausible that the division of these two texts into twelve chapters was modeled after the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, which contains precisely the same number. But, unlike the Dharmaśāstras, which position themselves as dependent upon and supplementary to the Veda, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and *Śivadharmottara* explicitly claim to offer better and more effective forms of practice than those prescribed within the Vedic corpus. For example, in the opening section of the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, Sanatkumāra explains that "Vedic rituals like the Agniṣṭoma are costly, but, in spite of the fact that they require a lot of effort, do not produce much in the way of results." He also points out that Vedic rituals "cannot be performed by twice-born people of limited means," and asks Nandikeśvara to "explain an easy method that can accomplish whatever may be desired."[76] Elsewhere, Nandikeśvara tells him that "without devotion to Śiva, one cannot ascend to Śiva's divine city, whether by means of violent asceticism or the performance of all the principal Vedic sacrifices."[77] The *Śivadharmaśāstra* even depicts Śiva as stating that "a Brahmin familiar with the four Vedas is not dear to me, but my devotee, even if a dog cooker [i.e., untouchable], is. One may make donations to and accept things from him. And he should be worshipped as I am."[78]

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agastiḥ paripṛcchati || *bhagavan darśanāt tubhyam antyajasyāpi sadgatiḥ* | *sapta janmāni vipras tu svarggād bhraṣṭaḥ prajāyate* || *tenāsi nātha bhūtānāṃ sarveṣām anukampakaḥ ataḥ sarvahitaṃ dharmaṃ saṃkṣepāt prabravīhi me* || *dharmā bahuvidhā devyā devena kathitāḥ kila* | *te ca śrutās tvayā sarve pṛcchāmi tvām ahan tataḥ*.

[76]See *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645, f. 1v, ll. 2-3 and Naraharinatha 1998: 1: *agniṣṭomādayo yajñā bahuvittakriyānvitāḥ* | **nātyantaphalabhūyiṣṭhā bahvāyāsasamanvitāḥ* (om. : Cod.) | *na śakyante *yataḥ* (em. [Naraharinatha] : *tapaḥ* : Cod.) *kartum alpavittair dvijātibhir* || *sukhopāyam ato brūhi sarvakāmārthasādhakam*. See de Simini 2016a: 49 for another translation.

[77]*Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645, f. 5v, ll. 2-3 and 1694, f. 5v, l. 6, following 1645: *na ca tapobhir atyugrair na ca sarvair mahāmakhaiḥ* | *gacchec chivapuran divyaṃ *muktabhaktir* (corr. [1694] : *muktiṃ bhaktir* : 1645) *bhavātmakaḥ*.

[78]*Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645, f. 2r, l. 2: *na me priyaś caturvedo madbhaktaḥ śvapaco 'pi yaḥ* | *tasmai deyan tato grāhyaṃ sa ca pūjyo yathā hy aham*. See Bisschop, Lubin, and Kafle 2021: 30, which cites and provides another translation of this verse.

These types of statement should not be overemphasized, and we must remember that the authors of the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and *Śivadharmottara* were participating in a textual culture characterized by the frequent use of hyperbole.[79] Both regularly prescribe the veneration of Brahmins and offer rebirth in a family of Vedic scholars as a reward that follows from adherence to its prescriptions.[80] And the frequent injunction to feed *śivayogins* must likewise be understood in the broader context of the early Śaiva ascetic traditions, which only admitted Brahmin initiates. Perhaps Veda-disparaging statements in these two texts may be taken, in accordance with the traditional hermeneutical principle, primarily as oblique self-praise rather than as criticism. In other words, these types of claims may not be meant to deny validity to the Veda and its allied texts in their own sphere, only to extol the superior nature of the practices prescribed in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and *Śivadharmottara*.

Claiming to transcend the Veda logically presupposes another source of authority, and both scriptures promote one, at least implicitly, by presenting themselves as ultimately derived from the teaching of Śiva. The *Śivadharmaśāstra* never explicitly thematizes the issue, but it emphasizes that its *dharma* was "proclaimed by Śiva" (*śivenokta-*) and, although the text is generally cast as a secondhand retelling of his original teaching, it nevertheless makes him the direct speaker from time to time.[81] The *Śivadharmottara*, per contra, directly addresses the issue of its own authority in an epistemologically sophisticated manner:

> This here [teaching] of Śiva is an injunctive statement; there are no explanatory passages belonging to Śiva. How could he who bestows grace upon the world utter anything false? What reason could the omniscient Śiva, pacified and free from all faults,

[79] I would therefore draw less strong conclusions than Schwartz 2012: 211-212. Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin 30-31 offer a more tempered assessment.

[80] For example, see *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645 f. 4v, l. 3: *puṇyakṣayāt kṣitiṃ prāpya rājā bhavati dhārmikaḥ | vedavedāṅgatattvajño brāhmaṇo 'pi sa jāyate*. See ULC MS Add 1694, f. 4v, l. 5 for the first half of this verse. The folio is broken, so the second half is not available.

[81] For the latter of these phenomena, see *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645 f. 2r, l. 1: *bhagavān uvāca*. For the former, see *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645 f. 31v, l. 2: *sarveṣām eva varṇānāṃ śivāśramaniṣevinām | śivadharmāḥ *śivenoktāḥ* (corr. : *śivanoktāḥ* : Cod.) *dharmakarmārthamuktaye*. This verse is cited and translated in Bisschop, Kafle, and Lubin 2021: 20.

> have for speaking untruthfully given that he is totally satisfied? Knowing everything, he will speak of things exactly as they are by nature, together with their virtues and defects, including meritorious actions and their rewards. People lie when they are overcome by faults like passion and hatred. Yet these do not exist in him, so how could he speak falsely? A stainless utterance composed by the omniscient Śiva, in whom no fault has ever arisen, is undoubtedly an authority. Wise people are therefore confident that his words are correct with respect to merit and demerit, and those who do not have faith go to hell.[82]

This passage looks like a relatively straightforward account of the epistemological foundations of Śaiva scripture in general and the *Śivadharmottara* in particular, but we must not miss a critical nuance. These criteria of reliability are framed with respect to Śiva as a direct speaker, yet the *Śivadharmottara* directly recognizes its own mediated character. The indirect relationship between Śiva's speech and the text as we have it is repeatedly emphasized. The text begins with Agasti asking Skanda to relate an abbreviated (*saṃkṣepāt*) account of various religious practices previously taught by Śiva to the Goddess, and the remainder of the text presents itself as a record of Agasti and Skanda's conversation.[83] Only at the very end of the final chapter do we learn that even their conversation has been relayed to us in a condensed form:

> The high-minded Skanda taught the great *Śivadharmottara* in 12,000 stanzas to Agasti, the best of seers. In it, the character of the ritual method (*karmayoga-*), the gnostic method (*jñānayoga-*), and the paths of *dharma* and non-*dharma* is described in detail. Understanding the entire [teaching], Agasti condensed it and taught its emancipation-granting essence in twelve chapters.[84]

[82] *Śivadharmottara* 1.41-47, p. 31-32: *vidhivākyam idaṃ śaivaṃ nārthavādaḥ śivātmakaḥ* | *lokānugrahakartā yaḥ sa mṛṣārthaṅ kathaṃ vadet* || *sarvajñaḥ paripūrṇatvād anyathā kena hetunā* | *brūyād vākyaṃ śivaḥ śāntaḥ sarvadoṣavivarjitaḥ* || *yad yathāvasthitaṃ vastu guṇadoṣaiḥ svabhāvataḥ* | *yāvat phalañ ca puṇyañ ca sarvajñas tat tathā vadet* || *rāgadveṣādibhir doṣair grastatvād anṛtaṃ vadet* | *te ceśvare na vidyante brūyāt sa katham anyathā* || *ajātāśeṣadoṣeṇa sarvajñena śivena yat* | *praṇītam amalaṃ vākyaṃ tat pramānan na saṃśayaḥ* || *tasmād īśvaravākyāni śraddheyāni vipaścitā* | *yathārtham puṇyapāpeṣu tadaśraddho vrajed adaḥ*. See Sanderson 2019: 12 n. 5 for another translation of the first half of this passage and the final sentence. I follow especially Sanderson's understanding of *yāvat*. See also de Simini 2016a: 67 n. 193 for another translation of the second half, excluding the final sentence.

[83] *Śivadharmottara* 1.2-5, p. 25.

[84] *Śivadharmottara* 12.261-263, p. 300: *uktaṃ dvādaśasāhasraṃ śivadharmottaraṃ mahat* | *agastaye munīndrāya kumāreṇa mahātmanā* || *itīha karmayogasya jñānayogasya tattvataḥ* | *dharmādharmagatīnāñ ca svarūpam upavarṇitaṃ* || *ity etad akhilaṃ budhvā saṃkṣipyāgastir abravīt dvādaśādhyāyasaṃyuktam iti sāraṃ vimuktidam*. See de Simini 2016b: 267 n. 82, where this passage is edited and another translation is given.

This brief statement, when read in light of the epistemological argument set out at the beginning of the text, suggests several important conclusions. First, the authors of the *Śivadharmottara* understood Śiva's speech to retain its authority even after its editorial modification. Second, they maintained that editing his utterances into definite texts of various sizes had no bearing on their fundamental identity as Śiva's words. The condensation involved could be quite substantial, with the current form of the *Śivadharmottara* reaching only about 1,700 stanzas in length. The fact that we are dealing with an indirect record seems to have been a completely uninteresting problem for the authors of the *Śivadharmottara*, which suggests that they conceptualized Śiva's speech in an expansive manner (recall that the Buddhists also thought of *buddhavacana* in an expansive way).[85] It may even be that Śiva's direct words were considered unmanageable for ordinary beings, making mediation a necessary prerequisite for human understanding. Third, the authors of the *Śivadharmottara* apparently saw no discontinuity in presenting their text as an ostensibly direct record of one conversation and only later revealing it to be an abbreviated retelling. I suspect that this flexible attitude towards textual representation was widespread.[86] We find precisely the same type of narrative in the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, which includes the following stanzas in its concluding section:

> The learned Candrātreya, having thus heard the whole essence-filled *dharma* taught by Sanatkumāra to a family member devoted to Śiva, extracted its best parts and declared this Dharmaśāstra, which has Śiva as its essence, in twelve chapters. To whatever extent someone practices Śiva's *dharma* on the basis of his instructions, [he] will, because of that instruction, certainly enjoy fruits to the very same extent; for one cannot know *dharma* without instruction, nor act without knowing, so both [the practitioner and the teacher] obtain the same result.[87]

[85] We should, however, remain sensitive to the fact that all of the explicitly mentioned editors are gods or seers.

[86] It should of course be noted that these types of presuppositions were presumably also operative for the composers and editors of the epics and Purāṇas.

[87] *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645, f. 37r, l. 6 to 37v l. 1 and 1694, f. 40v, ll. 3-5, following 1645: *śrutvaivam akhilaṃ dharmam ākhyātam *brahmasūnunā* (corr. [1694] : *brahmasūnunāṃ* : Cod.) | *candrātreyasagotrāya śivabhaktāya sāravat* || *sārāt sāraṃ samuddhṛtya *candrātreyeṇa* (corr. [1694] : *candrāteyeṇa* : Cod.) *dhīmatā* | *uktañ ca dvādaśādhyāyaṃ dharmaśāstraṃ śivātmakam* || *yāvad yasyopadeśena śivadharmaṃ samācaret* | *tāvat tasyāpi tat puṇyaṃ *upadeśān* (em. [1694] : *upadeṣṭaṃ* : Cod.) *na saṃśayaḥ* || *upadeśaṃ vinā yasmād dharmo jñātuṃ na śakyate*

Here we find an account of the text's editorial history that places its ostensibly current form several removes from the dialogic frame adopted within the main body of the text. The *Śivadharmaśāstra* explicitly presents itself as a dialogue between Nandikeśvara and Sanatkumāra, itself a retelling of an earlier conversation between Śiva and the Goddess. Only at the end of the text are we told that Sanatkumāra repeated the teaching to a member of Candrātreya's family and that it was later condensed by Candrātreya. Despite the direct acknowledgement of Candrātreya's editorial activities, these final steps were not folded into the frame narrative, and the dialogue remains in Nandikeśvara and Sanatkumāra's mouths.

Although the attribution to Candrātreya is surely fictional, at least from a critical perspective, the narrative plausibly reflects the actual underlying textual practices that resulted in the production of this scripture, namely the reformulation of preexisting but perhaps somewhat disparate materials that were considered to be, or at least represented as, authoritative family or community traditions. As in the Buddhist case, this type of editorial reformulation is usually not admitted directly, let alone thematized, but the incorporation of various types of seemingly popular material is evident. For example, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* states that a *liṅga* accidentally erected in play brings benefits to the person who erects it. This idea finds a parallel in the *Lotus Sūtra*, which states that children who accidentally construct a *stūpa* while playing will attain awakening.[88] Both might therefore

| *na ca kartum avijñāya tasmāt tulyaṃ phalaṃ tayoḥ*. See de Simini 2016b: 266 n. 80, where most of this passage is edited and translated.

[88] *Śivadharmaśāstra* ULC MS Add. 1645 f. 4v, l. 2, though note that this line appears to be crossed out and replaced with another: *krīḍann eva ca yaḥ kuryāl liṅgaṃ kaścid *dvijottama* (corr. : *dvijottamaḥ* : Cod.) | *yat phalaṃ hi bhavet tasya tan me nigadataḥ śṛṇu*. ULC MS Add. 1694, f. 4v, l. 4 preserves the first half of this verse. The second half is lost. See also SDhP-KN 2.81: *sikatāmayān vā puna kūṭa kṛtvā ye kecid uddiśya jināna stūpān* | *kumārakāḥ krīḍiṣu tatra tatra te sarvi bodhāya abhūṣi lābhinaḥ*. See Mirnig 2019: 488-490 for a discussion of several other Buddhist themes and their parallels in the *Śivadharmaśāstra*. Note also the *Śivadharmottara* 2.105-106: *api ślokaṃ tadarddhaṃ vā śivajñānasya yaḥ paṭhet* | *vācayec cintayed vāpi likhed vā lekhayīta vā* || *śṛṇuyād ekacittaś ca tadarthañ ca vicārayet* | *janebhyaḥ śrāvayed yaś ca tasya puṇyaphalaṃ śṛṇu*. This idea corresponds in part to SDhP-KN 224, ll. 8-10: *ye 'pi kecid bhaiṣajyarāja tathāgatasya parinirvṛtasyemaṃ dharmaparyāyaṃ śroṣyanty antaśa ekagāthām api śrutvāntaśa ekenāpi cittotpādenābhyanumodayiṣyanti tān apy ahaṃ bhaiṣajyarāja kulaputrān vā kuladuhitṛn vā vyākaromy anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau*.

represent the adaptation of a relatively widespread idea. Most of its prescriptions are of course untraceable, but it is nevertheless clear that the *Śivadharmaśāstra* reformulates textual material taken from elsewhere, and it may be inferred from this compositional method that more of the text, perhaps much more, was likewise produced through the reworking of preexisting texts.[89]

All of this suggests that the authors of the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and *Śivadharmottara* were working with a set of assumptions and textual practices that were in many ways similar to those of the Buddhists. In other words, the putative utterances of a divine or semi-divine figure could serve as the conceptual basis for a text produced through human editorial effort. Giving a definite linguistic shape to traditionally authoritative content was not understood to negate its ultimate origin in a transcendent source, at least by some. We must bear in mind that the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable forms of textual practice undoubtedly varied greatly, and we may presume that teachers were not consistent in the degrees to which they believed themselves to be authorized to recover, we might say, the words of Śiva in order to give them a definite form. But the conceptual resources that could be placed in service of authorizing this type of work were available, and, judging by the textual record, widely employed.

Understanding the broader cultural orientation towards divine utterances and the role of human effort in bringing them into the world helps us to think about an issue of some theoretical importance for the study of South Asian scriptural material in general and these two scriptures in particular. Scholars have often sought to explain the ideas and practices presented in texts like the *Śivadharmaśāstra* as an expression of strategies adopted by the authors, who are regularly supposed to have composed scriptures in an attempt to legitimize some course of practice or to accommodate

[89]Nina Mirnig draws our attention to several parallels between *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. See Mirnig 2019: 476 n. 27. See also Kafle 2015: 54-57 for a discussion of parallels found in both *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Niśvāsamukha*.

themselves to some other group. While in no way wishing to question the importance these types of dynamics on the development of religious thought, I am not certain whether the creation of scriptures should always be understood, at least uncritically, in these terms. This type of explanation rests on a commonly held set of presuppositions about the intentions of the authors who produced normative literature, namely that their activities were principally motivated by a conscious effort to manipulate outsiders and that they would contrive artificial representations of their beliefs and practices in service of this aim.[90] If we take this mode of thinking to its logical conclusion, we are forced to assume that the authors (or in some cases compilers) of these texts were acting disingenuously in attributing their work to venerable figures or gods; that the production of scriptures, one of the most important and widespread textual practices in premodern India, was carried out by individuals who worked clandestinely in an effort to misrepresent their community's beliefs, sometimes even concoct new ones, in the service of strategic aims; and that the activities of those who produced scripture were somehow totally unknown to the people who accepted their products as sacred.

A functionalist framework that explains the production of scriptures as an expression of strategic interests seems to be unjustifiable, at least when simply accepted as pre-given rather than adopted as a potential hypothesis, unless we wish to completely deprive scriptural authors and editors of any genuine religious commitments.[91] A comparison with the early Buddhist context may serve as a useful reminder of the conceptual complexity associated with attributing a text to a venerable or divine being: recall that Buddhist monastic lineages, the conservative arbiters of the textual authen-

[90] For the use of this type of explanatory framework in the context of other corpora, see Inden 2000 or Olivelle 2005: 28-29.

[91] For a broad and nuanced criticism of functionalist explanatory frameworks used to explain the relationship between culture and power, see Pollock 2006: 511-524. The context here is quite different, but I think the underlying thinking is broadly similar.

ticity of the Āgamic *sūtras*, continued to produce new instances of "the words of the Buddha" for centuries. The application of the criteria governing their textual practices almost certainly varied, both geographically and institutionally, and the production of scripture seems also to have involved the gradual assimilation of oral traditions of varying status. The authors of Mahāyāna scriptures pushed the boundaries even further and introduced more dynamic modes of textual production, especially through the reformulation of a wider variety of source material into what, I contend, they believed to be authentic *buddhavacana*. Can we really be certain that Śaivas understood their activities in a radically different way from Buddhists or that the underlying motivation for the religious developments that their scriptures advance was strategic rather than organic?

The functionalist interpretation of these issues is largely driven by theoretical rather than empirical judgments. The projection of intentions onto the authors of these scriptures depends entirely on the assumptions we bring to the material given that we have almost no knowledge of the broader historical context in which these texts were produced, let alone specific information about the actual social and political positions occupied by the people who composed and wrote down these texts. In other words, we have none of the data needed for a methodologically sound assessment of authorial intention. This problem is compounded by the fact that it is generally impossible to recover the pre-histories of scriptural texts, especially insofar as underlying oral traditions are concerned, and, even when source material may be identified, we confront again the challenge of having no reliable procedure definitively to judge how cultural actors actually understood textual practices like the reuse and reformulation of preexisting textual material, to say nothing of oral traditions, and we are left instead to infer these data from the scriptural products themselves.

There is another reason to think that Śaivas understood the boundary between traditional knowledge and its definite textual forms to be porous and flexible. This orientation may be inferred from

the bivalent usage of the word "Śiva knowledge" (*śivajñāna* or *śivavidyā*), which denotes, in the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and elsewhere, both knowledge that comes from Śiva and its definite textual realization in specific scriptures.[92] It is the latter of these meanings that often predominates in the *Śivadharmottara*, as de Simini notes, where we find phrases like "Over time, the Śiva knowledge was lost through inattention, and, having been incorrectly copied by fools, comes to have too many or too few syllables," a description that necessarily refers to a specific text.[93] The relationship between these two modes of "knowledge" came to be the object of a developed theology, an issue about which I will have more to say shortly. This shared signification points to a conceptual convergence that was presumably symptomatic of a textual culture that actually saw fluid traditional knowledge and its realization in definite texts as part of the same continuum, and, moreover, that took the editorial processes bridging these two aspects of knowledge as an acceptable form of textual practice that did not invalidate the divine character of the texts thereby created.[94] And here again a reference to Buddhist textual cultures may be usefully drawn: recall that a number of Vinaya texts cast historical incidentals as something that could simply be added to a text taken by tradition to be *buddhavacana*. Was a similar logic also applied to the insertion of opening narratives that represent Śaiva texts as the dialogue between a divine figure or seer and an interlocutor? Could the same mode of thinking account for the addition of stock phrases that place the words of a scripture in the mouth of Śiva or other divine beings?[95] It seems that this conceptual convergence across traditions points to a broadly shared set of presuppositions, though I do not know whether it is pos-

[92] de Simini 2016a: 200-203. See also Hatley 2016: 76-77 n. 194.

[93] See *Śivadharmottara* 2.7, p. 43: *śivajñānasya kālena vinaṣṭasya pramādataḥ | ūnātiriktavarṇasya mūḍhair durlikhitasya ca*. This passage is translated and discussed in de Simini 2016a: 128-130.

[94] See, for example, Hatley 2016: 167-181, who on pages 176-177 points to a specific instance in the *Brahmayāmala* where "the boundary between the primordial scriptural wisdom and the text one actually reads is obfuscated."

[95] It should be remembered that the use of standard formulae that appear to present these texts as the direct dialogue of Śiva and the Goddess serve an obvious metrical purpose and correspond with similar types of formulae found in the *Mahābhārata*.

sible to prove this textually. I will nevertheless try to uncover more about Śaiva views through a closer examination of the self-representational narratives accounting for the descent of scriptures into the world.

2.5 Scripture's Descent

Unlike the *Pañcārthasūtra*, which was held to have been taught by Śiva in a human body, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and *Śivadharmottara* present themselves as the indirect record of an ahistorical conversation between Śiva and the Goddess. This same form of self-representation is evident in the scriptures of the nascent Mantramārga. (Recall that this form of Śaivism first emerged in the fourth or fifth century CE.)

Unraveling the history of the Mantramārga and especially its relationship to other forms of Śaivism entails a number of complicated problems. Many scholars have adopted a classificatory scheme set out in the *Niśvāsamukha*, which contrasts the Mantramārga with the so-called Atimārga, a collective name for Pāñcārthikas, Lākulas, and, although they do not actually appear in the *Niśvāsamukha*, Somasiddhāntins.[96] This framework appears to be the product of *ex post facto* systematizing tendencies, and it is unclear whether the category "Atimārga" ever achieved broad use.[97] The Atimārga and Mantramārga are in theory differentiated by the latter's inclusion of householders and its emphasis on the attainment of supernatural powers (*bhukti-*) in addition to liberation (*mukti-*).[98] The historical circumstances were, as Sanderson has shown, messier. Married Pāñcārthika teachers are well attested, and the Somasiddhāntins undoubtedly sought supernatural powers

[96]Note that these groups all traced their origins back to Lakulīśa, assuming that the Somasiddhānta saw itself as descending from Somaśarman. See Bakker 2019b: 283-297.

[97]See Acri 2014. As Sanderson notes, its meaning was forgotten by the time of Kṣemarāja and Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha, another roughly contemporary Kashmiri exegete. See Sanderson 2006: 158-163. Bisschop 2020 notes the single known instance of the term Atimārga in a text not belonging to the Mantramārga.

[98]For example, see Goodall et al. 2015: 15-18.

through sanguinary rituals and ecstatic states of possession.[99]

The Mantramārga has left us an enormous and diverse body of scripture that represents itself as ultimately derived from teachings given by Śiva, at times in his terrific form, Bhairava, to the Goddess. The texts that make up this corpus are often called *tantras*, a word that means "system." Although *tantra* would later come to be the "privileged term," as Dominic Goodall puts it, for this type of scripture, other names were also used, including *saṃhitā*, *bheda*, and *āgama*; the last of these was widely adopted in South India from the twelfth century onwards.[100] Mantramārgic scriptures are generally composed in metrically correct *anuṣṭubh* meter, though, like their Atimārgic predecessors, they often adopt a register of Sanskrit that diverges from Pāṇinian norms. This corpus has been traditionally divided in a variety of ways. The most fundamental of these divisions, at least after the Mantramārga had achieved a certain level of development, was between the Siddhānta and the various other non-Saiddhāntika scriptural and ritual systems.[101] The first of these focuses on the worship of the five-faced Śiva in his mild aspect (i.e., Sadāśiva). It prescribes practices generally congruent with the norms of Vaidika culture, and, although it was open to members of all four castes, retains the hierarchical relationship between them even after initiation.[102]

The Saiddhāntika "canon" — here a largely notional concept that implies neither closure nor textual fixity — is conventionally said to be composed of 28 scriptures artificially divided into ten Śivabhedas ("Śiva Divisions") and eighteen Rudrabhedas ("Rudra Divisions"). Many Saiddhāntika scriptures include a complete list of all 28, though their names vary to a certain degree.[103] The

[99] See Sanderson 2014: 57-58 n. 220. No scriptures of the most extreme groups of Śaiva ascetics have survived, but Sanderson has suggested that some of their texts may have been redacted into the scriptures of the Kulamārga. See Sanderson 2014: 11-12.

[100] Goodall et al. 2015: 30.

[101] Sanderson 1988 still provides the best overview of initiatory Śaivism.

[102] See, for example, Sanderson 2014: 29. Elsewhere, Sanderson draws our attention to the following quotation from a Saiddhāntika scripture: *iti varṇāśramācārān manasāpi na laṅghayet* || *yo yasminn āśrame tiṣṭhan dīkṣitaḥ śivaśāsane* | *sa tasminn eva saṃtiṣṭhec chivadharmaṃ ca pālayet*. See Sanderson 2015a: 2-3.

[103] Various versions of this list have been collected and collated in Goodall 1998: 402-417. Sanderson 2014: 32 notes

relationship between this notional canon and the actual literature is complex, though it has been substantially clarified by Goodall. The standard list includes nine scriptures for which we have no external evidence.[104] There are a number of extant scriptures that are not mentioned in the list, and there are others that claim to be derived from one of the primary "Divisions."[105] Goodall suggests that the earliest version of this list, which appears in the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, may predate the composition of some of its members.[106]

Thanks to Goodall's research, we know that, of the 28 canonical texts, six have come down to us in a form that definitely predates the twelfth century. Another thirteen are mentioned in tenth- and eleventh-century commentaries and are therefore likely to have existed in some form prior to this period.[107] The history of the Saiddhāntika texts is complicated by the fact that more recent works of South Indian composition circulate under some of these 28 names. I will not be considering these Southern compositions, which generally postdate the twelfth century, but it should be noted that some have a direct textual connection with their earlier namesake, while others do not. It seems moreover likely that the practice of recasting or rewriting scriptures under one of the 28 "canonical" names extends back to the period of Saiddhāntika proliferation in the North.

Saiddhāntika scriptures narrativize their own revelation in a manner that is broadly consistent with that of the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and *Śivadharmottara*. The oldest of these, the *Niśvāsatattva-saṃhitā*, has been partially edited, translated, and studied by Dominic Goodall, Alexis Sanderson, and Harunaga Isaacson, and the following summary is especially indebted to their work. Its frame

the artificial division into the two groups of *bhedas*.

[104] See Goodall et al. 2015: 345 and Goodall 2004: xxiv.

[105] Goodall 2004: xxv provides a list of eleven.

[106] *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Uttarasūtra* 1.26-31 in Goodall et al. 2015: 160 and 345 for a translation, where it is noted that "We cannot know whether twenty-eight works with these names existed when this list was drawn up, but it seems not impossible that they did not."

[107] Goodall 2004: xxiv.

setting depicts a group of Vedic sages who ask an intermediary (the name is lost due to manuscript damage) for information about Śiva's teachings.[108] The intermediary then tells them about the original context in which Śiva taught the Goddess, and the text thereafter assumes the form of a conversation between those two figures. Yet we are subsequently provided with an account of the descent of scriptural knowledge that emphasizes the text's mediated nature and appears to stand in a degree of tension with its opening narrative.[109] We are told that the teaching emerged in the form of prelinguistic sound (*nādarūpaṃ viniṣkrāntaṃ śāstram*) from a bodiless and inactive Śiva, whereupon Sadāśiva, who knew its import, taught it to Īśvara, the form of Śiva presented as the speaker in the text itself.[110] Īśvara then edited it into an ordered composition (*granthanibandhakaḥ*) that he related to the gods in *anuṣṭubh* meter. The seers, in turn, were taught by the gods. And, by the agency of the seers, the teaching reached the world of men.[111] With each stage of successive condensation and linguistic realization, the text became more suitable for beings of increasingly limited intellect.

We are told that this "endless teaching of Śiva" (*anantaṃ śivaśāstraṃ*) was variously proclaimed as 28 scriptures, including the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*. The 28 were then divided into thousands of additional texts. Īśvara declares that any "further division" (*parataro bhedaḥ*) of the original twenty-eight teachings should be recognized as a compendium (*saṃgrahaḥ*) drawn together from "the words of gods and seers" (*ṛṣidevagaṇāṃ girām*).[112] The scope of this process is wide, and the

[108] *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Mūlasūtra* 1.1-13 in Goodall et al. 2015: 137-38 and 235-240 for a translation. Goodall elsewhere notes that the composition of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* probably predates the conceptual division of the Mantramārga into the Saiddhāntika and non-Saiddhāntika corpora.

[109] See Williams 2017: 58-60 for another summary of this section.

[110] *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Uttarasūtra* 1.23 in Goodall et al. 2015: 159 and 344 for a translation. Goodall et al. note that the speaker indications appear at times doubtful, so the identity of Īśvara is not totally secure.

[111] *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Uttarasūtra* 1.24-25 in Goodall et al. 2015: 159-160 and 344-345 for a translation.

[112] *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Uttarasūtra* 1.26-32 in Goodall et al. 2015: 160 and 345-346 for a translation. See esp. p. 346, where it is noted that *gaṇāṃ* is likely a contracted form of *gaṇānāṃ*.

Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā tells us that whoever hears and learns a *tantra* gives it his name. We are then presented with an extensive list of gods, supernatural beings, and Vedic seers who are said to be "fully conversant with the *tantra*" (*tantrasya pāragāḥ*). From them only a "little bit" (*kiñcit*) makes it to the world of men.[113]

This narrative makes clear that the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*'s authors were operating with a similar set of presuppositions to those of the *Śivadharmaśāstra*, though they present the initial stages of scriptural formulation in a more theologically complex fashion. They apparently saw no inconsistency in presenting their work as a multilayered record of a dialogue between Śiva and the Goddess while simultaneously claiming that it was the product of an extended editorial process. These aspects, in turn, did not impinge upon their broader understanding of scripture's descent into the world, which made no room for a dialogue between Śiva and the Goddess at all. Other Saiddhāntika scriptures generally contain similar accounts of their own textual histories, and they need not be discussed here. But, as Benjamin Luke Williams notes, they often give Vedic seers a far more prominent role to play in their idealized self-representations.[114]

The non-Saiddhāntika scriptures are far more diverse and complex, in terms of both their actual content and the theoretical frameworks developed for their categorization. The earlier of these emphasize Bhairava, who is generally worshipped together with a consort. As they developed further, goddesses rose to increasing prominence, eventually eclipsing Bhairava and assuming a role of central importance. Non-Saiddhāntika scriptures prescribe offerings considered polluting within

[113] *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Uttarasūtra* 1.33-39 in Goodall et al. 2015: 160-161 and 346-348 for a translation.

[114] Williams 2017: 66 notes that "in some important Siddhānta tantras it is the questions of the Vedic seers that constitute the primary interlocutional structure of the scripture." See, for example, *Rauravāgama Vidyāpāda* 1:3.1-28, vol. 1, pp. 7-9, which presents itself as a set of teachings condensed by the seer Ruru. Alex Watson notes that some later texts, such as the *Kiraṇatantra*, *Parākhyatantra*, *Mataṅgatantra*, and *Mṛgendratantra* introduce more conscious questioning on the part of the interlocutor and adopt an almost dialectical style clearly influenced by philosophical discourse. See also Watson 2006: 74-75 and Williams 2017: 66-82.

a Vaidika cultural context, such as meat and alcohol, and include imagery and practices associated with the charnel ground.[115] In this religious orientation they modeled themselves after the norms and practices of the later, more antinomian Śaiva ascetics. Often included within the early taxonomic descriptions of the non-Saiddhāntika scriptures are two groups of *tantras* that focused on snakebite medicine (*gāruḍa-*) and exorcistic rituals (*bhūta-*).[116] These texts have been largely lost or incorporated into larger digests, and their place in normative schemes of textual classification was first minimized and subsequently removed altogether.[117]

A number of problems frustrate our ability to chart accurately the historical development of non-Saiddhāntika texts and to determine their precise number at any historical point in time. As in the case of the Saiddhāntika works, it appears likely that some of the extant non-Saiddhāntika scriptures superseded older works bearing the same name.[118] Further confounding matters, normative descriptions of this part of the Mantramārgic corpus are generally bound up with theological accounts of the revelation of "Śiva knowledge" and cannot be taken unproblematically to represent actual bodies of scriptural material. What can be said with some certainty, as Sanderson has shown, is that scriptures emphasizing female deities and promoting antinomian rituals involving sex and violence were circulating by the sixth century and known to those outside Śaiva circles by the seventh.[119]

One of the more enduring models for conceptualizing the Śaiva corpus as a whole and the non-

[115]Sanderson 2014: 29-30.

[116]For a study of the Gāruḍa texts, see Slouber 2017.

[117]Sanderson 2014: 33-34.

[118]This phenomenon is mentioned in Hatley 2016: 75. See also his note on pp. 98-100 concerning the *maṇḍala* of Svacchandabhairava and the possibility that some form of the *Svacchandatantra* predated the *Brahmayāmala*.

[119]Among the Buddhist manuscripts discovered near Gilgit are two folios of a work composed by an author who claims that he has summarized the fundamental teachings of a scripture likely called, according to Sanderson, the **Devītantrasadbhāva*. These folios have been dated to the sixth century on paleographic grounds. See Sanderson 2014: 47-48. Dharmakīrti also appears aware of certain types of antinomian Śaiva scriptures. The relevant passages are discussed in Sanderson 2001: 11-12 n. 10. He is usually dated to the seventh century but whose work may have been known to thinkers definitively dated to the sixth; see Eltschinger 2010: 398.

Saiddhāntika works in particular is based on the idea that scriptural knowledge may be divided into five streams (*srotas*), each said to emerge from one of Śiva's five faces. This way of understanding revelation, which has been studied by several scholars, deemphasizes the dialogic form encoded into the structure of Śaiva scriptures.[120] For now, I want to focus on the stream-based model itself, which takes on two early forms, both of which are attested in the later layers (circa 7th c. CE) of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*.

Kafle's study of the *Niśvāsamukha* has clarified the more expansive of the two earliest stream-based frameworks. In this account, the five streams of scripture are divided hierarchically, from lowest to highest, beginning with the worldly religion of pious offerings and public works. It subsequently moves on to Vedic religion (which here means adherence to the rights and responsibilities set out in the *smṛti* works believed to be derived from the Veda) and then proceeds to the gnostic teachings of Sāṃkhya and their practical application through Yoga. It next addresses the two types of Śaiva asceticism collectively called the Atimārga, and it concludes with the Mantramārga. Each stream is said to emerge from one of Śiva's faces, notably attributing the non-Śaiva forms of religious practice to Śiva as well.[121] The second version of this basic framework sets out four separate streams of Atimārgic scripture and one of Mantramārgic, ignoring non-Śaiva scriptures al-

[120] A brief overview of the classical version of this account is given in Sanderson 2014: 32-34. A more detailed discussion may be found in Hanneder 1998. See also Hatley 2016: 76-83.

[121] The references to the teaching of these various streams of scriptural knowledge are spread throughout the *Niśvāsamukha*. See *Niśvāsamukha* 3.196 in Kafle 2015: 174 and 262 for a translation: *devyāśaṅkarasaṃvāde tanmayā parikīrttitam* | *paścimenaiva vaktreṇa laukikaṃ gaditaṃ tadā*; 4.41-42, pp. 181 and 268 for a translation: *vedadharmo mayā proktaḥ svarganaiśreyasaḥ paraḥ* | *uttareṇaiva vaktreṇa vyākhyātaś ca samāsataḥ* || *ādhyātmikaṃ pravakṣyāmi dakiṇāsyena kīrttitam* | *sāṃkhyañ caiva mahājñānaṃ yogañ cāpi mahāvrate*; 4.131, pp. 192 and 289 for a translation: *atimārggaṃ samākhyātaṃ dviḥprakāraṃ varānane* | *pūrveṇaiva tu vaktreṇa sarahasyaṃ prakīrtitam* | *ata ūrdhvam mahādevi kiṃ vakṣye parameśvari*; 4.135, pp. 192-193 and 289 for a translation: *pañcamenaiva vaktreṇa īśānena dvijottamāḥ* | *mantrākhyaṃ kathayiṣyāmi devyāyā gaditam purā*. See Kafle 2015: 21 for a discussion of these quotations. Although these passages do not make specific reference to the "streams," other sections do. See, for example, *Niśvāsamukha* 4.137 in Kafle 2015: 193 and 289 for a translation. Another part of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, the *Guhyasūtra*, states the following: *pañcasrotās tu ye proktā mukhena parikīrtitāḥ* | *tena yuktā bhavet puṣṭā sarvasūtreṣu paṭhyate*. This passage is edited and translated in Goodall et al. 2015: 21.

together.[122] Both of these classificatory schemes were, as Hatley shows, subsequently supplanted by stream-based models that tend to emphasize divisions internal to the Mantramārga. It should be noted that in spite of the decreasing prominence of non-Śaiva teachings within the description of the streams, many post-eighth-century scriptures retain the notion that Śiva was the ultimate source of all scriptural knowledge. This idea was at times associated with the Śaiva tendency to admit a relative degree of authority to different scriptural systems, an important issue to which I will return in Chapter 5.

The most common stream-based framework depicts the Siddhānta as coming out of Śiva's upward face, while texts concerned with snakebites and exorcism are said to issue from his eastern and western faces, respectively.[123] The remaining two types of scripture are named after the faces from which they are supposed to emerge. The Vāmatantras ("Left" or "Northern Tantras") issue forth from Śiva's peaceful northern face. The texts that would come to be so called are the earliest among non-Saiddhāntika works and were probably composed between the sixth and eighth centuries. These scriptures teach ritual systems centering on Tumburu-Śiva and his four sisters.[124] Only one complete scripture, the *Vīṇāśikhatantra*, has come down to us; it is preserved in a single palm-leaf manuscript containing 396 stanzas.[125] It presents itself as a teaching given by Śiva at the prompting of the Goddess, who emerges from a group of *siddhas*, minor gods, and Vedic seers to ask for information about seed *mantras*.[126] Normative depictions of the northern stream sometimes state that it contains only four scriptures, but these lists do not include the *Vīṇāśikhatantra*, which

[122]The relevant verses are quoted and translated in Kafle 2015: 21-22. We know little about two of these groups, the Vailamas and Kārukas. For some discussion, see Acri 2014.

[123]Hatley 2016: 77-83, esp. 78 for the "most commonly attested model." See also Sanderson 2014: 32.

[124]Hatley 2016: 92-97. See also Sanderson 2009: 50-51, esp. n. 22, and 129-130, esp. n. 301.

[125]See Goudriaan 1985: 5 and Hatley 2016: 93.

[126]*Vīṇāśikhatantra* 1-7 in Goudriaan 1985: 65.

suggests a complicated relationship between theoretical taxonomies and the actual literature.[127]

From Śiva's fearsome southern face is said to emerge the stream of Dakṣiṇatantras ("Right" or "Southern Tantras"), which is divided into two subcategories called *pīṭha*, or "collections."[128] This division is supposed to be based on the gender of the primary deity venerated within these scriptures: those of the Mantrapīṭha emphasize male deities, and those of the Vidyāpīṭha female. Notable is the fact that, as Williams points out, the Vedic seers tend to be marginalized or removed from the dialogic frames of the Southern Tantras.[129] The early history of this division of the Śaiva corpus is obscure, but its oldest members were almost certainly composed after the first of the northern stream, that is, the sixth or seventh century. Among the texts still extant, the most ancient are probably the *Brahmayāmala* ("Brahmā's Union [Scripture]"), likely composed and edited in several stages during the seventh or eighth century, and the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* ("Doctrine of Perfected Female Spirits"), which probably dates to the seventh century, though the received form was produced during a later period.[130] These two texts are extensive, with the *Brahmayāmala* containing more than 12,500 verses. And both make reference to a significant number of other Southern Tantras: 34 are mentioned by *Brahmayāmala* and 21 by the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*.[131]

It is difficult to determine what exactly these lists reflect. Should we assume that definite texts were in fact circulating under all of these names prior to the composition of *Brahmayāmala* and *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, and, if so, how should we understand the relationship between the texts known to the authors of these scriptures and the corpus that has come down to us? If some or all

[127]Hatley 2016: 93-94 discusses this problem in some detail.

[128]For this meaning of *pīṭha*, see Sanderson 2009: 45-46 n. 11.

[129]Williams 2017: 93.

[130]See Hatley 2016: 145-148 for a discussion on the meaning of *yāmala* in this context. For the dates of these two texts, see Hatley 2016: 71-76 and Törzsok 1999: vii.

[131]Hatley 2016: 81 and Törzsok 1999: x. It should be noted that the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* does not actually speak of the southern stream and instead lists the members of the Vidyāpīṭha.

of these texts were in fact circulating, were there more, perhaps many more, that claimed differing degrees of filiation with this core collection? And what are we to make of divergent versions of the same or similar texts? Unfortunately, the early textual evidence for Śaiva scriptures is nowhere near as rich as it is for Mahāyāna Buddhist *sūtras*, owing especially to their more limited geographic proliferation and the understandable absence of datable translations into other languages. As a consequence, many important Southern Tantras survive in a single early manuscript. But, from what we do have, it is clear that different versions did circulate and that they diverged, sometimes quite significantly, from one another. For example, Judit Törzsok has shown that the recension of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* known to the Kashimiri exegetical tradition contained substantial passages not found in the version preserved in Nepalese manuscripts.[132]

Bracketing the issue of normative taxonomies, it is clear that the eighth century marks a watershed in terms of Dakṣiṇatantra production. We have the *Netratantra*, which cannot be classified as a member of either the Vidyāpiṭha or Mantrapīṭha and was probably composed in Kashmir sometime after 800 CE.[133] We also have the *Svacchandatantra*, a massive and historically layered work of the Mantrapīṭha that might in some form predate the *Brahmayāmala*.[134] The surviving version appears to be more recent and was probably composed in stages over the ninth and tenth centuries. In taxonomic lists, the *Svacchandatantra* is said to have many subsidiaries, but only four have been preserved as fragments in commentaries or digests.[135] From the Vidyāpīṭha, we have the aforementioned *Brahmayāmala*, one of supposedly eight "Union Tantras" listed in taxonomic descriptions of

[132]See, for example, Törzsok's extensive discussion of the difference between the versions of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* as transmitted in two Nepalese manuscripts and the seemingly much longer version cited by the Kashmiri exegetical tradition; Törzsok 1999: 217-236.

[133]Sanderson 2014: 30.

[134]Hatley 2016: 98-100.

[135]Sanderson 2014: 36 informs us that "The only other works of [the Mantrapīṭha] that have reached us through citation or the incorporation of passages in compendia are its satellites."

the corpus. We also have the so-called Śaktitantras ("Tantras Focused on Śakti"), which, according to one account, included seven primary texts. Two are extant in some form: the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* and the *Śiraccheda*, the latter of which comprises the first section of the *Jayadrathayāmala*.[136] Beyond these are a large number of tenth- or eleventh-century goddess-centric texts, including the *Mālinīvijayottara*, the *Tantrasadbhāva*, and a host of others preserved only in citations.[137] And finally, there is the Kulamārga ("Path of the Goddess Clans"), which adopted the most extreme countercultural elements of the Mantramārga and pushed them further, teaching initiation through induced possession and emphasizing sexual ritual. Their scriptures were further divided into four Āmnāyas ("Lineages"). A complete discussion of the scriptures that comprised this corpus is beyond the scope of this chapter, but at least seven predated Abhinavagupta, an eleventh century Kashmiri exegete.[138] A large number of later compositions have also survived, whether in manuscripts or citations.[139] One unique aspect of these scriptures must however be noted: they tend, as Williams tells us, to attribute their worldly realization to the agency of *siddhas*, who are, in certain places, cast as embodiments of Śiva and are at times associated with particular geographical regions.[140] In this regard, they may have modeled themselves after Atimārgic circles, which emphasize the role of putatively historical figures and particular geographic regions in their own self-representations (recall that Kuśika is specifically associated with Ujjayanī).[141] This resemblance may in part be genetic given that, Sanderson argues, the Kulamārga developed directly out of the more antinomian strands of Atimārgic practice.

Throughout this vast corpus, the tendency to adopt the form of a dialogue, usually between

[136] Sanderson 2014: 41.
[137] Sanderson 2014: 41-42.
[138] See Sanderson 2014: 61 and Williams 2017: 118.
[139] See Dyczkowski 1988: 57-94. Sanderson 2014: 61-68 lists the texts known through manuscripts or citation.
[140] Williams 2017: 153-156.
[141] Williams 2017: 154 n. 404.

Śiva and the Goddess — or, in the context of the Siddhānta, seers and other figures — remains constant, and it was often accompanied by a theologically more sophisticated discussion of how a text came to descend into the world (*tantrāvatāra*-). As in the case of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, these accounts usually involved a number of divine and semi-divine figures. In some instances, ordinary human beings were also included. Shaman Hatley has studied the *tantrāvatāra*-section of the *Brahmayāmala* closely, and I will subsequently discuss how this particular narrative might help us understand the textual practices that were used in the production of Śaiva texts. First, however, I want to consider what exegetical approaches to non-standard registers of Sanskrit might tell us about the broader Śaiva orientation towards scripture.

2.6 God Speaks, but How?

I have on several occasions mentioned the linguistic characteristics of the Śaiva scriptural corpus. This issue is important because both language and linguistic register played an important role in certain Indian conceptualizations of scripture, with the sacralization of the Sanskrit language within the Vedic traditions serving as one of the earliest and most important examples.[142] The social and discursive spheres of Sanskrit usage had widened considerably by the time that the Śaiva scriptures were produced, but the importance of language as a marker of a text's scriptural character remained conceptually important among Vaidikas and others. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, an important Mīmāṃsaka who lived during the sixth or seventh century, argued that hearing the beginning of each Veda was enough to disabuse an intelligent person of the notion that they could have been produced by anyone.[143] Kumārila's point is that their language, though correct Sanskrit, is so extraordinary

[142]For a synopsis of the relevant issues as they relate to the monopolization of Sanskrit by the Vedic tradition and their bearing on South Asian cultural history more broadly, see Pollock 2006: 39-50.

[143]See the discussion in Chapter 4, pp. 237-238. For Kumārila's date, see Krasser 2012: 587 and Eltschinger 2014: 116 n. 80.

that no human being or god could ever have managed to compose them, both on account of their unique mode of expression and their unusual linguistic features. The other side of this position emerges as Kumārila quotes a Buddhist scripture composed in an unknown Middle Indic language and declares that we cannot expect its incorrect words to be faithful to their objects, thereby denying that it could possibly be a real scripture because it deviates from the norms of Pāṇinian Sanskrit (see Chapter 4, pp. 236-237).

Śaiva scriptures appear to present us with a different set of presuppositions about the nature of language and its function in determining the scriptural character of a particular text. These works are composed in Sanskrit, but the register they adopt frequently diverges from the grammatical norms of the classical language. Our ability to assess these divergences, or even catalogue them, is hampered by the types of witnesses that are available. Many Śaiva scriptures are transmitted in highly corrupt *codices unici*, and no wholly reliable method has yet been developed for differentiating between the authorial use of non-standard language and scribal error.[144] Further complicating matters, regional and chronological factors appear to have shaped their textual transmissions in a number of ways. Nepalese manuscripts dating from a relatively early period usually preserve recensions that contain far more non-standard usages than those known from the Kashmiri exegetical tradition or late manuscript traditions from either Kashmir or the South.

When examined in isolation, many of the mistakes commonly found in Śaiva scriptures appear to be plausibly explained by scribal error, for example: the frequent use of the nominative instead of the accusative or accusative instead of the nominative; the appearance of otiose consonants and *visargas*; or the use of nominal stems instead of declined forms. But the sheer number of solecisms

[144]One conservative approach might be to accept a solecism only where the meter demands it. Detailed discussions of this register of language and related issues may be found in Törzsök 1999: xv-lxxiii, Kiss 2015: 73-86, and Hatley 2016: 28-38.

suggests that a certain number are authorial, especially given that the "correct" form often ruins the meter. And although the language of the Kashmiri recensions is relatively standard when compared with that of Nepalese manuscripts, Kṣemarāja (recall that he was a tenth- or eleventh-century Kashmiri exegete) nevertheless identifies certain solecisms as *aiśa* ("coming from Īśa," i.e., Śiva). This term was no doubt modeled after *ārṣa* ("coming from the *ṛṣis*," i.e., seers), which was used to explain the appearance of grammatical irregularities in certain Brahmanical contexts.[145] To give just one example, the following verse appears in the *Svacchandatantra*'s fourth chapter:

> *Svacchandatantra* 4.384, vol. 2, p. 241: *śaktiṃ bhittvā tato devi yac cheṣaṃ vyāpinī bhavet | anubhāvo bhavet tatra sparśo yadvat pipīlikā*.[146]

Kṣemarāja makes two points of interest here. First, he tells us that instead of *yac cheṣaṃ vyāpinī bhavet*, the "clear reading" (*spaṣṭaḥ pāṭhaḥ*) is *taccheṣe vyāpinī bhavet*. The source of this proposal is, however, unclear. Did he have access to a manuscript with this reading, or was he simply proposing it as a clearer alternative to the version he knew?[147] Whatever the case may be, he does not change the verse in the underlying text. He then addresses the difficulties presented by the term "ants" (*pipīlikā*), which has a grammatically impossible case ending and cannot be construed with the rest of the verse. Kṣemarāja nevertheless accepts the reading as the correct one and tells us that it must be understood as a non-standard contraction of *pipīlikānām* ("of the ants"). He explains that the elision of the genitive plural ending "comes from Śiva" (*aiśvara-*).[148]

[145]The connection between *aiśa* and *ārṣa* is demonstrated by the fact that Kṣemarāja also uses both of these terms in precisely the same sense; see, for example, *Svacchandatantroddyota* 1.31, vol. 1, p. 7, ll. 1-2: *prastṛṇīyāt prastared iti ārṣaḥ pāṭhaḥ*. Ollett 2017: 72 notes that the Jains also used *ārṣa* to describe the language of their scriptural collections. Finally, Ruegg 2000: 297-298 considers the Buddhist use of the same term.

[146]It seems Kṣemarāja read *anubhavo* rather than *anubhāvo*. The Nepalese manuscript also reads *anubhava*, which is metrically non-standard in this position. See NAK 1-224, NGMPP B28/18 f. 44r, l. 5: *anubhavaṃ *bhavet* (em. : *bhavate* : Cod.) *tatra sparśayeva pipīlikāḥ*. I am not certain how to understand *sparśayeva*. Perhaps *sparśaya* must be read as an abbreviated form of *sparśayanti*? IFP T.507a, p. 86, l. 17 reads *anubhāvo*, as does IFP T.1032, p. 87, l. 8. See also Jayaratha's commentary on Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* 11.29-31, pp. 27-29: *śaktiṃ bhittvā tato devi tvakśeṣe vyāpinī bhavet | bhaved anubhavas tatra sparśo yadvat pipīlikā*.

[147]The South Indian recension preserved in IFP T.507a, p. 86, l. 16 reads "*taccheṣaṃ*." The same reading is attested in IFP T.1032, p. 87, l. 7. The reading preserved by Jayaratha is closer. See note above.

[148]*Svacchandatantroddyota* on 4.384, vol. 2, p. 242, ll. 1-2: *pipīlikā ity atra nāṃśabdasya lopa aiśvaraḥ*.

These comments give the impression that Kṣemarāja approached scriptures with confidence in their transmitted form and the aim to explain them as he found them. He confirms the theoretical underpinnings of this position in the course of explicating what he calls an *ārṣa* (here meaning the same thing as *aiśa*) reading. He states: "In this same way, other statements of the supreme lord (*parameśvaravacaḥ*) are entirely correct because the words of God (*bhagavadukti-*) should not be doubted by those of limited vision."[149] Yet elsewhere Kṣemarāja reveals that he was actively engaging in textual criticism, noting, for example, that he had removed interpolations and spurious readings after seeking out and consulting old manuscripts.[150] Unfortunately, he only discusses his text-critical method in a desultory fashion, but it is evident that he applies thought to the process. He often (but not always) prioritizes readings from older witnesses while rejecting newer ones; he chooses between variants on the basis of internal consistency; and he criticizes other commentators for modifying the text on the basis of their inability to understand it as it stood.[151]

It is challenging to come to terms with the tension that arises from the various approaches taken by Kṣemarāja. We are left to wonder how he ultimately decided readings were *aiśa* rather than corruptions introduced by "dimwits" (*durmedhobhiḥ*). His effort to find manuscript evidence suggests, at the very least, that he was not simply accepting the view of a particular lineage of teachers. The most important problem raised by his method is the relative antiquity of the very idea of *aiśa* language in the context of Śaiva scripture. Did the Kashmiri exegetes invent it as an apologetic exercise? How did the people who originally composed these works understand

[149] *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 1.31, vol. 1, p. 27, ll. 2-3: *evam anyad api parameśvaravacaḥ sādhv eva bhagavadukti-nāṃ mitadṛṣṭibhir avikalpyatvāt*. This comment is noted in Arraj 1988: 81 n. 2.

[150] *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 14.19, vol. 6, p. 120, ll. 10-15: *evaṃ ca prāyaśo granthāntaraprakṣepo grantha-viparyāsaḥ pāṭhaviparyāsaś cāsya granthasya durmedhobhiḥ parikalpitaḥ śataśākho dṛśyate | so 'smābhiḥ purāta-napustakānveṣaṇato yāvadgaty apasārita iti āstam etat*. This comment is noted and translated in Arraj 1988: 62 n. 2.

[151] See, for example, *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 5.45ab, vol. 3, p. 39 and on 8.11, vol. 4, p. 6. The latter of these is mentioned in Arraj 1998: 100 n. 1. See also Arraj's broader discussion on the same page.

their own non-standard usages? Does it reflect an intentional effort to write in a specific linguistic register, perhaps even one thought to be formally representative of the scriptural character of the text they were producing? Or were the authors of these texts simply unable to produce (or unbothered about producing) standard Sanskrit? And, turning to the Kashmiri recension, why were only some solecisms removed while others were retained? Are we right to categorize all the grammatical irregularities we find in the Nepalese manuscript tradition as *aiśa* when certain phenomena are never so-called by the exegetes themselves?

The conceptual problem of *aiśa* usage is made considerably more difficult by the fact that the Śaiva exegetical tradition never thematizes it, at least to my knowledge, and displays no explicit interest in exploring why Śiva might have chosen to use aberrant forms.[152] It is evident, moreover, that certain parts of the Śaiva community perceived linguistic and metrical mistakes as the products of human error and not the hallmarks of a divine author. The *Śivadharmottara*, which is admittedly unconcerned with or unaware of Mantramārgic texts, includes a passage that directs gurus to correct manuscripts that have all sorts of linguistic issues.[153] Whether these prescriptions were intended to apply to the transmission of the Dakṣiṇatantras is doubtful, but it seems necessary to assume a similar conceptual orientation on the part of the *Svacchanda*'s editors in order to account for the standardization of its language in Kashmir. Yet the *Śivadharmottara* also warns us about errors introduced "by teachers who are blinded by misplaced pride in their knowledge." Does this hint at the overzealous correction of non-standard usages, or is it simply betraying an anxiety about teachers disagreeing over what modifications are necessary?

[152]This stands in contrast to the Buddhist tradition, which thematizes the problem from time to time. On this point, see Newman 1988 and Szántó 2012, vol. 1: 60-67. It seems unlikely that the Buddhist example can here tell us much about the Śaivas because the Buddhists conceptualize the divergence from standard Sanskrit in a way that ties in with their own sociolinguistic priorities and historically ambivalent stance towards Sanskrit as a vehicle of soteriologically effective truth.

[153]See the *Śivadharmottara* 2.6-12, p. 43-44. This passage is quoted and translated in de Simini 2016a: 128-129.

Whatever the case may be, the *Śivadharmottara* certainly envisions Śaiva teachers as individually empowered to determine between genuine and corrupt usages. In the absence of any systematic standard of assessment, this type of individual authority accounts, at least logically speaking, for divergences in the linguistic register of regionally separated manuscript traditions. Part of the problem with trying to understand how non-standard usage in the Southern Tantras (as well as in other Śaiva scriptural contexts) was conceptualized is that the answer likely depends on historical and geographic particulars. For Kṣemarāja and perhaps the other Kashmiri exegetes, the appearance of specific solecisms was at times attributed to their divine source, but the language of their scriptures was otherwise fairly standard Sanskrit, and the vast majority of non-standard usages were understood, we may presume, to result from human error. Otherwise, it seems difficult to account for the broad editorial intervention that produced the more or less standardized Kashmiri recensions of the Southern Tantras. But this may be a historical development in addition to a geographical one, and, without explicit discussion of the problem of linguistic register or evidence attesting to the introduction of artificial solecisms into Śaiva texts, the relationship between non-standard Sanskrit and scriptural status is destined to remain opaque.[154]

2.7 Torrents of Scripture

The socio-cultural contexts within which the Dakṣiṇatantras were first composed are also largely hidden from us. Just as with other Śaiva scriptures, they almost never make reference to the types of people who could have plausibly been involved in their actual production. As a consequence, it is almost impossible to say anything concrete about the sociolinguistic communities responsible for

[154] See Sanderson 2004: 242-243 on the *Netratantra*. The text, he argues, was composed in Kashmir and transmitted to Nepal, where it remained relatively unchanged. In Kashmir, it was subsequently brought more in line with the standards of classical Sanskrit.

their composition or to hypothesize whether their usage of non-standard Sanskrit was intentional or the product of ignorance. These issues are further compounded by the layered textual histories of these scriptures. One possible exception to this general trend is the *Brahmyāmala*, which, as Shaman Hatley has already discussed in detail, provides an exceptional account of its own descent into the world.[155] The following abbreviated summary is especially dependent upon his work.

As Hatley tells us, the *Brahmayāmala* begins its own narration in an expectedly divine context, opening with a dialogue between Bhairava and the Goddess.[156] Their discussion does not lead, however, into a straightforward set of teachings. Bhairava instead explains how he originally learned the "flood of scripture" (*jñānaugha-*) from Śrīkaṇṭha and subsequently taught it to the Goddess, who improperly revealed it to her attendants.[157] Bhairava then tells her that, on account of this transgression, he commanded her to incarnate in the world, and she was born to a family of Sāmavedic Brahmins in Prayāga.

During her time on earth, the Goddess attained spiritual realization at the age of thirteen. Bhairava then reveals the origins of scriptural knowledge (*jñāna-*) to her.[158] The process begins with successive devolution in a divine arena: a "flood of *jñāna*" was taught by Sadāśiva and realized linguistically as a text called the *Vimala* ("Stainless"). The *Vimala*, which is called *Amṛta* ("Nectar") in its abbreviated form, is said to contain 125,000 *ślokas*, which Śrīkaṇṭha subsequently reformulated into innumerable *tantras* because of the varying capacities of his interlocutors and the dif-

[155] Hatley 2016: 128-137.

[156] Hatley 2016: 168-181 deals with a number of related issues in great detail, considering especially the various and sometimes conflicting accounts provided by the *Brahmayāmala* and its place within the larger body of Śaiva scripture. Williams 2017: 94-101 provides a summary of the relevant section of the *Brahmayāmala*, focusing especially on the role of the guru and the absence of Vedic seers.

[157] *Brahmayāmala* 1.18-21 in Hatley 2016: 307 and 392. Hatley edits and translates: *śrīkaṇṭhena tato mahyaṃ parā karuṇayā mahat | jñānaughas tu samākhyātaḥ padabandhakrameṇa tu*. "Then, because of his supreme compassion, Śrīkaṇṭha taught me the great mass of scriptural wisdom, in the sequence of its verbal composition."

[158] *Brahmayāmala* 1.30-36 in Hatley 2016: 310-311 and 394-396 for a translation.

ferentiation between types of rituals.[159] This mode of conceptualizing knowledge was common in premodern South Asia, and we have seen it in both the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* and the *Śivadharmaśāstra*.[160] Yet the chapter then goes on to provide a much more specific account of *Brahmayāmala* and its future descent into the human world.

Bhairava explains that the Goddess will teach the 125,000-verse text to Krodhabhairava and then to a Brahmin from Kurukṣetra named Kapālabhairava, the latter of whom will abbreviate (*saṃghariṣyati*) it into a shorter version containing 24,000 verses.[161] The Goddess will then teach the reduced recension to another Brahmin, Padmabhairava of Oḍra, who will further condense the text down to 12,000 verses. Among Padmabhairava's fourteen disciples, who are said to be of various geographical and caste backgrounds, there will be a Brahmin named Caṇḍabhairava, who, after learning the text from Padmabhairava, will become a "creator of *tantras*" (*tantrakartā*), which means that he will "distill," as Hatley translates, the content of the 12,000-verse version in order to produce further abbreviations for the welfare of the world.[162]

We are later introduced to a Brahmin named Svacchandabhairava, who seemingly will learn an exemplar of the *Brahmayāmala* from Krodhabhairava (the textual transmission is, Hatley tells us, riddled with issues), perhaps referring to the Goddess' initial pupil, and thereupon abbreviate it "with a mind possessed by Śakti."[163] The precise nature of Svacchandabhairava's relationship with Krodhabhairava is, however, unclear, and a subsequent verse suggests that it may involve some kind

[159] *Brahmayāmala* 1.40-41 in Hatley 2016: 312 and 398 for a translation. See also Hatley 2016: 177: "'Scriptural wisdom' (*jñāna*) is a transcendental essence which descends in streams from a primordial source, taking on concrete form according to the capacities of its various redactors and audiences." My phrasing of "varying capacities" is modeled after his. I also adopt the translation "interlocutor" (*pṛcchaka-*) from Hatley.

[160] See the discussion in Pollock 1985: 512-513 of a similar account found in the *Mahābhārata* that describes the descent of knowledge into the world and its subsequent linguistic realization and differentiation. Hatley 2016: 178-180 also discusses the broad appearance of this phenomenon.

[161] See Hatley 2016: 400 n. 79 for a discussion of the orthographic issues related to *saṃghariṣyati*.

[162] *Brahmayāmala* 1.44-66 in Hatley 2016: 313-317 and 399-404 for a translation.

[163] See Hatley 2016: 407 n. 121 for the suggestion with respect to Krodhabhairava's identity. See also n. 123 for a discussion of the difficulties pertaining to the reading translated by "mind possessed by Śakti."

of "divine contact."[164] We are then told that a certain Caṇḍabhairava (the relationship between this figure and the previously mentioned person of the same name is unclear to me) will condense the text into a shorter version of 7,000 verses, and, it seems, also expand it into a longer one.[165] The next section is corrupt, but, according to Hatley, it likely says that Caṇḍabhairava will not further condense the text for his students or perhaps that he will forbid them from condensing it further.[166]

The *Brahmayāmala* casts this broader narrative into cosmic time, placing the figures just mentioned into different cosmic eras (*yuga*-) and elaborating further on its fate at the end of the Kaliyuga.[167] Here I want only to emphasize the textual practices that are central to the foregoing account. As Hatley notes, "Mentioning numerous individuals, this narrative tacitly acknowledges the role of human agency — through the medium of the tantric guru — in the production of scriptural literature."[168] In other words, the *Brahmayāmala* clearly conceptualizes scripture as a malleable entity subject to modification by individual actors authorized by their filiation to a particular spiritual lineage, a situation redolent, in some ways, of the one we encountered in our study of the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras* (Chapter 1, pp. 68-74).

One might argue that the *Brahmayāmala* largely speaks of the gradual condensation of a definite text — from 125,000 verses down, at least notionally, to 7,000 — which emphasizes what must have

[164]Hatley 2016: 407 n. 120 suggests that *divyasaṅgānubhāvataḥ* might mean something like "through divine visitation." I wonder if this usage might be connected with the Buddhist notion of *anubhāva*. See, for example, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 3, ll. 21 and 4, ll. 1-5: *atha khalv āyuṣmataḥ śāriputrasyetad abhavat | kim ayam āyuṣmān subhūtiḥ sthavira ātmīyena svakena prajñāpratibhānabalādhānena svakena prajñāpratibhānabalādhiṣṭhānena bodhisatvānāṃ mahāsatvānāṃ prajñāpāramitām upadekṣyaty utāho buddhānubhāveneti | atha khalv āyuṣmān subhūtir buddhānubhāvenāyuṣmataḥ śāriputrasya imam evaṃ rūpaṃ cetasaiva cetaḥparivitarkam ājñāyāyuṣmantaṃ śāriputram etad avocat*. Note also SDhP KN 271, ll. 2-4: *vayaṃ bhagavann anāgate 'dhvanīmaṃ dharmaparyayaṃ tathāgate parinirvṛte daśasu dikṣu gatvā sarvasattvāṃl lekhayiṣyāṃaḥ pāṭhayiṣyāmaś cintāpayiṣyāmaḥ prakāśayiṣyāmo bhagavata evānubhāvena*.

[165]*Brahmayāmala* 1.86-87 in Hatley 2016: 321 and 409 for a translation. Hatley 2016: 130 tentatively places a roman numeral "II?" next to the name of this Caṇḍabhairava.

[166]*Brahmayāmala* 1.87-92 in Hatley 2016: 321 and 410 for a translation. See esp. the discussion in n. 135.

[167]*Brahmayāmala* 1.93-114 in Hatley 2016: 322-325 and see 411-414 for a translation.

[168]Hatley 2016: 128.

been the opposite of the process used during its original composition. Yet it is worth keeping in mind that the condensation of scriptural forms actually occurred. For example, there are two known recensions of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, and Judit Törzsok has argued that the longer of these may in fact be the older one.[169] More definitive is the existence of a shorter version of the *Brahmayāmala*, which, although it once refers to itself as the *Brahmayāmala*'s "essence" (*sāra-*), otherwise speaks of itself as the *Brahmayāmala* without further qualification.[170] The shorter text is, Hatley tells us, largely derived from its longer predecessor, though it appears to incorporate new material as well.

This much does not account theoretically for the initial composition (or compilation) of scriptures, though it certainly echoes, in a certain sense, the accretive process through which some Śaiva texts were at least partially created. But what of the impossibly large ur-texts mentioned by the *Brahmayāmala* and elsewhere? A definite Śaiva scripture of 125,000 verses is extremely unlikely to have ever existed, especially considering the *Mahābhārata*, the longest premodern Indic text and one of the longest pieces of literature in world history, contains only 100,000 or so stanzas in its vulgate version.

It may be useful to think of the *Vimala* and other similarly massive and no doubt imaginary texts as hypostasized representations of the Śaiva tradition itself. One reason to postulate a conceptually permeable barrier between amorphous bodies of traditional knowledge and the definite texts in which they are realized has already been discussed, that is, the semantic bivalency of the term *jñāna*, which, depending on context, means both knowledge and its realization in textual form. A closer examination of the actual textual practices used in the production of Śaiva scriptures may also shed light on the ideological underpinnings of these idealized ur-texts, though it may also be

[169]Törzsok 1999: iv-v.

[170]Hatley 2016: 42-43. Hatley notes that "the shorter recension designates itself by the same principal titles as the longer: *Picumata* or *Picutantra*, *Navākṣaravidhāna* ('Method of the Nine Syllables'), and *Brahmayāmala*." He also notes the possible similarity between the two recensions of *Brahmayāmala* and the two of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*.

that these practices are more properly understood as theoretically authorized by the conviction that these types of massive exemplars in fact existed. As Alexis Sanderson has demonstrated, and as I have discussed above, many Śaiva scriptures (or at least substantial parts of them) were produced by adaptively redacting passages from earlier scriptures into a new text. This process on occasion entailed a significant degree of rewriting, especially in order to reflect theological advancements.[171] At other times, however, the appropriation of material from another, earlier scripture proceeds with almost no modification. Sanderson has demonstrated this phenomenon by comparing the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* with the *Svacchandatantra*. As he notes, the process of scriptural reuse may be traced even further. Here I provide another example, in addition to the one mentioned earlier, by reproducing part of a table Sanderson uses to demonstrate the *Svacchandatantra*'s dependence on the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*. I add an additional column to Sanderson's table in order to show how the *Tantrasadbhāva* reproduces the *Svacchandatantra*'s version of the same passage (a fact also noted by Sanderson):[172]

Niśvāsaguhya:	*Svacchanda* 10.1111-1114ab:	*Tantrasadbhāva*:
hemābhāś śaṅkarāḥ proktāḥ	hemābhāś śaṃkarāḥ proktāḥ	hemābhāś śaṃkarāḥ proktāḥ[173]
śivās sphaṭikasannibhāḥ	śivāḥ sphaṭikasannibhāḥ	śivāḥ sphaṭikasannibhāḥ[174]
ekaikasya vinirdiṣṭam	ekaikasya vinirdiṣṭaḥ	ekaikasya vinirdiṣṭaṃ
parivāre yaśasvini	parivāro yaśasvini	parivāro yaśasvini
koṭir ekā samākhyātā	koṭir ekā samākhyātā	koṭir ekā samuddiṣṭā
sahasrāṇi tu ṣoḍaśa	sahasrāṇi ca ṣoḍaśa	sahasrāṇi ca ṣoḍaśa[175]
kūrmākārāṇi sarveṣāṃ	kūrmākārāṇi sarveṣāṃ	kūrmākārāṇi sarveṣāṃ
proktāni bhuvanāni tu	proktāni bhuvanāni tu	proktāni bhuvanāni tu
asādhyekapadam ūrdhvan	atordhvaṃ hariharaś caiva	atordhvaṃ hariharās ca
tato hariharau varau	rāgatattve nibodha me	rāgatattve nibodha me

[171] See Sanderson 2001: 24-34 for a discussion of this issue.

[172] See Sanderson 2001: 26-28, where an extensive critical apparatus is provided for the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* and *Svacchandatantra* citations. Sanderson notes that much of the *Svacchandatantra*'s tenth chapter has been incorporated into the *Tantrasadbhāva*, though he does not cite any specific examples. He does, however, point out parallel sections from other parts of these two texts in order to demonstrate that the latter has incorporated material from the former and not the other way around.

[173] Ms: *hemābhā śaṃkarā proktā*.

[174] Ms: *śivā sphaṭikasannibhāḥ*.

[175] Ms: *ṣoḍaśaḥ*

tasmād api daśeśānāḥ saṃsthitāḥ kāmarūpiṇaḥ suhṛṣṭas suprahṛṣṭaś ca surūpo rūpavardhanaḥ manonmanas samākhyātas sumanonmana eva ca mahāvīras suvīraś ca vīreśo daśamaḥ smṛtaḥ[177]	suhṛṣṭaḥ suprahṛṣṭaś ca surūpo rūpavardhanaḥ manonmano mahāvīro vīreśāḥ parikīrtitāḥ[178]	suhṛṣṭas suprahṛṣṭaś ca svarūpo rūpavardhanaḥ manonmano mahāvīro[176] vīreśāḥ parikīrtitāḥ[179]

In citing these parallel passages, I do not mean to argue that the *Brahmayāmala* was produced in a similar way, only that its self-representational narrative resonates with the type of textual practice that characterizes, in Sanderson's words, the "flow of redaction" between certain Śaiva scriptures.[180] Of course, the fragmentary nature of the evidence means we will never be able to identify all possible sources for any given text. When no parallel is identified, we cannot be sure whether a passage is truly unique or whether it was taken from or modeled after a now lost source. It is also difficult to say anything about the conditions under which the initial composition (or should I say textualization of received tradition?) occurred, though it seems likely that, as in the Buddhist case, we are dealing with a continuum of textual practices that blur the boundaries between composition and editing. Whatever the case may be, the adaptive reuse of existing scriptural passages in the redaction of new scriptures was a widespread practice.

The reincorporation of existing textual material into new scriptures makes theoretical sense in the Śaiva context, where scriptural knowledge (*jñāna-*) was, as several scholars have noted, both the undifferentiated source of all scripture and its actual realization in definite textual forms. Appropriation and reformulation seem therefore to reflect the process described, albeit in admittedly

[176]Ms. *manotmano*.
[177]Edited in Sanderson 2001: 27.
[178]Edited in Sanderson 2001: 27. See also *Svacchandatantra* 10.1111-1114ab, vol. 5.2, pp. 463-464.
[179]NAK A 44/2, f. 85v, l. 6 to f. 86r, l. 2.
[180]Sanderson 2001: 29. See also Hatley 2016: 182-183 and especially 193 for a discussion of how the *Brahmayāmala* "constructs a pedigree rooted in earlier layers of the tradition…."

mythical terms, in the *Brahmayāmala*'s account of its descent into the world and subsequent condensation. The practical outcome of this conceptual orientation was likely that cultural actors involved in what we would call the composition of scriptures saw themselves as recovering preexisting scriptural knowledge, which they sought to reformulate into definite texts. The sources for this recovery included textualized material and, we may presume, ever-shifting oral traditions pertaining to thought and practice. As in the Buddhist case, I suspect that the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable textual practices were highly dependent on specific socio-historical factors and varied based on the particular views current within specific communities and among individual teachers.

2.8 Summary and Conclusions

The emergence of the Śaivas as a self-conscious religious community was bound up with the production of scriptures attributed to Śiva. The first of these were produced by a group of Brahmin ascetics, and their socio-cultural background is evident in the textual practices they adopted, which mirrored, in some ways, those used by ritual schools attached to particular branches of the Veda. The next wave of Śaiva scripture, the Pramāṇas of the Lākula division of initiatory ascetics, is almost entirely lost. But what we do know is that these texts were seemingly written in *anuṣṭubh* verse and adopted a dialogic form.

Two of the principal scriptures for non-initiates, the *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the *Śivadharmottara*, are in some formal respects quite similar to the members of the Dharmaśāstric genre. In others ways, however, they are totally different, incorporating diverse material concerning lay devotion to Śiva. They also present themselves as the words of Śiva, albeit edited into definite textual form by human beings. In this they mark an advance over the early narratives accounting for the origins of texts like the *Pañcārthasūtra*, which are ascribed to Śiva only insofar as they are said to have been taught

by him in human form.

It is only with the Mantramārga that Śaiva scripture would truly begin to proliferate. This process begins, or better comes into view, with the fourth- or fifth-century *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*. By the sixth or seventh century, the Mantramārgic corpus had diversified into several distinct streams, with the more exoteric Siddhānta texts remaining largely congruent with Vedic norms, and the more esoteric non-Siddhānta scriptures adopting a more antinomian idiom of ritual expression. The language of all these texts, at least in their arguably earliest forms, departs from the standards of classical Sanskrit, a characteristic that was perhaps associated with their divine character. Their production was often driven by the reformulation of preexisting scriptural materials, and, we may presume, the intervention of Śaiva teachers who understood themselves to be participating in the uninterrupted process whereby Śiva's divine knowledge found expression in an ever-growing number of textual forms.[181]

[181] As Hatley 2016: 177 notes in his study of the *Brahmayāmala*: "These linguistic manifestations of scripture are provisional, and the canon fundamentally an open one. Possibilities for new revealed texts are endless, each containing within itself the essence of what precedes." See also his comment cited above on p. 139.

Chapter 3: Now Viṣṇu Speaks

3.1 Introduction

Evidence of devotion to Viṣṇu in the last centuries BCE is relatively rich. Epigraphical sources from the first or second century BCE document the public donations of figures who identified themselves as *bhāgavatas*, a word that denotes a devotee of the Bhagavat ("Blessed One"), which is to say Viṣṇu or, even more commonly, one of the various major deities assimilated to his cult.[1] Early literary evidence attesting to his worship is likewise extensive. The *Mahābhārata* contains several notable sections focusing on divine figures that Viṣṇu would come to subsume: the *Bhagavadgītā* ("Lord's Song;" circa 1st c. CE), *Harivaṃśa* ("Hari's Lineage;" 3rd to 4th c. CE), and *Nārāyaṇīya* ("Section Concerning Nārāyaṇa;" 3rd to 5th c. CE).[2] And the Vaikhānasas of South India, who present themselves as forming a Vedic *śākhā*, possess a unique set of putatively Vedic *sūtra* texts (4th to 8th c. CE) that include Viṣṇu-centric devotional practices.[3]

By the fifth century or so, though the evidence is not entirely certain, texts concerning Vāsudeva's divine nature had emerged under the name "Pañcarātra."[4] (Note that in South India the conventional spelling later became "Pāñcarātra.")[5] The old Pāñcarātrika corpus is not extant, and

[1] See Colas 2018.

[2] For an overview of these works, see Malinar 2007, Couture 1991, and Schreiner 1997, respectively. See also Brockington 1998: 147, 152, and 326 and Colas 2018.

[3] Colas 2003: 236.

[4] See the discussion of the *Nārāyaṇīya* below. The earliest definite reference to a Pāñcarātrika corpus may be found in the work of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, though his dating not entirely settled. See the discussion in Chapter 2, p. 131 and esp. n. 143.

[5] Leach 2012: 9-10

we do not know what exactly it contained. We are generally unable to say how these texts positioned themselves with respect to other corpora or whether they represented themselves as having been uttered by a divine being. What fragmentary evidence we do have allows us only to speculate, though it seems likely that they promoted the worship of Viṣnu as a form of practice that was supposed to transcend Vedic ritual.

The oldest extant Pāñcarātrika scriptures date to the ninth century or so and were probably composed in Kashmir.[6] They show a number of affinities with the texts of the Śaiva Mantramārga. They generally authorize themselves by claiming to derive from the teachings of Viṣṇu, but they also admit that their definite textual forms are the result of editorial intervention on the part of various divine and sagely figures. Scholars have shown that their authors often produced new scriptures by adaptively recasting passages found in older ones.[7] And their linguistic character, at least as it is preserved in the earliest surviving manuscripts, mirrors that of the relatively archaic Nepalese recensions of Mantramārgic texts. These continuities should not be surprising. Sanderson has already shown that a number of Pāñcarātrika scriptures drew upon and modeled their ritual system after Śaiva texts.[8]

The older among the surviving Pāñcarātrika scriptures present themselves as transcending the Veda.[9] This claim to transcendence would, as Robert Leach has shown, eventually be attenuated in South India, where more recent Pāñcarātrika texts abandoned their scriptural independence, rooting their own self-authorization in a claim to be derived from the Veda itself, albeit in ways that some-

[6]Sanderson 2009: 61.

[7]For example, see Acharya 2015: xvi-xvii and Rastelli 2006: 555-566. Note that, as I do not have sufficient facility with German, I have been unable to engage fully with much of Rastelli's work. I have nevertheless tried to give references wherever possible.

[8]Sanderson 2001: 35-41 and Sanderson 2009: 58-70. Note that Sanderson also adduces some later instances that involve the appropriation of textual passages from the Pañcarātra by the Śaivas.

[9]Leach 2012: 115.

times diverged from the classical model of *smṛti* formulated most forcefully by the practitioners of Mīmāṃsā (see Chapter 4, pp. 212-219).[10]

3.2 Pseudo-Vedāntic Beginnings?

The earliest references to a Pāñcarātrika scriptural corpus may appear in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, but the information it contains must be used with some caution. This portion of the *Mahābhārata* presents a number of complex problems, and, although some scholars suggest that it was composed by Pāñcarātrikas, this much is uncertain.[11] Basic questions about the textual history of the *Nārāyaṇīya* and its original relationship with the *Mahābhārata* remain unsettled. Many scholars hold that it may be divided into two historical strata and that it assumed its final form around the fourth or fifth century CE, which is to say around the same time that the *Mahābhārata* is supposed to have taken the shape recovered by the critical edition.[12]

The word "Pañcarātra" occurs seven times in the *Nārāyaṇīya*, but only two instances are found in the earlier stratum.[13] One appears to refer self-referentially to a speech given by Nārāyaṇa, that is, to a section of the *Nārāyaṇīya* itself. The speech is described as "this great *upaniṣad* called the 'Pañcarātra' (*pañcarātrānuśabdita-*), which is connected with the four Vedas along with the doctrinal conclusions of Sāṃkhya and Yoga."[14] Assuming that this interpretation of *anuśabdita* is

[10] See the discussion in Leach 2012: 117-120.

[11] In the introduction to her French translation, Anne-Marie Esnoul argues that this portion of the *Mahābhārata* owes its existence to a Pāñcarātrika milieu. See Esnoul 1979. Rastelli 2018 also states that the *Nārāyaṇīya* is "clearly associated with the Pāñcarātra," though she is cautious about assigning any degree of continuity between its authors and those of later Pañcarātra texts. Grünendahl 2002: 310-312 and 336 also speaks also of an "epic Pañcarātra school."

[12] This view is first set out in Schreiner 1997: 1 and is accepted by, for example, Leach 2012: 179-178. Conversely, Hiltebeitel 2006, esp. 249-250 argues that the *Mahābhārata* is the product of a relatively short period of composition and editorial redaction and that the composition of the *Nārāyaṇīya* was a more or less integral part of that process.

[13] See *Mahābhārata* 12.322.24, 12.326.100, 12.336.76, 12.337.1, 12.337.59, 12.337.63, 12.337.67. See the edition found in Grünendahl et al. 1997. I am excluding from consideration "Pañcarātrika," which is listed among the many names of Nārāyaṇa in 12.325.4.

[14] *Mahābhārata* 12.326.100 reads: *idaṃ mahopaniṣadaṃ caturvedasamanvitam | sāṃkhyayogakṛtaṃ tena pañcarātrānuśabditam*. This verse is cited in Yamunācārya's *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya*, and Veṅkaṭanātha's

correct, we may understand "Pañcarātra" here to refer specifically to the secret teaching (*upaniṣad-*) concerning Vāsudeva's true nature as conveyed in Nārāyaṇa's speech.[15] It remains possible that the term *pañcarātrānuśabdita* means not "called the 'Pañcarātra"' but "reiterated in the Pañcarātra," in which case "Pañcarātra" might denote some kind of textual corpus.[16] The other early instance is less helpful; it simply states that the "knowers of the Pañcarātra" (*pañcarātravidaḥ*) ate at king Uparicara Vasu's dwelling.[17]

In the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s second stratum, "Pañcarātra" takes on two separate but related meanings. In one instance, we are told that Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and the Veda's *āraṇyaka*-sections supplement one another and are collectively called 'Pañcarātra.[18] Elsewhere, "Pañcarātra" tends to serve as one among this group of textual collections rather than a collective name for all of them.[19] Although these two meanings may appear incongruous, the first, which defines Pañcarātra as a summation of sorts, may be intended to emphasize its preeminence over and subsumption of others teachings, and we cannot exclude the possibility that it refers to an independent set of texts. The second clearly denotes some sort of textual corpus because it appears as one among several other well-known corpora.

Pāñcarātrarakṣā. These testimonia all read *kṛtāntena* in the place of *kṛtaṃ tena*. These variant readings, which I follow in my translation, are noted by Leach 2012: 172 n. 288.

[15]Their conversation takes place directly between *Mahābhārata* 12.326.10-16 and then as reported by Bhīṣma from 12.326.17-97. Leach 2012: 154 translates *pañcarātrānuśabdita* as "spoken of as the Pañcarātra."

[16]There is a similar verse that uses *śabdita*, albeit not in compound and without the prefix *anu*, to refer to a teaching that appears in the disciplinary texts concerned with Yoga. See *Mahābhārata* 12.326.65: *hiraṇyagarbho bhagavān eṣa chandasi suṣṭutaḥ | so 'ham yogagatir brahman yogaśāstreṣu śabditaḥ*.

[17]*Mahābhārata* 12.322.24: *pañcarātravido mukhyās tasya gehe mahātmanaḥ | prāyaṇaṃ bhagavatproktaṃ bhuñjate cāgrabhojanam*.

[18]*Mahābhārata* 12.336.76: *evaṃ ekaṃ sāṃkhyayogaṃ vedāraṇyakam eva ca | parasparāṅgāny etāni pañcarātraṃ ca kathyate*. Leach 2012: 162 discusses this verse and on 164 n. 275 provides a convincing explanation of the compound "*vedāraṇyaka*."

[19]*Mahābhārata* 12.337.1: *sāṃkhyaṃ yogaṃ pañcarātraṃ vedāraṇyakam eva ca | jñānāny etāni brahmarṣe lokeṣu pracaranti ha*. "Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pañcarātra, and the *āraṇyaka* teachings of the Veda — these forms of knowledge, Brahmanical seer, circulate amongst mankind." Note that in another verse we find "the Vedas and the Pāśupata [doctrine]" instead of the *āraṇyakas*. See *Mahābhārata* 12.337.59: *sāṃkhyaṃ yogaṃ pañcarātraṃ vedāḥ pāśupataṃ tathā | jñānāny etāni rājarṣe viddhi nānāmatāni vai*.

The work of a Kashmiri author from a much later period, Bhāgavata Utpala (10th c. CE), might provide insight into the character of the Pāñcarātrika corpus known to the authors of the *Nārāyaṇīya*, but the evidence he preserves extremely fragmentary and inconclusive.[20] Utpala incorporates a number of quotations into his commentary on the *Spandakārikā* ("Verses on Vibration"), a scholastic work that systematizes the non-dualistic Śaiva doctrines current in 10th century Kashmir, including three that are drawn from otherwise unknown texts called the *Pañcarātra*, *Pañcarātraśruti*, and *Pañcarātropaniṣad*.[21] The names of the second and third indicate that they were perceived to be (or were intended to be perceived as) Vedic in character, though, from a critical perspective, there can be little doubt that they were composed well after the Vedic period. The fragments attributed to these three texts are quite different from extant Pāñcarātrika scriptures. They are composed in prose, perhaps, as Mark Dyczkowski suggests, in imitation of the old Upaniṣads.[22]

It is unclear whether we can conclude anything from these brief fragments. It might be hypothesized that they preserve remnants of an old Pañcarātra corpus, perhaps even the types of texts that were known to (or indirectly informed the views of) the authors of the *Nārāyaṇīya*. There is, however, an obvious difficulty with this proposal. Bhāgavata Utpala lived at least five centuries after the composition of the *Nārāyaṇīya*, and the total absence of any scholastic or commentarial literature from the early Pāñcarātrika tradition leaves us with no direct means to confirm the identity or antiquity of these citations. Yet one of these quotations resembles a passage found in the *Nārāyaṇīya*'s closing chapter, where we find a discussion of the nature of the true "person" (*puruṣa-*):

[20]For the name of Bhāgavata Utpala, see Sanderson 2001: 35 n. 38. Mark Dyczkowski 1992 instead calls him Bhagavadutpala, and he is followed by Leach 2012.

[21]Note also that he cites several known Pāñcarātrika texts as well as works of uncertain affiliation. See also Sanderson 2018 for a brief discussion of the *Saṃkarṣaṇasūtra*.

[22]See Dyczkowski 1992: 293-294, who comments: "The prose form of these works may be nothing more than a deliberate attempt to conform to the prose style of the early Upaniṣads in order to simulate a venerable antiquity."

> That very one is the light of the course of the world; the paramount thing to be understood; the thing to be known (*bodhanīyam*) together with the knower (*saboddhṛ*); the thinker (*mantā*) and the thought (*mantavyam*), the eater (*prāśitā*) and the food (*prāśitavyam*), the smeller (*ghrātā*) and the smell (*ghreyam*), the toucher (*sparśitā*) and that which is touched (*sparśanīyam*), the seer (*draṣṭā*) and that which is seen (*draṣṭavyam*), the hearer (*śrāvitā*) and that which is heard (*śrāvaṇīyam*), the knower (*jñātā*) and that which is known (*jñeyam*), both with and without qualities.[23]

Utpala ascribes a similar statement to the *Pañcarātropaniṣad*: "He is the knower (*jñātā*) and that which is known (*jñeyam*), the speaker (*vaktā*) and that which is spoken (*vācyam*), the enjoyer (*bhoktā*) and that which is enjoyed (*bhogyam*), and so on."[24] Of course, this quotation is extremely short, and its wording is neither particularly unique nor exactly the same as the *Nārāyaṇīya*. I am uncertain whether we can infer anything from the resonance between these two passages. Perhaps it suggests that, if the authors of the *Nārāyaṇīya* knew an early Pāñcarātrika corpus, it looked, at least in part, something like the *Pañcarātropaniṣad* quoted by Utpala. But caution is again warranted. The *Nārāyaṇīya* does not identify the above-mentioned passage as specifically associated with the Pañcarātra, and the background of Utpala's citation remains opaque.

Setting aside the *Nārāyaṇīya*, it is worth considering whether titles such as "*Pañcarātraśruti*" and "*Pañcarātropaniṣad*" indicate that early Pāñcarātrikas wanted to present themselves and their texts as Vedic in character. This conclusion seems reasonable, but the problem is complicated by the fact that the Pāñcarātrikas apparently saw their own teachings as transcending those of the Veda, which they held to be insufficient in the search for the "highest good" (*paraṃ śreyas*). This notion is evident in a citation that Śaṅkara (8th c. CE) attributes to the Pāñcarātrikas. Its source is uncertain,

[23] *Mahābhārata* 12.339.16-17ab, vol. 16, p. 1981-1982: *yat tat kṛtsnaṃ lokatantrasya dhāma vedyaṃ paraṃ bodhanīyaṃ saboddhṛ | mantā mantavyaṃ prāśitā prāśitavyaṃ ghrātā ghreyaṃ sparṣitā sparśanīyam || draṣṭā draṣṭavyaṃ śrāvitā śrāvaṇīyaṃ jñātā jñeyaṃ saguṇaṃ nirguṇaṃ ca*. Note that I am particularly uncertain about my translation up to *saboddhṛ*.

[24] *Spandapradīpikā* 29, p. 41, l. 16-17: *pañcarātropaniṣadi ca jñātā ca jñeyaṃ vaktā ca vācyaṃ bhoktā ca bhogyaṃ ca ityādi*.

and, like Utpala's citations, it is written in prose.[25] It claims that the sage Śāṇḍilya studied the Pāñcarātrika teachings after failing to find the highest good within the four Vedas.[26]

The citation preserved by Śaṅkara (though not as he interprets it) does not exclude the possibility that early Pāñcarātrikas claimed to have a better and more esoteric part of the Veda — one that transcended the four Vedas while claiming filiation with the corpus as a whole. And, perhaps somewhat separately, the notion of a *Pañcarātraśruti* resonates with the claim made by some Pāñcarātrikas to belong to the "Ekāyana," an opaque term that is associated, at least in some contexts, with an "Ekāyana *śākhā*" or "Ekāyanaveda."[27] No text or group of texts with this name is found in the generally recognized Vedic corpus, and, from a historical standpoint, it is unclear whether "Ekāyana" ever referred to an existing body of texts, let alone one composed during the Vedic period. The only extended treatment of the Ekāyana *śākhā* and its putative character, the *Kāśmīrāgamaprāmāṇya* ("The Authoritative Character of the Kashmiri Scriptural Tradition"), is lost, though it reportedly argued that the Ekāyana recension was authorless (*apauruṣeya-*).[28] I will discuss the notion of the Ekāyana *śākhā* in more detail below, where I argue that it might have originated as a means to account for non-Vedic *mantras* used during the installation of temple icons. It seems unlikely that "Ekāyana *śākhā*" ever referred to the sorts of texts quoted by Bhāgavata Utpala, especially given that its earliest usages refer specifically to *mantras* and not to a "Veda" in general.[29]

[25] Leach 2012: 44 does not take this to be a direct quotation from a Pāñcarātrika work, stating that "The fact that it is not in poetic metre strongly suggests that it is not a verbatim quote in any case."

[26] *Śāṅkarabhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra* 2.2.45: *vedavipratiṣedhaś ca bhavati caturṣu vedeṣu paraṃ śreyo 'labdhvā śāṇḍilya idaṃ śāstram adhigatavān ityādivedanindādarśanāt*. The same quotation, with some inconsequential variations, is preserved in Yāmuna's *Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 103, l. 1-2.

[27] For example, see the colophon in Vāmanadatta's *Saṃvitprakāśa* 1.137, p. 14: *ekāyane prasūtasya kaśmīreṣu dvijātmanaḥ | kṛtir vāmanadattasya seyaṃ bhagavadāśrayā*. "This is the composition of Vāmanadatta, a Brahmin born in the Ekāyana [*śākhā*], which takes the Lord as its subject." This brief statement is quoted and translated in Leach 2012: 135 n. 232 and Sanderson 2007: 280 n. 162, with the two scholars adopting somewhat different positions, at least insofar as I can tell, on how to construe *bhagavadāśrayā*.

[28] A reference to this text is found in *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 170, l. 8.

[29] According to Leach 2012: 141, the editor of the *Lakṣmītantra* claims that Utpala's citations refer to the Ekāyanaveda. Leach remarks that the evidence is not sufficient to substantiate this claim.

(Note also that a citation attributed to the *Pañcarātraśruti* more or less clearly attributes Pāñcarātrika teachings to God and does not present them as *apauruṣeya*, though it is impossible to say whether in doing so it sets out a representative position.)[30]

I do not wish to speculate too much about the character of the Pāñcarātrika textual corpus prior to the eighth or ninth century. The brief quotations provided by Bhāgavata Utpala, if they do in fact preserve fragments of a lost corpus, indicate that some of these texts adopted a prose style that is debatably reminiscent of certain Upaniṣads. This aspect of their character might have played an implicit authorizing function, if, that is, Dyczkowski is right to see a resonance with the old Vedāntic corpus here. Given the present state of the evidence, we cannot say any more about the character of the early corpus and must turn instead to the extant Pāñcarātrika scriptures.

3.3 Words of Another God

The oldest Pāñcarātrika scriptures that have come down to us were probably composed in or near Kashmir during the ninth or tenth century.[31] They claim (in most cases) to be derived from the teachings of Viṣṇu himself and sometimes use Vedic elements in the course of their ritual prescriptions. They are of an entirely different character from the statements attributed by Utpala to the *Pañcarātraśruti* and *Pañcarātropaniṣad*. They are almost exclusively composed in *anuṣṭubh* meter, and they adopt, at least in the old recensions preserved in Nepalese manuscripts, a linguistic register that deviates from the norms of standard Sanskrit and resembles the language of the Śaiva scriptures (see Chapter 2, pp. 131-136). In terms of their content, the ninth- or tenth-century Pāñca-

[30] *Spandapradīpikā* 1, p. 2, ll. 16-18: *pañcarātraśrutāv api yadvat sopānena prāsādam āruhet plavena vā nadīṃ taret tadvac chāstreṇaiva hi bhagavāñ chāstā 'vagantavya iti*. "Moreover, in the *Pañcarātraśruti*, [it says that] 'Just as one can, by means of a staircase, ascend a terrace or, by means of a raft, cross a river, in that same way, only by means of the teaching (*śāstra-*) may the Lord, who is its teacher (*śāstā-*), be known." See Dyczkowski 1992: 140 for another translation.

[31] Sanderson 2009: 61-62.

rātrika scriptures eschew any detailed focus on knowledge of the self and instead contain systems of *maṇḍala*-initiation, post-initiatory observances of various kinds, systems of regular worship, methods for deriving mantras, and detailed instructions for the installation of temple icons.[32] In other words, they closely resemble the scriptures of the Śaiva Mantramārga.

Sanderson argues that these similarities are the product of intentional effort on the part of the Pāñcarātrika community. In his view, this group sought to remodel themselves after the Śaiva tradition as part of a "reformation" that would provide them "with a substantially new ritual system that would enable them to compete more effectively with their rivals."[33] Whatever reasons may have prompted this development, and identifying them involves problems of some complexity, it seems likely that the textualization of a new ritual system along Śaiva lines was accompanied by a fundamental shift in the nature of Pāñcarātrika scripturality. This new type of scripture, which rose to prominence by the ninth century or so, was defined by the following characteristics: an overwhelming emphasis on ritual prescriptions; self-representation as a dialogue purporting to be the mediate record of a conversation between Viṣṇu and some other venerable figure; and the implicit or explicit claim to be independent of and superior to the Vedic corpus (though such claims would become attenuated in the South after the twelfth century or so). And, as in the Śaiva context, new Pāñcarātrika scriptures were often produced through the adaptive redaction of preexisting scriptural material.

According to a recently published catalogue, we know, primarily through reference, of 460 Pāñcarātrika *saṃhitās* ("collections"), the title most commonly adopted for Pāñcarātrika scriptures. As Leach tells us, around 150 are extant, though many only as fragments.[34] The vast majority of

[32]Here I abbreviate and slightly modify a more detailed list given in Sanderson 2009: 62.
[33]Sanderson 2009: 61.
[34]Leach 2012: 24-25 summarizes the findings of Parampurushdas and Shrutiprakashdas 2002.

these are South Indian compositions that date to the twelfth or thirteenth century at the earliest and are concerned primarily with temple worship. But palm-leaf manuscripts from Nepal and fragmentary citations preserved in early works of Kashmiri provenance suggest that more than a dozen of the newer type of Pāñcarātrika scripture had been composed (or become available) in the North by the tenth or eleventh century. Among these, several have come down to us in more or less complete Nepalese manuscripts, and four are extant in South Indian recensions that contain, as Diwakar Acharya tells us, a good deal of new material.[35]

A number of Pāñcarātrika scriptures provide lists that purport to include the names all *saṃhitās*, but these are late and of South Indian origin.[36] Two pieces of external evidence nevertheless suggest that the early North Indian Pāñcarātrika corpus may have been larger than a dozen or so texts.[37] The *Agnipurāṇa* includes a list of 25 Pāñcarātrika *saṃhitās*, and the *Śrīkaṇṭhī* ("The [*Saṃhitā*] of Śrīkaṇtha"), a Śaiva text probably known to Abhinavagupta (10th to 11th centuries), contains a list of 116.[38]

The extant Pāñcarātrika scriptures that can be reliably dated, at least in some form, to the tenth century or earlier may be divided into two groups. The first is almost exclusively concerned with the installation of temple images and is comprised of the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* and the *Devāmṛta-*

[35]Acharya 2015: xiv n. 9 reports that an early manuscript of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* contains a supplementary text that speaks of ten: the *Jayā*, *Vaihāyasī*, *Māyā*, *Pauṣkarī*, *Jyotis*, *Pātālākhya Lakṣmī*, *Kālavaiśvānara*, *Pañcarātrarahasya*, and *Kulakeśarika*. Early Nepalese manuscripts of the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*, *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*, *Jayottaratantra*, and the *Vāsudevakalpa* of the *Mahālakṣmīsaṃhitā* have been preserved, as well as a fragmentary manuscript of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*. Acharya judges a portion of the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* manuscript to be an independent text called the *Aṣṭadaśavidhāna*. Finally, Bhāgavata Utpala cites the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, *Pauṣkarā*, a prose passage from the *Māyāvāmanasaṃhitā*, the *Śrīvaihāyasī*, and the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*. There is obviously a fair amount of overlap here, and it should be noted that the nearly all of the *Jayottara*'s verses may also be found in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*.

[36]Leach 2012: 79-105, esp. 85 and 101-105 discusses some of these examples and demonstrates their relevance with respect to the fourfold Siddhānta system. Unfortunately, I cannot consider these issues here.

[37]Note also the inclusion of Vaiṣṇava ritual instructions (*vidhāna-*), including a *Pañcarātravidhāna*, in the *Brahmayāmala*'s account of the streams of scripture. See Hatley 2016: 346 and 452 for a translation.

[38]See Hannender 1998: 237 for the name of this text and pp. 244-246, vv. 51cd-69 for the list itself. Leach 2012: 102-103 argues that this list was a subsequent interpolation. For a discussion of the relevant *Agnipurāṇa* passage, see Rastelli 2007: 187-230.

pañcarātra.[39] The second includes the the *Jayākhya*-, the closely related *Jayottara*-, the *Pauṣkara*-, and the *Sātvatasaṃhitās*. The scriptures of this latter group are of a more diverse nature. Their chief concerns are initiation, mantra propitiation, and modes of individual worship, though most touch on the problem of image installation in their later chapters. From a broader perspective, both groups share an emphasis on ritual injunctions and derive their authority from the claim ultimately to be the teaching of Viṣṇu or another major god said to represent one of his divine aspects.

The two earliest extant Pāñcarātrika scriptures, the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* and *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*, are closely related. Although both are preserved in fragmentary manuscripts, what remains is enough to indicate that, as Acharya has shown, the latter was produced by a redactor who reused a number of the former's chapters without making significant changes.[40] In other words, most of the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* was created by cannibalizing passages from the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*. Yet the two texts contain somewhat divergent narratives of their respective descents into the world. The *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* opens with a description of Īśvara, here clearly referring to Śiva, who is residing on Mt. Mandara, where he is lauded by a sizable retinue of gods, the members of his host, and a variety of other supernatural beings. Brahmā approaches and praises Śiva with "*ṛk*-, *yajur*-, and *sāma*-type *mantras* drawn from the Vedas" and asks him about Viṣṇu's various natures, the production, installation, and consecration of Viṣṇu's image, and issues related to temple construction.[41]

The principal teachings of the text are presented as Śiva's reply. He begins by commanding

[39] I am here excluding from consideration the *Aṣṭādaśavidhāna*, which Diwakar Acharya considers an independent text that has been interpolated into a *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* manuscript. This much seems to be correct, but I am uncertain whether it was intended to be scriptural prior to its interpolation, and, in any event, it does not have its own *śāstrāvataraṇa*, at least not in the form in which it has been preserved.

[40] See Acharya 2015: lxxi-lxxiv.

[41] *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* 1.4, 1.7-11, 1.12-20, and 1.21-25 respectively, all in Acharya 2015: 3-6. See also the summary of this section given by Acharya on pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

Brahmā to "listen closely about the installation of Viṣṇu['s image], this great knowledge, the Pañcarātra, which is preeminent among all teachings."[42] The ultimate origin assigned to the discourse that follows is somewhat obscured by a corruption in the text's transmission. According to the reconstruction offered by Acharya, Īśvara subsequently states that he will "explain [the teaching] as it was previously related by Śambhu (*yathākhyātaṃ tu śambhunā*)."[43] This attribution is somewhat surprising because Śambhu generally serves as one of Śiva's own epithets.[44] The difficulties here are compounded by the fact that the reading "as it was previously related" is a conjecture; the manuscript quite clearly reads the contextually inappropriate "in conformity with its condition" (*yathābhāvam*).[45]

Whether or not the precise identity of the speaker matters is complicated by the immediately subsequent verses, which assert that Śiva, Brahmā, and Viṣṇu are in fact a single being. This position, Acharya tells us, is rare in subsequent Pāñcarātrika texts, and it might be taken as deemphasizing the importance of identifying who exactly was responsible for the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*'s initial promulgation.[46] Put differently, there is a certain tension between, on the one hand, the express depiction of the text as the record of a dialogue between two divine figures of unequal status and, on the other, the claim that those figures share a fundamental identity. Assuming Śambhu does in fact refer to Śiva in this context, there is an echo here of the Śaiva indifference to the seeming incongruity between their own abstract theorization of scriptural revelation in terms of "streams"

[42] *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* 2.1-2ab in Acharya 2015: 7. Note that a summary of this chapter is given by Acharya on pp. xxxvi-xxxviii.

[43] *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* 2.2cd in Acharya 2015: 7. The reconstruction is made more likely by the corresponding phrase in the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*. Acharya 2015: 112 suggests that Śambhu may in fact refer to an earlier text.

[44] It should be noted that Halāyudha, the medieval lexicographer, states that Śaṃbhu may serve as a name for Viṣṇu. See *Halāyudhakośa*, 1.25: *sanātano jinaḥ śambhur vidhir vedhā gadāgrajaḥ | kaiṭabhārir ajo jiṣṇuḥ kaṃsajit puruṣottamaḥ*.

[45] NAK 1-1648, NGMPP A 54/9, 1v, l. 3, reported in Acharya's apparatus as *yathābhāvan tu śambhunāṃ*.

[46] Acharya 2015: xxvi. The relevant statement is found in verse 2.7, p. 7.

and the fact that their scriptures present themselves, prototypically speaking, as a dialogue between Śiva and the Goddess.[47]

The flexibility with which these introductory narratives were treated becomes apparent when comparing the opening sections of the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* and *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*. As I have already noted, and as Acharya has shown, the latter of these two texts appropriates a great deal of material from the former. Included among the mass of adapted material are the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*'s first and second chapters, which are largely a verbatim reproduction of content drawn from the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*.[48] Yet the authors (or, perhaps clearly in this case, redactors) of the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* modify the opening verses in order to present this text as a different conversation between different beings — Brahmā and his son Sanatkumāra — atop Mt. Meru.[49] Brahmā's reply largely mirrors Śiva's in the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*. He expresses his intention to explain "the great scriptural knowledge that is the Pañcarātra, celebrated among all teachings." And the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* contains a similarly unexpected statement about its own textual history. Brahmā tells Sanatkumāra that it was "previously stated by Parameṣṭhin."[50] This epithet, which literally means "standing at the pinnacle," is conventionally applied to Brahmā himself.[51]

Brahmā obliquely provides us with further information about the putative process whereby the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* was supposed to have become a definite text by stating that he will explain

[47] See Chapter 2, pp. 125-128 and Hanneder 1998: 11-12.

[48] See also the summary given in Acharya 2015: lxxi.

[49] See *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* 1.1 in Acharya 2015: 3: *mandarasthaṃ sukhāsīnaṃ devānāṃ prabhum īśvaram | kāraṇam sarvabhūtānām ṛṣidevagaṇārcitam*. Compare this with *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* 1.1 in Acharya 2015: 59: *merupṛṣṭhe sukhāsīnaṃ brahmā lokapitāmaham sanatkumāraḥ śrīmantaṃ pṛcchate parameśvaram*. The latter text significantly condenses the narrative introduction, removing the preliminary verses of praise. *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* 1.7cd-22 and *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* 1.2cd-17ab are, barring a few exceptions, word-for-word the same.

[50] *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* 2.1 in Acharya 2015: 62. On p. 112, Acharya suggests that this may be "an honest statement about the source of the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*," by which he means a reference to its derivation from the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*. He similarly explains the phrase *yathāgītaṃ svayaṃbhuvā*, which appears in v. 2.26, p. 65.

[51] Here too there is a possibility that this word refers to Viṣṇu. Note, for example, *Raghuvaṃśa* 10.34: *iti prasādayāmāsus tava saṃhriyate vacaḥ | bhūtārthavyāhṛtiḥ sā hi na stutiḥ parameṣṭhinaḥ*. As Jinasamudra explains (v. 10.35 in his commentary), *parameṣṭhin* here refers to Viṣṇu.

the 12,000 verse *saṃhitā* "previously extracted by me" (*purā mayoddhṛtā*).[52] Although no specific source is given, we may presume that he drew from the "great knowledge [known as] Pañcarātra" (*pañcarātraṃ mahājñānam*) mentioned in the previous verse. The operative presuppositions here resemble those at work in the Śaiva context. Here too we find the notion that undifferentiated (or at least undefined) forms of "knowledge" need to be worked into specific textual forms. Again I would suggest thinking of this idea as a mythologization of the textual practices that were actually used in the production of scriptural texts from oral and written traditions (Chapter 2, pp. 140-143). The often all-encompassing exemplar from which definite texts are said to be reduced may be understood as a representation of the tradition itself, and the belief in the existence of this type of divine exemplar authorizes, at least logically speaking, the (re-)amalgamation of disparate materials in an attempt to recover something closer to the putative original teaching.[53]

It is only with the *Jayottara* that human agency is explicitly introduced into the narration of a Pāñcarātrika scripture's descent into definite form. This text (or perhaps only manuscript) is unique in presenting itself as the mediate report of Vaiśampāyana.[54] His appearance suggests that the *Jayottara* was perceived to be connected with the framing narrative of the *Mahābhārata*, where Vaiśampāyana serves as the narrator of the epic at king Janamejaya's snake sacrifice. The tendency to connect Pāñcarātrika scriptures with the *Mahābhārata* is not found in the other texts of the early Pāñcarātrika corpus, though it is common in South Indian compositions of a much later date.[55]

[52]*Devāmṛtapañcarātra* 2.1-2 in Acharya 2015: 62: *śṛṇu vipra mahāprājña sarvaśāstraviśārada* | *pañcarātraṃ mahājñānaṃ yad uktaṃ parameṣṭhinā* || *purā dvādaśasāhasrī saṃhitā ca mayoddhṛtā* | *tad ahaṃ saṃpravakṣyāmi śṛṇuṣv ekamanā mune*. Given the non-standard linguistic register, I suppose that *tad* must refer back to *saṃhitā* in spite of their mismatching genders, though it seems possible that it refers instead to *pañcarātraṃ mahājñānam*.

[53]Perhaps the sum total of the tradition, including its oral and written expressions, could legitimately be used in the recovery of something closer to the divine exemplar.

[54]NAK MS 4/82, NGMPP A-1306/24, f. 1v, l. 1: *oṃ namo nārāyaṇāya* || *oṃ namo bhagavate vāsudevāya* || *vaiśampāyana uvāca* | *śrīvatsāṅkavapu*[*ṃ*] *śrutvā ṛṣibhiś ca *tapodhanaiḥ* (corr. : *trapodhanaiḥ* : Cod.). See the parallel verse in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.26, p. 3: *śrīvatsāṅkavapur devas trātā śāsti jagattraye* | *cetaso 'vasthitiṃ kṛtvā ṛṣibhiś ca tapodhanaiḥ*.

[55]Though note the mention of Śvetadvīpa in *Devāmṛtapañcarātra* 7.3 in Acharya 2015: 81. The text states that this

Leach argues that the authors of these later scriptures were motivated "by the desire to locate these works within an ancient and authoritative tradition" and therefore drew explicit connections with the *Nārāyaṇīya*.[56]

References to the *Nārāyaṇīya* presumably reflect an attempt on the part of Pāñcarātrikas to assure themselves of the authoritative status of their scriptures, especially given that their socio-cultural position appears to have been contested in both Kashmir and the South. The chief point of contention was seemingly that certain adherents of the Pañcarātra claimed to be Brahmins despite lacking traditional Brahmanical status and were therefore considered illegitimate by those who saw themselves as the custodians of Vedic religion.[57] It is therefore possible that the appearance of Vaiśampāyana at the beginning of the *Jayottara* responds to a related anxiety. But all this speculation is tempered by the fact that he is nowhere else mentioned in the text, and, given that only one *Jayottara* manuscript is extant, we cannot rule out the possibility that this anomalous attribution reflects the idiosyncratic addition of a single Nepali scribe.

The significance of Vaiśampāyana's appearance at the very beginning of the only surviving *Jayottara* manuscript is therefore likely to remain uncertain, but the verses that follow are more clear. They describe how the text was brought into the world, setting out a narrative that is quite different from the one found in the corresponding sections of the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra* and the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*. Here a group of seers, having heard about Viṣṇu, approaches Śāṇḍilya and asks to learn about the ritual practices that characterize his worship.[58] Śāṇḍilya's association with

location may be found in the ritual pavilion as part of a larger exercise in homologization.

[56]Leach 2012: 154.

[57]See the discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 293-301.

[58]NAK MS 4/82, NGMPP A-1306/24 f. 1v, l. 3: *bhagavañ śrotum *icchāmo* (em. [*Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.37ab; perhaps eyeskip in ms.] : *śrotum i viṣṇor* : Cod.) *viṣṇor *adbhutakarmanaḥ* (corr. : *adbhuda-* : Cod.) | *upāsālakṣanaṃ karma kathayasva svabhāvataḥ*. This verse is parallel with *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.37, p. 4: *bhagavan śrotum icchāmo viṣṇor adbhutakarmaṇaḥ* | *upāsālakṣaṇaṃ karma kathayasva prasādataḥ*.

the Pañcarātra certainly predates the composition of the *Jayottara* (recall that Śaṅkara quotes a prose passage claiming that Śāṇḍilya studied the Pañcarātra's teachings after he failed to find the highest good in the Veda), and it seems plausible that this text is reformulating an older, perhaps much older, narrative concerning the putative textual history of the Pāñcarātrika scriptures. Śāṇḍilya is then said to reveal the essence (*sārabhūta-*) of a teaching that Viṣṇu taught to a large audience at the prompting of the seer Nārada while residing at the Badarī hermitage.[59]

Unlike the two earliest Pañcarātra scriptures, the *Jayottara* is therefore unambiguous in attributing its ultimate origins to Viṣṇu himself. This aspect of its self-representation is reinforced by a shift in its frame of reference; the remainder of the text is presented as a conversation between Viṣṇu and Nārada.[60] And here, unlike in the *Svāyambhuvapañcarātra*, the hierarchical framework of teaching and condensation is not muddied by a theology that makes the various interlocutors all ultimately identical. The text is therefore authorized in a straightforward manner by its relationship with Viṣṇu, its ultimate speaker, with seers playing a prominent role in mediating its descent into the world.

The *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, which is a longer version of the *Jayottara*, provides us with a far more extensive narrative that fleshes out many details only alluded to in the *Jayottara*.[61] It offers a differ-

[59]NAK MS 4/82, NGMPP A-1306/24 f. 1v, ll. 3-5: *sārabhūtam idaṃ śāstraṃ yad uktaṃ tena vai svayaṃ* || **badaryāśramasaṃsthena* (corr. : *badayā-* : Cod.) *viṣṇunā *prabhaviṣṇunā* (em. [*Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.44b] : *prabhaviṣṇuṇīḥ* : Cod.). Note that these lines are parallel with *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.41a, 1.45a, and 1.44b, p. 4: *sārabhūtam idaṃ śāstraṃ jñānopaniṣadaṃ mahat* | *rahasyam aprakāśyaṃ ca brahmagarbhaṃ ca śāśvatam* || *anugrahārthaṃ ca purā kathitaṃ nāradasya tat* | *tathācātirahasyatvāl loke 'smin na prakāśitam* || *na cāpi coditaṃ caiva kenacid dharmagauravāt* | **tathānekadinasyānte* (em. [suggested by editor] : *tathoktasya* : Ed.) *antardhānagataṃ tu *tat* (em. [suggested by editor] : *tam* : Ed.) *bhūyaś caivāvatīrṇena viṣṇunā prabhaviṣṇunā* | *muner vai svāṃśabhūtasya yad uktaṃ punar eva hi* || *badaryāśrmasaṃsthena prabhunā lokakāriṇā* | *dharmamārgāvatārārthaṃ vratenānena sattamāḥ*. The subsequent one and a half stanzas of the *Jayottara* describe the audience, though I cannot reconstruct them with confidence. They largely correspond with *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.46cd, 1.47ab, and 1.48cd, p. 5.

[60]See, for example, NAK MS 4/82, NGMPP A-1306/24 f. 2r, l. 4: *bhagavān uvāca* || *sādhu nārada pṛṣṭo 'ham sārabhūtam idaṃ tvayā* | *mantrapūrvaṃ hitaṃ sarvaṃ *yat tvayā* (conj. : *yac cayā* : Cod.) *codito hy ahaṃ*. See the parallel verse in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 9.3, p. 41: *sādhu nārada pṛṣṭo 'haṃ sārabhūtaṃ idaṃ tvayā* | *mantrapūrvaṃ hi vai sarvaṃ yat tvayā paricoditaṃ*.

[61]Acharya 2015: xiii n. 5 notes that he holds "the *Jayottaratantra* to be the Urtext of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*." His forthcoming critical edition, which I have not seen, will no doubt resolve a number of outstanding questions. Here I

ent perspective on the descent of the same basic teaching into the world, though it involves, albeit only at certain points, additional figures. It begins with the seer Saṃvartaka, who asks his father, Aurva, for a method to escape from cyclical rebirth.[62] Aurva tells his son that, during the Kṛta-yuga, a group of seers well-versed in the Veda and its auxiliaries performed terrifying austerities for many thousands of years and yet failed to attain emancipation from cyclical existence.[63] Their exasperated exclamations were met by a disembodied voice (we are later told that it emanated from the sky) that was "instigated by those [seers], dedicated to meditation, who desired to know the Lord's *dharma*." The voice declared that people who have not realized the highest ontological level (*paratattva*-) cannot attain their spiritual goals whether by mastery of the Veda, making donations, performing many sacrifices, or undertaking various observances like the lunar fast, urging the seers instead to concentrate their efforts on the father of the world (*jagadguru*-).[64]

The seers, though delighted upon hearing this unprecedented teaching (*abhūtapūrvaṃ śrutvā*), were bemused by these instructions because they did not know the identity of the supreme being. In response, the voice arose again from the sky and informed them that the supreme Brahman was none other than Viṣṇu.[65] This revelation led the seers to the practical problem of how Viṣṇu could be known, and they set out to find Śāṇḍilya, who was generally recognized as having accomplished all objectives. Upon reaching his dwelling on Mt. Gandhamādana, which is described in fantastic terms, they declare their desire to hear about the "ritual acts characterized by service to Viṣṇu" and,

wish only to note that the *Jayottara*, after concluding its brief introduction, moves on to material that corresponds with *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 9, though the latter has a far greater number of verses. See NAK MS 4/82, NGMPP A-1306/24 f. 2r, l. 5ff.

[62] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.6, p. 1. A very brief summary of the opening chapter of this text is given in Leach 2012: 82 n. 124.

[63] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.7-11, p. 1-2. This passage, from verse 1.6 to verse 1.16, is discussed in Leach 2012: 114-115. Note that, on p. 115 and separately on p. 154, Leach suggests that the first chapter of this text "[does] not belong to the oldest layer" of this text, though he notes that his position would be difficult to prove. All that I can add is that an abbreviated version appears, as seen above, in the *Jayottara* manuscript.

[64] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.12-18ab, p. 2.

[65] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.18cd-25, pp. 2-3.

more generally, "the Lord's *dharma*" (*bhagavaddharma-*).[66]

Śāṇḍilya begins his reply by introducing Viṣṇu's teaching as the "essence" (*sārabhūtaṃ śāstram*) and the "great gnostic secret" (*jñānopaniṣadaṃ mahat*), emphasizing its esoteric character. He then shifts to its textual history, informing the seers that it was "previously told to Nārada," but, owing to its extremely secret character, it was never revealed to anyone and eventually disappeared (*antardhānagata-*).[67] The next group of verses tells us that Viṣṇu descended once more (*bhūyaś caivāvatīrṇa-*) and taught this secret doctrine to a large group of seers, including Nārada, and divine beings at Badarī hermitage.[68] Śāṇḍilya then commands the seers to listen to the *dharma* he obtained previously from Nārada. He characterizes this *dharma* in a variety of ways: it is "endowed with all knowledge and ritual" (*sarvajñānakriyāyukta-*), it "bestows all accomplishments" (*sarvasiddhiprasādhana-*), it is "condensed" (*saṃkṣipta-*), as well as a host of other things.[69] He then tells the seers that he will explain it "in conformity with tradition" (*āmnāyena yathāsthitam*).[70]

After an excursus on what kind of students are fit for the teaching and the exalted status of the guru, Śāṇḍilya's direct narration ends, presumably returning us to Aurva and Saṃvartaka's dialogue about Śāṇḍilya.[71] We are told that Śāṇḍilya "placed Viṣṇu's hand upon the heads of the seers," a reference to part of the Pāñcarātrika initiatory ritual, itself modeled after the undoubtedly earlier Śaiva practice of "laying Śiva's hand" on the head of the initiate.[72] We thereupon return

[66]See *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.27-30, p. 3 for the seer's reflection and their determination to see Śāṇḍilya; see 1.31-36, pp. 3-4 for the description of Mt. Gandamādana. Their request is found in 1.37-39, p. 4.

[67]*Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.40-43, p. 4. I am not certain whether I have understood this section of the narrative correctly, especially the part that appears to suggest that Viṣṇu taught the text to Nārada twice.

[68]*Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.40-48ab, pp. 4-5. This passage corresponds with Jayottara NAK MS 4/82, NGMPP A-1306/24 f. 1v, ll. 2-5. See above, p. 160 n. 59.

[69]*Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.48-52, p. 5.

[70]*Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.48cd-52, p. 5.

[71]See *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.53-57ab and 1.57cd-66ab, both on p. 5. Leach 2012: 22-23 cites and translates vv. 1.60c-1.66.

[72]See *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 16.335, p. 181: *viṣṇuhastaṃ tato dadyān mūrdhni pṛṣṭhe hṛdantare* | *ālambhet mudrayā sarvaṃ mūrdhnaḥ pādatalāntataḥ*. For the Śaiva equivalent, see, for example, the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Mūlasūtra* 4.14 in Goodall et al. 2015: 144 and 279-280 for a translation: *nyāsam ālaṃbhanaṃ caiva śivahastaṃ pāśakṛntanam*

to Śāṇḍilya, who tells us more about the history of the "the great teaching that has come down in stages" (*kramāgataṃ mahacchāśtram*). In brief, God promulgates a *saṃhitā* in *anuṣṭubh* having first extracted the essence, it seems, of a divine exemplar containing 15 million stanzas.[73]

The *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* eventually assumes the form of a dialogue between Viṣṇu and Nārada, adopting thereby an idiom of self-representation that clearly roots its authority in God.[74] As in the Śaiva context, it seems that its authors were not concerned with the seeming tension between the self-representational claim to embody Viṣṇu's words and the explicit narration of an extended process of editorial modification and compressed transmission. All of the human figures said to take part in the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*'s "descent into the world" are seers, which brings with it another claim to authority, albeit a subsidiary one. Some might wish to explain their inclusion as a contrived attempt to further bolster the text's claim to a scriptural character. Here, as in the Śaiva case, I am resistant to a functionalist interpretation and would again stress that the authors and editors of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* likely worked with the presupposition that the material they wove into Pāñcarātrika scriptures, whether textual or oral, necessarily came from Viṣṇu through the mediation of venerable figures. A functionalist framework instead assumes that the Pāñcarātrikas who created these texts felt that their underlying sources lacked authority and therefore tried to legitimize them by concocting artificial frame stories. Is it not more likely that source materials first assumed authority, perhaps within localized communities or lineages, and were only subsequently worked

| *pañcabhir brahmabiś caiva sarvāṇy etāni kārayet*. Note that Goodall et al. 2015: 279 "assume that the hypermetry in 14b is authorial." This early example is somewhat different from the later use of *śivahasta*; in the Lākula context, it served as the climax of the initiatory ritual, whereas in later Saiddhāntika contexts, it concluded the so-called *samaya-dīkṣā*, which authorized the performance of observances but did not remove the physical bonds blocking the eventual attainment of liberation.

[73] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 1.73cd-79ab, p. 7-8. I am again not entirely confident that I have interpreted these verses correctly, but the general gist seems clear enough. See the summaries given in Smith 1975: 115 and Leach 2012: 82 n. 124. Leach also mentions the condensation of an original teaching on p. 108.

[74] This frame is permanently adopted from *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 2.31, p. 21 onwards. Note that I am here bracketing the problem of the so-called *Adhikaḥ Pāṭhaḥ*.

into scriptural form *because* they were already taken to be authoritative?

The *Sātvatasaṃhitā*, which existed in some form by the tenth century or so, adopts a unique but brief account of its own descent into the world.[75] It begins with the semi-divine seer Nārada, himself a devotee of Viṣṇu, who descends into the Malaya Mountains out of a desire to gaze upon Viṣṇu in the form of Paraśurāma. Impressed with Nārada's unwavering devotion, Paruśarāma appears and exhorts him to direct the seers dwelling in the Malaya Mountains towards the "Sātvata ritual path." Paraśurāma then disappears, and Nārada proceeds to visit a hermitage. He instructs the resident seers to propitiate the lord of gods according to the method of the secret tradition (*rahasyāmnāyavidhinā*), and they reply by asking how to reach Nārāyaṇa's station.[76]

Nārada begins with the ultimate origins of the teaching, explaining that it was previously uttered by Viṣṇu at the urging of Saṃkarṣaṇa. The teaching later came down to Nārada through an unbroken chain of tradition (*pāramparyāgata-*). After urging the seers to listen, Nārada sets the scene by explaining that Viṣṇu's body took on a slight redness at the arrival of the Tretāyuga. The dialogic frame then shifts to Viṣṇu and Saṃkarṣaṇa's conversation, and the latter asks the former about his changing hue. Viṣṇu explains that his color has changed in response to the passionate inclinations that characterize people during the Tretāyuga. Saṃkarṣaṇa asks what types of actions might prevent these passions from affecting people who are devoted to Viṣṇu, and Viṣṇu replies with a brief discussion of his threefold propitiation.[77] We then hear again from Nārada, who introduces the second chapter with a single stanza, stating that Saṃkarṣaṇa again questioned Viṣṇu for the welfare

[75] The text's citation by Bhāgavata Utpala does not guarantee that the narrative of its descent dates back to that period. He cites only a pair of stanzas, the first corresponds with *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 18.127, p. 176 and the second is untraceable. See *Spandapradīpikā* 9, p. 21, l. 23 to p. 22, ll. 1-2.

[76] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 1.1-17ab, p. 1-2. For the final half verse, I am following Alaśiṅgabhaṭṭa's gloss of *śreyas* as *sādhanabhūtaṃ bhagavatprītijanakaṃ yat karma*.

[77] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 1.17-27, p. 2-3. Here Viṣṇu refers to himself as *paraṃ brahma* and mentions his worship in the following three forms: *para*, *vyūha*, and *vaibhava*. See also Smith 1975: 516.

of those terrified by existence. The *Sātvatasaṃhita* subsequently returns to Viṣṇu and Saṃkarṣaṇa's dialogue, which, apart from a handful of brief intercessions, continues until the end of the text.[78]

Not every Pāñcarātrika scripture includes an opening passage that describes its own descent into definite textual form. We do not find one in the *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā*, for example.[79] But those that do include this sort of narrative tend to emphasize their own mediated character, whether implicitly or explicitly, as well as the deities and seers involved in their transmission.[80] Many, though not all, present themselves as originating in Viṣṇu himself. Some claim that a massive, sometimes all-encompassing, exemplar was gradually reduced, presumably to better suit the faculties of its increasingly less competent audiences. And importantly, a number of Pāñcarātrika scriptures declare that they are a higher teaching taught specifically to those who have tried and failed to achieve liberation through Vedic forms of religious practice, which are depicted as ultimately unable to effect this goal.[81] This claim to transcend the Veda goes back at least as far as the time of Śaṅkara. But it would, as Leach notes, become increasingly attenuated as South Indian *saṃhitās* made an increasingly greater use of the Veda in the course of their own self-authorizations.[82]

3.4 Graded Utterances

The *Sātvatasaṃhitā*'s twenty-second chapter contains several descriptions of the ideal characteristics of different classes of initiate. These are followed by a discussion of the *ācārya*, who should

[78] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 2.1, p. 4.

[79] The *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā* interestingly contains an account of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s descent into the world. Leach 2012: 76 n. 110 argues that this section postdates Yāmuna's composition of the *Āgamaprāmāṇya*.

[80] Leach 2012: 108 notes that "The Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās employ a variety of techniques to establish their own 'intermediate' status."

[81] Leach 2012: 115 makes this same point and explains that "the Pāñcarātra is presented as an additional, higher teaching for Vedic initiates who desire additional and higher goals.

[82] Leach 2012: 120-131 discusses how the degree to which these texts accommodate themselves to Vedic norms often depends on the sectarian tendencies of the Pāñcarātrika group that produced them.

be able to recognize the "mixture of scriptures" (*sāṅkaryam āgamānām*) through the force of their statements.[83] The text then goes on to introduce guidelines for identifying three types of utterance: divine (*divya-*), those spoken by seers (*munibhāṣita-*), and human (*pauruṣa-*). This passage, which has been studied by both Leach and Whitney Cox, defines each of them and places them within a hierarchical framework based on their relative soteriological value. No comparable discussion is found in any of the other *saṃhitās* that can be shown to have circulated, at least in some form, in the North. The relevant section is as follows:

> With respect to [the scriptures (*āgama-*)] there are three types of statement: divine, those spoken by seers, and human. Make sure, lotus-eyed one, to familiarize yourself with the difference between them. That which is significant, certain, lucid, succinct, and fixed is said to be an utterance of God (*pārameśvara-*); for, established by command, it grants liberation.[84] [As for a statement] that praises supernatural attainments and encourages [people to pursue] them, wins over all [devotees], is secret, and produces conviction, know that to be an utterance of the seers (*munivākya-*); it grants the fruits of all four aims of man. A statement that is meaningless, nonsensical, serves little purpose, bombastic, and fails to effect a command of the former [categories] (*ādyokteḥ*) is human in origin (*pauruṣa-*). It is a storehouse of pointless supernatural accomplishments and should be avoided because it brings about damnation. Even if a statement is of human origin, it should be accepted like one spoken by the seers provided it reiterates something already established [by one of the other two types of statement], conveys a reasonable meaning, and is of a different character [from the deficient sort of human utterance]. Thus, wise one, when a scripture (*āgama-*) is produced from acceptable statements, know that it shows, in its entirety, the true path and expresses injunctions.[85]

[83] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 22.49, p. 212: *sāṃkaryam āgamānāṃ ca vetti vākyavaśāt tu yaḥ*. "[A proper *ācārya*] is one who recognizes the [inappropriate] mixing of scriptures through the force of their statements." The text then goes on to introduce the nature of each type of statement.

[84] The more recent edition published together with Alaśiṅga Bhaṭṭa's commentary reads *ca* instead of *hi*. Neither edition has a critical apparatus, but Veṅkaṭanātha quotes this verse with *hi*, which I have adopted here. See *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 29, l. 7.

[85] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 22.49cd-56ab, p. 212: *tatra vai trividhaṃ vākyaṃ divyaṃ ca munibhāṣitam* || *pauruṣaṃ cāravindākṣa tadbhedam avadhāraya* | *yad arthāḍhyam asandigdhaṃ svaccham alpākṣaraṃ smṛtam* || *tat pārameśvaraṃ vākyam ājñāsiddhaṃ hi mokṣadam* | *praśaṃsakaṃ hi siddhīnāṃ sampravartakam apy atha* || *sarveṣāṃ rañjakaṃ gūḍhaṃ niścayīkaraṇakṣamam* | *munivākyan tu tad viddhi caturvargaphalapradam* || *anarthakam asambaddham alpārthaṃ śabdaḍambaram* | *anirvāhakam ādyokter vākyaṃ tat pauruṣaṃ smṛtam* || *heyaṃ cānarthasiddhīnām ākaraṃ narakāvaham* | *prasiddhārthānuvādaṃ yat saṃgatārthaṃ vilakṣaṇam* || *api cet pauruṣaṃ vākyaṃ grāhyaṃ tan munivākyavat* | *evam ādeyavākyottha āgamo yo mahāmate* || *sanmārgadarśanaṃ kṛtsnaṃ vidhivādaṃ ca viddhi tam*. See Leach 2012: 79-80 for another translation. Cox 2017: 107 translates this passage up to *munivākyavat*. Note that he follows the *Pañcarātrarakṣā*'s editor in reading *gūḍhaniścayīkaraṇakṣamam*. I have followed Leach in my understanding of *vilakṣaṇa*.

The *Sātvatasaṃhitā* here presents a typology of utterances in an idiom that seems, as Leach notes, faintly to echo certain aspects of the Mīmāṃsaka tendency to hierarchize scriptural statements, though the overarching framework is antithetical to their classical understanding of textual authority.[86] What concerns us here is the manner in which divine, sagely, and human utterances are defined. According to the titles given to each category, the most obvious issue at stake is the putative source of an utterance. Yet we must remember that this passage is meant to describe the qualifications of an *ācārya*, which include being able to recognize different types of scriptural statement on the basis of stereotyped properties. As a consequence, it seems that this passage is not (or at least not only) telling us about the characteristics of utterances of an already known type. Rather, it suggests, more importantly in my view, that an *ācārya* may use the properties of a statement in order to determine the category to which it belongs. In some ways, this approach resembles the Buddhist conceptualization of scripture: authentic *buddhavacana*, which literally means "words of the Buddha," was held to be identifiable, at least in certain contexts, by its presumed truth-value. Recall also that the principal mechanism for testing whether a statement was "uttered by the Fortunate One" (*bhagavato vacanam*) was to compare it with other accepted instances of *buddhavacana* for consistency. In both contexts, an analysis of content, rather than an institutional categorization or an attempt to establish a text's transmission history, plays an important role in determining whether a statement is judged to be authoritative, at least in theory.

In drawing this comparison, I do not wish to suggest that the authors of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā* held exactly the same views as the Buddhists when it came to judging the attribution of statements to divine figures. I only want to draw attention to a shared set of notions about how one might

[86]Leach 2012: 83 n. 128 notes that "the Mīmāṃsaka terminology is familiar," at least insofar as Veṅkaṭanātha's explanation of *anirvāhakam ādyokteḥ* is concerned.

determine whether speech is authoritative or not. The resemblance between these two cases is especially noticeable when we consider the expressly porous boundary between *munivākya* and *pauruṣa*-statements, with the latter type eligible to be accepted as *munibhāṣita* provided that, among other things, it reiterates something established by one of the higher categories of statement.[87] (Note however that the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*'s postulation of a hierarchy makes it quite different from the Buddhist case.)

As Leach notes, albeit in a different context, the *divya*-class is not permeable, which is to say that that there is no express path for *munibhāṣita*-statements to be taken as if they were spoken by God.[88] What exactly we might infer from this fact is not immediately obvious, especially because, in the case of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā* at least, these categories are not applied to definite texts, at least not explicitly. The overall point, as Whitney Cox suggests, appears to be to provide some sort of criteria for identifying corruption and interpolation.[89] There is undoubtedly a commitment to the notion that certain Pāñcarātrika teachings come directly from God. But, at the same time, the method provided for identifying them reflects a seemingly flexible approach towards authority or at least one potentially subject to varying interpretations.

Assessing the broader significance of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*'s hierarchy of statements is similarly complicated by its absence, again as noted by Leach, from other early Pañcarātra scriptures. It is only found in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, a South Indian composition dating to the twelfth or thirteenth century, and the *Īśvarasaṃhitā*, which appropriates a number of passages from the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* and may be assigned to the thirteenth or fourteenth century.[90] The same three-part

[87]Leach 2012: 82-83.

[88]Leach 2012: 84. His discussion pertains specifically to the appearance of an analogous model in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, which is quite different insofar as it involves the explicit application of these categories to specific scriptures.

[89]Cox 2017: 107.

[90]Leach 2012: 82. For the dating of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, see Rastelli 2006: 54 and 98; for the dating of the *Īśvarasaṃhitā*, see Matsubara 1994: 28-31. See also Leach 2012: 34-35.

framework is also found in the *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* ("The Pāñcarātra's Protective Talisman"), a theological tract by Veṅkaṭanātha (1268-1396 CE), a South Indian thinker also known by the title Vedāntadeśika.[91] Given the dating and geographical provenance of these three works, it is tempting to hypothesize that the relevant passage of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā* was added in South India. Yet Leach gives us reason to believe that its tripartite model might have been current in the North. He points out that the *Ciñcinīmatasārasamuccaya*, a Kaula work of uncertain date preserved only in Nepal, divides a cycle of *tantras* associated with the hunchbacked goddess Kubjikā into three types: the *divyaugha*, *siddhaugha*, and *mānavaugha*.[92] These categories correspond almost exactly with the three found in the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*, and it seems plausible that the two classificatory systems are the products of mutual influence.

I want to bracket the problem of the tripartite framework's relative antiquity and concentrate instead on whether it reveals anything about the limits governing Pāñcarātrika scriptural production from either a practical or theoretical standpoint. One aspect that bears again repeating is that the *Sātavatasaṃhitā*'s taxonomic scheme is specifically concerned with utterances and not definite texts. Later versions would, as mentioned, employ these three categories in an effort to hierarchize scriptural works. Yet it appears that the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*'s authors were concerned instead with the interpretation of individual statements within a single scripture. This passage might, as just mentioned, be intended to provide a practical basis for judging scriptural statements to determine whether they should be considered authentic and, moreover, what to do if two statements contradict one another.[93]

[91] For Veṅkaṭanātha's dates, see Cox 2017: 93.

[92] This text has been preserved in several manuscripts in Nepal, attesting to its currency in that region. See Dyczkowski 1988: 175 n. 93 and Sanderson 2014: 96. For a discussion of these divisions, see Dyczkowski 1988: 90. Leach 2012: 79 n. 116 notes the similarity between the Kaula taxonomy and the Pañcarātra one, and he suggests that the "Śaiva scheme postdates the threefold classification of texts found in the Pāñcarātra."

[93] It might also be focused on the practical issue of how injunctions from different scriptures were to be realized in

Another important issue is the conceptualization of "statements coming from God" (*pārameśvaraṃ vākyam*), a category that, as also noted above, is presented as less permeable than the "utterances of the seers."[94] Caution is warranted here because, as was demonstrated in the case of the *Śivadharmottara*, the editorial intervention of human intermediaries was not always understood to alter fundamentally the identity of a putatively divine utterance. Of course, the situation is here significantly complicated by the explicit identification of a separate category of statement that is supposed to have come from the seers, and the *Sātavatasaṃhitā* does not give us more information that might be used to understand better the distinction between various types of statement. Veṅkaṭanātha provides one interpretation, albeit presumably an anachronistic one given that he basis his discussion, at least in part, on a later articulation of this classificatory framework that is explicitly concerned with texts rather than discrete utterances.

Veṅkaṭanātha focuses on an expanded version of the tripartite framework as it appears in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*. He explains that *divya* teachings are "directly composed by God and thereafter circulated (*pravartita*-)," as Leach translates it, "by figures like Brahmā, Rudra, and Indra."[95] Summarizing his scriptural source, Veṅkaṭanātha defines *munibhāṣita*-teachings as "those created by Brahmā and others."[96] He points out that the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* divides the *munibhāṣita* category into three subcategories named after Sāṃkhya's three qualities. *Sāttvika* teachings "take the form of a composition in which all of the content was heard directly from God." *Rājasa* teachings "were composed by figures like Brahmā and their students after bringing together some material

the context of a complex ritual performance.

[94]See the reference to Leach's discussion of this issue above, p. 168.

[95]*Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 39, ll. 7-8: *sākṣād bhagavatpraṇītaṃ brahmarudrendrapramukhaiḥ pravartitaṃ śāstraṃ divyam*. Veṅkaṭanātha is here drawing on *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.336-337, p. 86. See Leach 2012: 80 for a discussion and translation of various phrases.

[96]*Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 39, ll. 10: *brahmādibhir nirmitaṃ śāstraṃ munibhāṣitam*. See also *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.338, p. 86.

heard from God and some established by the power of their own yoga." And *tāmasa* teachings "were produced with content arising from an imaginative exercise based entirely in their own yoga."[97] Finally, Veṅkaṭanātha tells us that "*pauruṣa* (i.e., *mānuṣa*) statements are distinct from those categorized as *divya* or *munibhāṣita* because they have been composed by ordinary men who are not *yogins* and might therefore be invalid."[98]

Neither Veṅkaṭanātha nor his scriptural sources further thematize the process whereby Viṣṇu was imagined to "directly compose" a teaching, and no further explanation of the term "circulate" (*pravartita-*) is given. The distinction between *divya* and *sāttvika* also remains somewhat unclear. At first glance, it seems as if the *divya* category allows for no editorial activity of any kind, whereas the *sāttvika* texts are supposed to have been edited into their definite forms by lesser gods and other figures possessed of exceptional yogic capabilities. And none of the categories, including the lower two forms of *munibhāṣita*, appear to allow for the meaningful intervention of ordinary human beings at any stage. Yet the situation may be more complicated than it first appears. Veṅkaṭhanātha, here again following the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, subsequently provides a list of Pāñcarātrika scriptures that fall into each of the various categories, though notably none are categorized as *mānuṣa*. Among them, the *divya* texts are said to be the *Sātvata*, *Pauṣkara*, and *Jayākhya*, a group commonly referred to as the Pañcarātra's "Three Gems" (*ratnatraya-*) in secondary scholarship.[99]

The claim that the *Sātvata-* and *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* were directly composed by God stands in a

[97] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 39, ll. 11-14: *sākṣād bhagavataḥ śrutārthamātranibandhanarūpaṃ śāstraṃ sāttvikam | bhagavataḥ śrutam ekadeśaṃ svayogamahimasiddhaṃ ca śeṣaṃ saṃkalayya brahmādibhis tacchiṣyaiś ca svayaṃ praṇītaṃ śāstraṃ rājasam | kevalasvayogavikalpotthair arthaiḥ kṛtaṃ śāstraṃ tāmasam iti*. See also *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.339-344.

[98] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 39-40: *divyād munibhāṣitāc ca vyatiriktaṃ saṃbhavadaprāmāṇyam ayogibhiḥ manujamātraiḥ praṇītaṃ pauruṣaṃ vākyam*. See also *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.385. This passage is translated and discussed in Cox 2017: 110-111.

[99] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 40, l. 3: *sāttvatapauṣkarajayākhyādīni śāstrāṇi divyāni*. See also *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.376cd-377ab, p. 85 and Leach 2012: 81. See Leach 2012: 29ff. for a discussion of the category "*ratnatraya*."

degree of tension with the way in which these texts describe their own descents into the world. The first presents itself in a manner that seems closer to Veṅkaṭhanātha's description of *sāttvika* teachings, not *divya*, because it is supposed to be a record of a conversation between Viṣṇu and Saṃkarṣaṇa as related to Nārada. No explicit mention of editorial processing or condensation is ever made.[100] At the same time, it must be admitted that the brief narrative at the beginning of the text does not purport to be Viṣṇu's teaching at all, and we therefore confront again the fact that the categorization of the principal content of a text is often not affected by the incidental details it contains. This phenomenon suggests, in turn, a degree of flexibility operating beneath the ostensibly rigid categories defined by the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*. And the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, at least in its present form, explicitly states that it was condensed at various stages during the process of its transmission. As a consequence, Leach argues that its categorization as a *divya* scripture was not based on its own self-representation.[101] Yet Veṅkaṭanātha, not to mention the authors of his scriptural sources, apparently found no contradiction in investing the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* with *divya* status.

How can we understand this seeming discrepancy, especially in light of the fact that the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* and *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* delineate a separate category that seems better to reflect the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*'s narrative of its own descent into definite form? It seems certain that Veṅkaṭanātha simply accepts the division as it is set out in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, which fits with his broader exegetical agenda. Assessing the intentions of the authors of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* presents a more complex set of problems, not the least because its various sections may have been composed or modified at different times by different people. Yet its opening narrative may provide

[100] See above, p. 164-165.
[101] Leach 2012: 81-82, and esp. n. 124.

further insight into its application of the tripartite scheme of scriptural categorization. Here I will discuss only the relevant details, though I will return to the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s "descent into the world" at the beginning of the next section. The text starts with a description of the general origins of the Pāñcarātrika corpus.[102] It tells us that God first taught Śāṇḍilya a secret tradition (*rahasyāmnāya-*) that was dedicated entirely to liberation.[103] After being further entreated, he subsequently taught scriptures "such as the *Sātvata*, *Pauṣkara*, and *Jayākhya*, which are composed in *anuṣṭubh* and grant both worldly enjoyments and liberation."[104]

The *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* then goes on to deal with what it calls the "root Veda" (*mūlaveda-*), a concept about which I will have more to say shortly. It returns to the three *divya* scriptures in the course of a narrative about the decay of *dharma* beginning in the Tretāyuga, during which time people abandoned their exclusive devotion to Vāsudeva and adopted adulterated (*miśra-*) forms of religious practice.[105] They eventually desired to return to Viṣṇu's station, and, in response, Saṃkarṣaṇa first taught Śāṇḍilya "the *divya* teachings, such as the *Sātvata*, which grant both enjoyments and liberation, in order to confer favor upon all caste groups and to accomplish the desired objects of all people."[106] He then teaches the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* itself, which is said to be "the essence of all God's teachings" and to "communicate the meaning of the *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā*." It originally contained 100,000 stanzas, but Śāṇḍilya later condensed it to 16,000 and taught it to Sanaka after "extracting the essence" (*sāram uddhṛtya*) from the version taught by Saṃkarṣaṇa.[107] The edited

[102]Rastelli 2006: 144-154 provides a German translation of this chapter. See also my note above on p. 146 n. 7.

[103]*Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.12-16, p. 1.

[104]*Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.17-19, p. 1.

[105]*Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.79, p. 3. This denegration of *miśra* practice may preserve the traces of a sectarian conflict of sorts. See Leach 2012: 143.

[106]*Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.86-89, p. 4.

[107]*Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.90-94, p. 4. See also Leach 2012: 33-34, which discusses and translates part of this passage. *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.94 states that Nārada separately learned the abbreviated teaching directly from Viṣṇu: *nārado 'pi purā caitad api saṃkṣepato vibhoḥ | kṣīrodaśāyino devāt sākṣāt saṃśrutavān dvija*.

text is, it should be noted, nearly 8,700 stanzas long.[108]

I am not sure whether this type of layered textual history really allows for the *Pārameśvara-saṃhitā* to be easily fit into one of the three categories of scriptural statement. It was first taught directly by a form of God in an enormous number of stanzas and was subsequently condensed by Śāṇḍilya, who taught a revised version under the same name. The original *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, it seems, should have been categorized as *divya*, but it never appears to have enjoyed this title, even notionally. It is impossible to know whether there is a reason for this absence. Perhaps the text's authors consciously sought to avoid ascribing different categories to a single scripture that took on various forms. Yet I think there may be a more fundamental issue at work here. The original version is said to be the essence of all "*pārameśvara* teachings" (*pārameśvaraśāstra-*).[109] In the categorization of scriptural statements, the term "*pārameśvara*" is sometimes used as a synonym for *divya*.[110] It seems therefore possible that "the essence of the *pārameśvara* teachings" means the same thing as "the essence of the [three] *divya* scriptures." (Recall, however, that the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* is traditionally seen to be most closely connected with the *Pauṣkara*.)

An avowed dependence upon material heard directly from God is consistent with the description of *munibhāṣita* provided elsewhere in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*. What makes this particular description unique is that dependence is articulated in strictly textual terms. This aspect of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s self-representation finds an echo in the fact that the text incorporates an enormous amount of material from other Pāñcarātrika scriptures and especially the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*,

[108] Smith 1975: 245.

[109] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.90, p. 4: *pārameśvaraśāstrāṇāṃ sarveṣāṃ munipuṅgava | sārabhūtaṃ viśeṣeṇa pauṣkarārthopapādakam*. Note, however, that Leach 2012: 34 and Rastelli 2006: 154 appear to understand this term differently, though they only translate it in passing.

[110] For example, see *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 22.51, p. 212; *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 10.357, p. 84; and *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* p. 29, l. 7.

Jayākhyasaṃhitā, and *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā*.[111] Marion Rastelli has shown that the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s authors (or, as she prefers to call them, compilers) closely follow the topics found in the three *divya* scriptures and directly incorporate a huge number of passages from them, with certain chapters consisting almost entirely of appropriated textual material.[112] Here I can only provide two brief examples, both pointed out in Rastelli's index, though they should be sufficient to demonstrate one of the principal processes whereby redactors created the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*:[113]

Pārameśvara 7.149-151:	*Sāttvata* 6.143cd-144:	*Jayākhya* 15.125cd-126ab:
nidhāya dakṣiṇasyāṃ ca	nidhāya dakṣiṇasyāṃ ca	
madhya āgneyadiggatam ǀ	madhya āgneyadiggatam ǁ	
viśrāntaṃ nairṛtapade	viśrāntaṃ nairṛtapade	
uttarasyāṃ tathāparam ǁ	cottarsyāṃ tathāparam ǀ	
vāyvīśapadasaṃruddham	vāyvīśapadasaṃruddham[114]	
āghārājyaṃ tataḥ kṣipet ǀ	ājyam ādāya vai tataḥ ǁ	
idhmamūlād athāgrāntam		
idhmedhmopari saṃsthitam ǁ		
sruvam ājyena saṃpūrya		sruvam[115] ājyena saṃpūrya
sūryabījena cintayet ǀ		sūryabījena cintayet ǁ
sahasrāṃśuṃ ca tanmadhye		sahasrāṃśuṃ ca tanmadhye
dadyāt kuṇḍasya dakṣiṇe ǁ		dadyāt kuṇḍasya dakṣiṇe ǀ
…		

Pārameśvara 7.174-177:	*Pauṣkara* 26.13c-15:
yoktavyāny agnimadhye tu	yoktavyam agnimadhye tu
samidbhiḥ saha sarvadā ǀ	samidbhiḥ saha sarvadā ǁ
sarvāṇy annaviśeṣāṇi	sarvāṇy annaviśeṣāṇi
candanādīni yāny api ǁ	candanādīni yāny api ǀ
sadantakāṣṭhatāmbūlam	sadantakāṣṭhatāmbūlam
utkaṭakṣāravarjitam ǀ	utkaṭakṣāravarjitam ǁ
dāpyāni lakṣahome tu	dāpyāni lakṣahome tu
āsanādīni yāni ca ǁ	āsanādīni yāni ca ǀ

[111] Leach 2012: 84 n. 129 makes a similar point, though he is discussing its relevance to a somewhat different issue.

[112] Rastelli 2002: 9, cited in Leach 2012: 33. Rastelli 2006: 555-578 includes an extremely detailed index that lists *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* verses together with parallels found in the broader Pāñcarātrika corpus as well as certain other texts.

[113] See Rastelli 2006: 558.

[114] Following the reading in the version edited by Sudhakar Malaviya. The older version reads *vārīśapadasaṃruddham*.

[115] The editor tentatively suggests emending to *srucam*.

The reuse of material from existing scriptures in the production of new ones is unique neither to the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* nor the Pañcarātra more broadly. Yet it is still striking how the mythologized self-representation of this text reflects the textual practices that were actually used in its production. Taking stock of this method of redaction likewise illuminates the issue of graded utterances, at least insofar as its application in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* is concerned, by showing how concrete textual dependence may be recast as a sort of hermeneutic theology. Recall also that the *Sātvatasaṃhitā* teaches that "scriptures produced from acceptable statements" should be taken as authoritative. Here too there is a resonance, as Leach also notes, with the fact that the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* was largely produced from *divya*-type utterances.[116]

The tripartite framework raises important questions, especially when used to classify entire scriptures. The categorization of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*, *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, and *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā* as directly taught by Viṣṇu seems to follow, first of all, from the authoritative position they had obtained among certain communities of Pāñcarātrikas, and, second, from their use as source material for scriptural composition. This categorization appears entirely unrelated to the text-internal narratives that describe their respective descents into the world. In other words, the notion that these texts and no others were directly taught by Viṣṇu likely developed in response to their relatively exalted status rather than as a method of self-promotion. It also shows that ideas about the origins of a scripture or body of scriptures could be entirely divorced from the self-representational narratives that they contain.

[116] As mentioned above.

3.5 The Ekāyanaveda

The *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* diverges from the prototypical model of the *śāstrāvataraṇa* by placing its own revelation at the end of a multistage process that explicitly posits a hierarchical relationship between various corpora attributed to Viṣṇu.[117] The text's framing begins with Sanaka, one of Brahmā's sons, who fails to accomplish his desired goal through terrible forms of ascetic practice. In response, Viṣṇu commands him to resort to Śāṇḍilya, who is said to have studied an enormous body of teachings directly from God (*sākṣād bhagavato 'dhītāḥ*). Having heard the "initial teaching" (*prathamaṃ śāstram*), which is called the "secret transmission" (*rahasyāmnāya-*) and grants only liberation, Śāṇḍilya, we are told, then prompted Viṣṇu to teach the *Sātvata-*, *Jayākhya-*, and *Pauṣkarasaṃhitās*, which are composed in *anuṣṭubh* and grant both enjoyments and liberation.[118]

The *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* does not clarify whether Śāṇḍilya was the first human recipient of these teachings, nor does it make explicit the relationship between them. The point here seems only to be that Sanaka must seek out Śāṇḍilya's instruction. Once the two meet, Śāṇḍilya teaches Sanaka something called the "Ekāyanaveda," which is said to be "the root of the great Veda tree" and to "pertain only to the ultimate ontological level, namely Vāsudeva, who is the true form of Brahman." Śāṇḍilya then describes the Ekāyanaveda as "the first *dharma*," which is "always upheld by the Sātvatas" and is "free of deities [other than Viṣṇu]."[119]

Śāṇḍilya then goes on to explain how he came to learn the Ekāyanaveda. He previously studied the Ṛg-, Yajur-, and Sāmavedas, which are littered with all sorts of other gods and promote adulterated forms of ritual practice, together with their associated discourses. Although these cor-

[117] See above on p. 173 n. 102 for a reference to Rastelli's German translation of the opening chapter of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*. A brief summary of this part of the text is given in Leach 2012: 33-34.

[118] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.1-21, p. 1.

[119] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.32-45ab, p. 2.

pora speak directly (*apraṇādyā*) about Viṣṇu from time to time, they tend to do so in an extremely condensed manner and in an indistinct fashion. He tells Sanaka that a strong desire to know Viṣṇu better prompted him to practice austerities for several thousand years. At the beginning of the Kaliyuga, Saṃkarṣaṇa appeared and taught him the Ekāyanaveda.[120]

At this point, Śāṇḍilya recounts what seems to be an entirely separate textual history of the Ekāyanaveda. He begins by telling us that Nārada once studied it on Śvetadvīpa. He then explains that Brahmā's mind-born sons, including Sanaka himself (*bhavān api*), together with a handful of other divine figures, propagated the *ekāntidharma*, here a reference to the Ekāyanaveda.[121] (No attempt is made to explain why, given that Sanaka knew the Ekāyana already, he would need to seek out Śāṇḍilya.) Another group of seers and semi-divine figures propitiated Viṣṇu and were eventually taught the root *śruti* (here a synonym for the Ekāyana).[122] Moved by compassion for the world, they examined the root Veda, which was hundreds of thousands of stanzas in length, and produced the *divya* scriptures. This description stands in open contrast with the text's other accounts of the origins of the *divya*-class of Pāñcarātrika texts, an important problem about which I will say more presently. The narrative then shifts into a prophetic register; Śāṇḍilya states that Manu and the other Dharmaśāstric authors will base their own works on the root Veda. We are then told that the root Veda, among other characteristics, contains the various types of mantras, such as *ṛks*.[123]

Śāṇḍilya next claims to have taught the root Veda to various other seers. The fundamental *dharma*, which has Vāsudeva as its sole object, prevails, we are told, throughout the Kṛtayuga. In the other ages, however, the derivative Veda (*vikāraveda*-) predominates, that is, the body of

[120] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.45cd-58ab, pp. 2-3.
[121] See Leach 2012: 133-134, citing Rastelli 2006: 161-168.
[122] This group is comprised of the seven Citraśikhandins and Manu.
[123] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.58cd-71, p. 3.

texts traditionally called the Veda. The shift from one to the other is explained in terms of the devolution of human capacity in accordance with the cycle of cosmic time, with the Tretāyuga marking the point at which people began to have various types of desires (*nānākāma-*). The rise of desire causes the Ekāyana's *dharma* (and presumably the texts that contained it) to disappear. The only qualification is that Viṣṇu may still reveal it to someone fit for the highest teaching. The purpose of this narrative appears to be to explain why Saṃkarṣaṇa appeared to teach Śāṇḍilya the Ekāyanaveda.[124]

Sanaka thanks Śāṇḍilya for teaching him the "best of *dharmas*," which, he acknowledges, is practiced by enlightened people (*pratibuddha-*). But how, he asks, can unenlightened people attain God's *dharma*? Śāṇḍilya explains that he formerly asked a similar question of Saṅkarṣaṇa, who responded by teaching the *divya* scriptures. These texts were intended for people who, having relinquished the highest *dharma* in favor of mixed forms of religious observance, desired again to reach Viṣṇu's station. Saṅkarṣaṇa subsequently promulgated the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* itself, which follows the root Veda (*mūlavedānusāreṇa*), is the essence of all divya teachings, and especially conveys the content of the *Pauṣkara*.[125] This version of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* was 100,000 verses in length, and Śāṇḍilya declares his intention to teach a version in 16,000 ślokas after first extracting the essential parts. He then notes that "Nārada previously heard this abbreviated teaching directly from God." He concludes by discussing the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s contents in some detail.

This lengthy opening passage appears to weave several traditions into a single narrative, one of which, Rastelli argues, may be intended to connect the Ekāyanaveda with the teaching received by Nārada in the *Nārāyaṇīya*.[126] Although she draws our attention to an important point, I cannot

[124] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.72-80, p. 3.
[125] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.83-91ab, p. 4.
[126] Rastelli 2006: 161-168, which is mentioned in Leach 2012: 134.

consider it here. I want only to make two general observations. First, the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* claims that the Ekāyanaveda is the foundation of the Vedic corpus. The "derivative Veda" therefore contains only a mediated and degraded form of the Viṣṇu-focused teachings found in the "root Veda." Second, the Pāñcarātrika *saṃhitās* present a better approximation of the Ekāyanaveda's teachings than traditional Vedic texts. The relationship between the *saṃhitās* and the Ekāyanaveda is not entirely transparent. At one point, Śāṇḍilya tells us that the *divya* scriptures are produced from, or at the very least with reference to, the root Veda (*mūlavedaṃ nirīkṣya*), but, at another, they are taught directly by Saṅkarṣaṇa.[127] This difference is perhaps ultimately insubstantial because in both cases it is implied that the *saṃhitās* provide an approximation of the Ekāyana's teachings, albeit in a more manageable and less exalted form.

In order to judge the historical significance of the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s claims about the Ekāyanaveda and its specific relevance to the problem of scripture, we must consider a number of related questions. What is the semantic history of the word *ekāyana*, and did it arise together with the idea of the Ekāyanaveda? Does it have a historical referent of any kind, or did it develop as a purely notional explanation for the origin of the *saṃhitās*? Did it arise in the context of South India, or may we trace its evolution back to the earlier periods of Pañcarātra scriptural proliferation? And, from a more conceptual perspective, does it matter that God is depicted as teaching certain Pāñcarātrika scriptures as a simplified form of the Ekāyanaveda? In other words, is it important for certain Pāñcarātrikas to claim that their tradition is rooted in the putatively truest form of the Veda rather than simply in God's words?

These problems have been studied by several scholars, including especially Leach, and the first

[127] *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.63-64, p. 3: *mūlaśrutiṃ yathāvac ca ṛṣayo 'dhyāpitās tu taiḥ* | *tatas te ṛṣayas tv aṣṭau lokānāṃ hitakāmyayā* || *ślokānāṃ śatasāhasrair mūlavedaṃ nirīkṣya ca* | *tathā divyāni tantrāṇi sātvatādīni cakrire*. See also *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 1.88-89: *sātvatādīti śāstrāṇi bhogamokṣapradāni ca* | *upadiśya tu divyāni śāstrāṇi tadanantaram*.

may be answered with confidence.[128] The word *ekāyana* undoubtedly predates the notion of an Ekāyanaveda. We find it in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, where it appears among the various auxiliary disciplines associated with Vedic learning and means, according to Patrick Olivelle, a monologue.[129] Elsewhere in the same text, it denotes "convergence," a meaning found in a variety of other later corpora, including the Pāli *suttas* and the two epics.[130] This is not the place for a full semantic history of "*ekāyana*." What matters is that it comes in certain later sections of the *Mahābhārata* to refer, as Leach shows, either to Viṣṇu himself or to the path whereby Viṣṇu may be reached.[131] There is no evidence to suggest that *ekāyana* was originally understood to signify a "Veda" or even a corpus of texts.

By the ninth century at the latest, *ekāyana* had come to refer to a specific religious community. The Kashmiri poet Ratnākara mentions them in the 47th chapter of his *Haravijaya* ("Hara's Victory"). Unfortunately, the reference is brief, and all that can be determined is that the Ekāyanas saw a supreme being without characteristics (*aliṅga-*) as a cause for liberation alone.[132] The Vaiṣṇava affiliation of this group is clear from the context, with the immediately preceding verse referring to a community that reveres Saṅkarṣaṇa. Another Kashmiri, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha (10th c.), makes mention of two groups of Pāñcarātrikas: the Sāṅkarṣaṇapāñcarātras and the Saṃhitāpāñcarātras.[133]

[128] Leach 2012: 136-140.

[129] *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 7.1.2: *ṛgvedaṃ bhagavato adhyemi yajurvedaṃ sāmavedam ātharvaṇaṃ caturtham itihāsapurāṇaṃ pañcamaṃ vedānāṃ vedaṃ pitryaṃ rāśiṃ daivaṃ nidhiṃ vākovākyam ekāyanaṃ devavidyāṃ brahmavidyāṃ bhūtavidyāṃ kṣatravidyāṃ nakṣatravidyāṃ sarpadevajanavidyām etad bhagavo 'dhyemi*. See Olivelle 1998: 259 discussed in Leach 2012: 137.

[130] Gethin 1992: 61-68 provides an overview of various instances in the Buddhist Pāli corpus along with supplementary examples from the two epics. A discussion of these examples may be found in Leach 2012: 138-139.

[131] Leach 2012: 139-140.

[132] *Haravijaya* 47.56cd, p. 649: *sādhāraṇā tvam apavargaphalaikahetur ekāyanair abhihitā bhagavaty aliṅgā*. The hymn equates the highest goal of a variety of religious systems with the goddess Caṇḍī. As she is being qualified, we find the feminine ending here. This half-stanza is quoted and translated in Leach 2012: 1401-141. Both *Haravijaya* verses are discussed in Sanderson 2018.

[133] *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa* on 1. 50, p. 87, ll. 22 and 1.53cd, p. 91, ll. 18. This reference is noted in Sanderson 2018. For Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's date, see Watson 2006: 114-115.

Sanderson has suggested that the second of these two corresponds with Ratnākara's Ekāyanas. If he is correct, then we may presume that the Ekāyanas held the Pāñcarātrika *saṃhitās* to be their chief scriptures.[134]

None of the information reviewed so far suggests that these figures believed themselves to be the custodians of some sort of root Veda. "Ekāyana" is, again as noted by Sanderson, often found together with personal names, suggesting that, much like the names of Vedic *śākhās*, it functioned as a socio-cultural identifier.[135] There is, for example, Vāmanadatta, a Kashmiri who refers to himself as "born in the Ekāyana."[136] The poet Maṅkha, who worked during the first half of the twelfth century, mentions a certain Devadhara, who is called an "Ekāyana."[137] And a commentary on the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* partially preserved in a Nepalese manuscript is attributed to Candradatta, an adept initiated by Ekāyanācārya Nārāyaṇagarbha.[138]

There is some early evidence that shows that the Ekāyana was imagined to be a Vedic *śākhā* by certain followers of the Pañcarātra. The 20th chapter of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, which deals with image installation, contains a passage that instructs various ritual actors to sit in front of the icon after it has been installed. Brahmins are placed on the four points of the compass and made to recite mantras of the *ṛk*-, *yajus*-, *sāman*-, and *atharvan*-types. Various Vaiṣṇavas are then instructed to sit at both the cardinal and intermediate points, and it is specified that they may be members of any caste. The priest overseeing the ritual then has them recite "mantras from the Ekāyana *śākhā*"

[134]Sanderson 2018.

[135]The following examples are referenced by Sanderson 2018, though he does not provide their precise locations.

[136]*Saṃvitprakāśa* 1.137cd-138ab, p. 14: *ekāyane prasūtasya kaśmīreṣu dvijātmanaḥ* | *kṛtir vāmanadattasya seyaṃ bhagavadāśrayā*.

[137]*Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* 25.58-59, p. 345: *aniruddhācyutabalaślāghyadarpakalāñcitāḥ* | *ekāyanasya yasyāsaṃś cāturātymāñjitā giraḥ* || *sudhāsadharmibhir dvitrair iti laṅkakacāṭubhiḥ* | *abhyarṇaṃ karṇayos tasya sa śrīdevadharo 'dhinot*.

[138]NAK MS 1-1633, NGMPP A44/7, exposure 77, ll. 3-4: *śrīmadekāyanācāryanārāyaṇagarbhapādānugṛhītasādhakacandradattakṛtāyā* **jñānalakṣmyā* (corr. [Exposure 79, l. 3]: *jñānakṣmyā* : Cod.) *saptāviṃśatipaṭalaḥ*.

(*ekāyanīyaśākhotthān mantrān*), which are said to be "extremely purifying" (*paramapāvakān*).[139]

Before we examine the significance of this reference, we must first consider Leach's important suggestion that this passage was added to the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* in the South at a relatively late date. He points out that it includes the Vaikhānasas among the various Vaiṣṇava groups and argues that their presence is indicative of the fact that this passage "do[es] not belong to the earliest portions of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*" because "the Vaikhānasas were restricted to South India throughout the premodern period, which suggests that the composition of these passages also occurred in the South."[140] Leach's argument is compelling, and he supports it with other pieces of circumstantial evidence. But the passage is in fact present in a Nepalese manuscript that was copied in 1294 CE, and it seems therefore probable that it was not composed in the South.[141]

There is no reason to suppose that the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* roots its own authority in the Ekāyana *śākhā* or sees it as the foundation of the Pāñcarātrika corpus more generally. It appears rather to be making reference to a classificatory system for pseudo-Vedic mantras of no particular importance to the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*'s authors (note that the word is nowhere else used in the text). Although the relevant passage is brief, the juxtaposition between the recitation of traditional Vedic mantras and those reportedly taken from the Ekāyana *śākhā* is immediately apparent. The performance of the first type is specifically associated with Brahmins, while recitation of the second is ostensibly open to all four *varṇas* and specifically associated with various classes of Vaiṣṇava.

In trying to understand the significance of the Ekāyana *śākhā* and the context in which such

[139] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* 20.261-270, p. 218-219. Part of this passage is discussed in Leach 2012: 142. He notes that it is parallel with *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 12.307-317b, p. 109. Note that, in the published version of the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, a half-verse is missing between the two halves of the verse numbered 20.262. It may be recovered from the parallel in *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* 12.308cd and NAK MS 1-49, NGMPP, B 29/3 f. 58r (labeled 59), l. 6. For information about this manuscript, see Acharya 2015: 128.

[140] Leach 2012: 61-62.

[141] *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* NAK MS 1-49, NGMPP, B 29/3 f. 58v (labeled 59), ll. 2-3.

a notion may have arisen, it may be useful to consider an interesting passage from the *Āgamaḍambara* ("Pomp and Scripture"), a play written in the tenth century by a Kashmiri logician named Bhaṭṭa Jayanta. In the comedic interlude that precedes the fourth act, a disgruntled Vedic priest complains that the Pāñcarātrikas "read their *Pañcarātragrantha* as a series of syllables with special accentuation as if they were mimicking Vedic recitation."[142] Unfortunately, Jayanta gives us no further information about this *Pañcarātragrantha*, but the very fact that certain non-Vedic texts were supposedly recited with artificial accents is suggestive of *mantras* and would be especially understandable if they were recited in a ritual context that included other types of Vedic recitation. (Note however that Jayanta makes no explicit mention of Ekāyanas or an Ekāyana *śākhā*. Here we find only a reference suggestive of pseudo-Vedic *mantras* being recited by Pāñcarātrikas.)

It may be relevant that the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*'s only use of the term Ekāyana appears in a chapter concerning image installation. The same is true, as Leach points out, of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*, which mentions Ekāyana priests and their *mantras* throughout its treatment of image installation in its 24th and 25th chapters.[143] Here they are presented as "icon-keepers" (*mūrtipa-*) who assist the principal officiant. They are, again as Leach notes, described as Brahmins (*vipra-*, *dvija-*).[144] The Ekāyanas are at times contrasted with other groups of icon-keepers who are identified as experts in the four Vedas.[145] They are unique in that they perform both Vedic and non-Vedic *mantras* (note

[142] *Āgamaḍambara* p. 194, ll. 8-10: *viśiṣṭasvaravarṇānupūrvikatayā vedapāṭhaṃ anusaranta iva pañcarātragrantham adhīyate*. See the adjacent page for a translation. Dezső 2005: 287 n. 4.11 suggests that this passage might be connected with the *Ekāyanaśākhā*.

[143] Leach 2012: 142 notes that all of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*'s references to Ekāyanas appear between 24.282 and 25.294.

[144] For the description of Ekāyanas as Brahmins, see the following two verses: *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 24.285, p. 246: *maṅgalyakumbham ādāya dhyāyamānocyutaṃ hṛdi* | *sahacaikāyanair viprais sadāgamaparāyaṇaiḥ*; 24.300, p. 247: *caturo vāsudevādīn nāmnā ekāyanān dvijān* | *svābhiḥ svābhir asaṃkhyan tu taiḥ kāryam abhidhāya ca*. See also Leach 2012: 43, which discusses a number of instances from the same broader section.

[145] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 25.108-112, p. 266: *evaṃ daśāvaśiṣṭāntais secite kalaśais sati* | *tataḥ kumbhacatuṣkeṇa caturbhir mūrtidhārakaiḥ* || *ṛksāmapūrvair vidhivat snāpanīyaṃ ca pāṭhayet* | *uduttamaṃ hi ṛgvedān *pāṭhayed* (corr. : *pāṭhaye* : Ed.) *draviṇaṃ yajuḥ* || *tatas tu vāruṇaṃ sāma sāmajño 'tharvaṇas tataḥ* | *ayaṃ te varuṇaś ceti pavitraṃ te tato ṛcā* || *vasoḥ pavitraṃ hi yajuḥ pāṭhayet sāmagāṃs tataḥ* | *pavitraṃ tehi yat sāma sañcodyaikāyanāṃs tataḥ* || *mūrtipān samudāyena pāvamānī catuṣṭayam* | *tadante tu paraṃ mantraṃ vyūhīyaṃ bhagavān iti*. See also *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 25.51cd,

here the contrast with the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*).[146] The *Sātvatasaṃhitā* does not appear to attribute the members of this latter group to an Ekāyana *śākhā*. It simply calls them "connected with the Pañcarātra (*pāñcarātrika-*).[147]

Leach has cast doubt on the antiquity of the section in which these passages appear, complicating their use as evidence for developments outside of South India.[148] Yet the appearance of the Ekāyanas in the context of image installation nevertheless accords with what we might expect from the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*. It seems therefore reasonable, if speculative, to postulate that the notion of an Ekāyana *śākhā* arose among Pañcarātra ritual specialists who participated in the installation of temple images. Whether the word Ekāyana first denoted a group of ritual specialists or a body of non-Vedic mantras is not clear. On the one hand, the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* allows for members of any caste to recite Ekāyana *mantras*, which suggests that the idea of the Ekāyana *śākhā* may have been primary. On the other, Bhaṭṭa Jayanta's attestation indicates that by the tenth century Pāñcarātrikas without traditional *śākhā* affiliations had already adopted Brahmanical manners and the practice of reciting non-Vedic texts with artificial accents, which suggests that a group of ritual specialists claiming to be Brahmins may have started referring to their *mantras* as a *śākhā* in conjunction with their professed caste status. The two ideas are in any case logically connected because the idea of

p. 261, which mentions *ṛksāmapūrvān brāhmaṇān* in contrast with *ekāyanān*. Leach 2012: 143 explains that "In these chapters, the Ekāyanas are distinguished from the other Brahmanical assistants (*mūrtipa*) primarily on account of their textual expertise."

[146]This point is noted by Leach 2012: 144. For instance, see *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 25.52cd-54, p. 261: *sanṛttageyavāditra-stutimaṅgalapāṭhakaiḥ* || *idaṃ viṣṇur vicakrama ṛṅmayais saha pāṭhayet* | *ekāyanāṃs tadante tu oṃ namo brahmaṇe tu yat* || *tathaiva śākunaṃ sūktaṃ śrūsuktena samanvitam* | *svarṇādinārthinaḥ śaktyā tarpayaṃs tān praveśayet*. See also 25.112, p. 266 in the note above.

[147]*Sātvatasaṃhitā* 24.343, p. 250: *tatas tvoṃ bhagavan bhogaiḥ pāṭhayet pāñcarātrikān* | *arcāmi teti ṛgvedān arcā sāma ca tadvidaḥ*. See also 25.129, p. 268: *pāṭhayed asyavāmīyam ṛṅmayāṃs tadanantaram* | *tanmayān balamantran tu daśādheti mahāmate*; 25.111cd-112, p. 266: *pavitraṃ te hi yat sāma sañcodyaikāyanāṃs tataḥ* || *mūrtipān samudāyena pāvamānīcatuṣṭayaṃ* | *tadante tu paraṃ mantraṃ vyūhīyaṃ bhagavān iti* || *pavitramantraṃ tadanu idaṃ viṣṇur vicakrame tato vibhamantrais tu sarvaiḥ saṃmantritena ca*. Leach 2012: 144 explains that *tanmaya* is an abbreviation of *bhagavanmaya*.

[148]Leach 2012: 144-147. He also provides a comprehensive account of references to Ekāyanas that appear in the *Pauṣkarasaṃhitā*. This text presents a number of well-known problems, and it will not be my focus here.

a Vedic *śākhā* presupposes a group of Brahmins tasked with maintaining it, and all Brahmins are supposed to be affiliated with a particular *śākhā*. It seems moreover probable that this notion was somehow connected with the Ekāyana designation first attested in Ratnākara's ninth century poem and subsequently in titles attached to personal names, though the exact nature of this connection remains elusive.

Although we cannot be certain, perhaps the notion of an Ekāyana *śākhā* emerged as a way to authorize a specific group of *mantras* used in the context of image installation. It is important to note that these rituals, unlike much of the early Pāñcarātrika ritual program, were public, and they also involved Vedic priests (or at least priests who specialized in the recitation of certain types of Vedic *mantras*). It seems therefore possible that this type of joint participation with textual specialists who claimed a close filiation with the Veda influenced the self-understanding of certain Pāñcarātrikas, who began to present themselves and their *mantras* as belonging to an Ekāyana *śākhā*.

Whatever conditions might account for the emergence of the idea of the Ekāyana *śākhā*, it was evidently connected specifically with *mantras* and was not initially seen as an entire Veda, let alone the root of the traditional Vedic corpus.[149] The picture of the Ekāyanaveda found in the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* developed only later, though it presumably grew out of the earlier notion of the Ekāyana *śākhā*. When exactly the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s particular understanding of the Ekāyana-as-root-Veda arose is difficult to say; it does not appear in any of the demonstrably early Pañcarātra scriptures, and it is absent from Yāmunācārya's *Āgamaprāmāṇya* (recall that he was a South Indian who lived during the late 10th and early 11th centuries). In his work, we find only references to the Ekāyana *śruti* and *śākhā*. Yāmuna takes these two to be synonymous and contrasts them with the

[149]Leach 2012: 133 notes the relatively late appearance of "references to an 'Ekāyanaveda.'"

Vājasaneyaka *śākhā* of the Yajurveda.[150]

At the same time, Yāmuna bears witness to a conceptually well-developed depiction of the Ekāyana *śākhā*. He describes it as the source of 40 *saṃskāras* practiced by people who have "abandoned the *dharma* of the Triple Veda."[151] Yāmuna explains that the "Ekāyana *śruti*" is for Brahmins who desire liberation, and, as a consequence, differs from the Triple Veda (*trayī*), which is principally concerned with rites directed towards attaining heaven and progeny.[152] This discussion is brief, and Yāmuna tells us that the impersonal (*apauruṣeya*-) character of the Ekāyana *śākhā* has already been established in a work called the *Kāśmīrāgamaprāmāṇya*.[153] What can be deduced is that Yāmuna believed the Ekāyana *śākhā* to be extant, at least in some form, because he speaks of people who studied it daily.[154]

It is important to note that, unlike the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*, Yāmuna does not connect the Ekāyana *śākhā* with the Pāñcarātrika *saṃhitās* in any way. In fact, he explicitly states that God composed the Pāñcarātrika *saṃhitās* by condensing the content of the various *śākhās* of the Veda as they have traditionally been conceived.[155] This conceptual position is not found in the Pañcarātra scriptures that predate Yāmuna, and it stands in contradiction with the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*'s attempt to differentiate the Ekāyanaveda from what it calls the derivative Veda. It also conflicts with the self-representational narratives found at the beginning of many early *saṃhitās*.

[150]For example, see *Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 140, ll. 5-7: *atha bhāgavatajanaparigṛhītatvād iti hetuḥ hanta tarhi tatparigṛhītatvād vājasaneyakaikāyanaśākhāvacasāṃ pratyakṣādīnāṃ aprāmāṇyaprasaṅgaḥ*. See also Leach 2012: 67, where this passage is cited and translated.

[151]*Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 169, ll. 7-8: *ye punaḥ sāvitryanuvacanaprabhṛtitrayīdharmatyāgena ekāyanaśrutivihitān eva catvāriṃśat saṃskārān kurvate*.

[152]*Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 170, ll. 3-7.

[153]*Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 170, ll. 7-9. Many scholars take this work to be authored by Yāmuna, but Leach 2012: 77 n. 113 warns that "Yāmuna gives no clear indication in the [*Āgamaprāmāṇya*] that he authored this work [i.e., the *Kāśmīrāgamaprāmāṇya*]."

[154]*Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 141, ll. 8-10: *iha vā kim ahar ahar adhīyamānavājasaneyakaikāyanaśākhān vilasadupavītotarīyaśikhāśālino 'dhyāpayato yājayataḥ pratigṛhvato viduṣaḥ paśyanto brāhmaṇā iti nāvayanti*. See Leach 2012: 67, where this passage is cited and translated.

[155]*Āgamaprāmāṇya* 102, ll. 6-9. See also the translation given in Leach 2012: 116.

Although their positions are different in fundamental ways, both the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* and the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā* bear witness to the increasing tendency to root the authority of the Pāñcarātrika scriptures in the Veda. As we have seen, the early *saṃhitās* do not claim to be a condensed version of the Veda; they establish themselves as superior to it. Yāmuna's understanding of their origins, which I will discuss more fully in Chapter 5, likely developed under the influence of the Mīmāṃsaka model of *śruti* and *smṛti*. It would appear only later in the scriptures themselves.[156] Conversely, the position that rooted the authority of the Pāñcarātrika scriptures in the Ekāyana-veda and painted the "derivative Veda" as a secondary product of this putatively original teaching developed from the earlier and less expansive notion of the Ekāyana *śākhā*, which, assuming my hypothesis is correct, initially emerged as a means to authorize the non-Vedic *mantras* used in the context of Pāñcarātrika image installation rituals. Given that the Ekāyana *śākhā* is first mentioned in the context of a joint ritual that involved the participation of various types of textual expert, we may speculate that competition (or perhaps simply contact) with priests who derived their authority from traditional Vedic *śākhās* played a role in this conceptual development.

The divergence between these two frameworks may be the product of a social division among the followers of the Pañcarātra. The *Sātvatasaṃhitā* mentions that certain Veda-knowing Brahmins devote themselves to "mixed worship" (*vyāmiśrayāga-*), presumably involving a mixture of Vaidika and Pāñcarātrika rites. They are contrasted with various groups who are fully devoted to God (*saṃyag bhaktānāṃ parameśvare*).[157] In South India, the Pāñcarātrika community and its scriptural corpus were sometimes divided into four hierarchically arranged *siddhāntas*: the Āgama-, Mantra-,

[156] Leach 2012: 117-120 provides several examples. He also notes that Yāmuna cites a verse in support of his position and suggests that it may be taken from a version of the *Paramasaṃhitā* that has not come down to us. See *Āgamaprāmāṇya* p. 102, ll. 11-12. Leach basis his conclusion on Rāmānuja's citation of the same verse under the commentary attached to *Brahmasūtra* 2.4.42.

[157] *Sātvatasaṃhitā* 2.7-2.12. See Leach 2012: 54, who quotes and translates this verse.

Tantra-, and Tantrāntarasiddhāntas. The complex details of this system and its various conceptualizations, which have been studied in detail by Rastelli and Leach, do not concern us here.[158] Our principal interest is in the contrast between the Āgamasiddhānta and the Mantrasiddhānta. As Marion Rastelli notes, "the Ekāyanas are identified with the followers of the Āgamasiddhānta."[159] This group is prototypically described as using non-Vedic mantras, though the issue is complicated.[160] The Mantrasiddhāntins are, conversely, depicted as Vedic Brahmins who practice mixed forms of worship.

3.6 Textual Criticism and Scripture

As with the Buddhists and Śaivas, the Pāñcarātrikas give us little information that might help us understand how the people involved in the actual composition and redaction of scriptures might have understood their activities. One exception to this general rule may be found in the occasional discussion of what might be called "text-critical principles" adopted in the exegetical treatment of Pāñcarātrika texts, though we must remember that the presuppositions of the exegetes likely differed from those held by the people who produced and modified scriptures. As we saw in the previous chapter, Kṣemarāja's identification of textual interpolations and corruptions within the *Svacchandatantra*, as well as his use of multiple manuscripts, indicates that he was participating in a textual culture that did not see the words of a scripture as totally inviolable and that he recognized the practical need for human intervention in the process of scriptural transmission. Yet he also sought to explain certain non-standard usages as deriving from God, which suggests a limit to his willingness to change the text before him. These positions must be considered together with, first

[158] Rastelli 2006: 185-251 and Leach 2012: 69-78.
[159] Rastelli 2020: 46. She here refers to the *Pādmasaṃhitā* and the *Pārameśvarasaṃhitā*.
[160] See especially the examples given in Leach 2012: 144 and 150, where Ekāyanas also recite Vedic *mantras*.

of all, evidence of the pervasive reuse of scriptural passages in the creation of new scriptures, and, second, the phenomenon of linguistic regularization in the process of scriptural transmission. All this suggests a continuum of textual practices without clear boundaries between what we would call "editing" and "composition."[161]

Unlike the Śaivas, the Pāñcarātrikas have left us neither an extensive collection of Nepalese manuscripts nor a developed body of commentarial literature. What we do have is Veṅkaṭanātha's *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, which contains arguments that are pertinent to the problem of textual authenticity and that reveal tensions within the Pāñcarātrika community over the critical interpretation of certain sections of their scriptures. Whitney Cox has already discussed the following examples at some length. Here I am only interested in considering the conceptual orientations towards scriptural textuality presupposed by Veṅkaṭanātha and his hypothetical opponents.[162]

The first of these exegetical discussions concerns several passages from Pāñcarātrika scriptures that strongly condemn Vaikhānasa forms of practice, suggesting that Pāñcarātrika rites should be taken up in their place. Veṅkaṭanātha temporarily entertains the possibility that these types of statements were "interpolated" (*prakṣipta-*) into scriptural works by people "eager to eat sugarcane" or else "inserted" (*niveśita-*) by vile *pūjakas* "greedy to make advances on one another's religious institutions."[163] In support of this text-critical judgment, Veṅkaṭanātha adduces a passage from the Southern recension of the *Mahābhārata* that he calls the "section comprising the Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra."[164] As he explains, this citation collectively enumerates the Pāñcarātrika and Vaikhānasa

[161] Recall the somewhat similar suggestion of Silk 2021 in the context of Mahāyāna texts.

[162] Cox 2017: 100-111.

[163] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, p. 23, l. 15 to p. 24, l. 2: *yāni ca pādmapārameśvarādiṣv ativādavacanāni tāni nūnam ikṣubhakṣaṇavikīrṣubhiḥ prakṣiptāni parasparasthānākramaṇalolupair *paṭubhir* (em. [Cox 2017: 101, n. 15; ms. *ja*] : *vaṭubhir* : Ed.) *vā pūjakādhamair niveśitāni*. Cox 2017: 101-102 cites and translates this section. I adopt the translation "eager to eat sugarcane" from him. See especially p. 101 n. 16 for a discussion of this phrase.

[164] See the quoted material in *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, p. 24, l. 5 to p. 25, l. 7, which is attributed to the *śrīvaiṣṇavadharmaśāstrakāṇḍa*. The relevant passage may be found in *Mahabhārata*, vol. 18, Appendix 1, no. 4, 1652-1665.

as being different varieties of Vaiṣṇava teaching (*vaiṣṇavaśāstrabhedatvena samaparipaṭhita-*) and places them on an equal footing; the invalidity of one would therefore entail the invalidity of the other.

Veṅkaṭanātha ultimately rejects the view that these statements are interpolated, preferring instead to adopt the old exegetical principle that interprets the condemnation of one thing as the praise of another.[165] He justifies this decision by pointing out that he has reviewed a number of independent readings and thereby came to the conclusion that the statements are original.[166] This discussion, through the hypothetical objections it poses, makes two points that are important for the broader problem of scripture. Interpolation was, first of all, entertained as a real possibility, and, second, the chief and perhaps only means for discovering (though not assessing) it was the analysis of content.

Veṅkaṭanātha subsequently draws our attention to the aforementioned section of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā* that categorizes scriptural statements as *divya*, *munibhāṣita*, and *pauruṣa*.[167] To understand why this particular passage poses a problem for Veṅkaṭanātha, we must first note that he and some of his contemporaries understood the three types of scriptural statement to be correlated with the four *siddhāntas* (recall that these are categories into which the Pāñcarātrika scriptural corpus was sometimes divided).[168] Much of the opening chapter of the *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* is devoted to proving that the texts and practices of the four *siddhāntas* should not be "mixed" (*saṃkara-*) and that the

[165] See, for example *Śābarbhāṣya* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 2.4.21, vol. 3, p. 229, l. 10-11: *na hi nindā nindyaṃ ninditum prayujyate | kiṃ tarhi ninditād itarat praśaṃsitum*. Compare with *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, p. 25, l. 12: *na hi nindā nindyaṃ ninditum pravartate | api tu nindyād itarat praśaṃsitum iti nyāyavidaḥ*. Cox 2017: 109 notes Veṅkaṭanātha's use of this exegetical principle.

[166] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, p. 25, ll. 8-9: *athaitāni parasparāpakarṣavacanāny asaṃkīrṇabahukośapāṭhāvalokanād āptabhāṣitāni manyemahi*. The meaning of *asaṃkīrṇa* is discussed in some detail by Cox 2017: 102-103, who understands it to mean "unrelated [manuscripts]."

[167] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, p. 29, ll. 1-15. Here Veṅkaṭanātha refers us to the 22nd chapter of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā*, where, as he notes, the relevant passage appears in in the context of a discussion about the characteristics appropriate to an *ācārya*.

[168] See above, p. 154 n. 36.

followers of one should not abandon it in favor of another. This passage, at least as Veṅkaṭanātha interprets it, denigrates *pauruṣa* statements that stand in contradiction with *divya* or *munibhāṣita* ones, thereby suggesting that the former should be relinquished and the latter should be adopted.

Veṅkaṭanātha tells us that certain people take this part of the *Sātvatasaṃhitā* as standing in contradiction with the doctrine of non-mixture and judged the passage in question to be an interpolation (*prakṣepa-*) made by followers of the Āgama- and Mantrasiddhāntas who had designs on religious institutions under the control of Tantra- and Tantrāntrasiddhāntins.[169] If this hypothetical objection represents the views of a real group of Veṅkaṭanātha's contemporaries, then certain critical readers believed that human beings had tampered with a *divya* scripture in order to advance the sectional interests of a particular group. Importantly, this judgment was made on grounds that had nothing to do with the mechanics of textual transmission. It was entirely based on the content of a particular passage and the interpretive difficulties that it posed in light of a broader theological position.

Veṅkaṭanātha disagrees, calling the proponents of this view "presumptuously minded" (*dhṛṣṭa-buddhayaḥ*).[170] As in the previous instance, he argues that the condemnation apparent here should be understood as praising the higher categories of scriptural statement rather than denigrating the lower ones. But in spite of reaching different conclusions, he and his hypothetical opponents agree about one of the fundamental methods that should be adopted in judging the authenticity of scriptural statements: it must proceed through the examination of their content and its consistency with the broader corpus (or, perhaps more accurately, received ideas about what the broader corpus is supposed to say). We find again a family resemblance with the methods adopted by Buddhists

[169] *Pāñcarātrarakṣā*, p. 29, l. 17 to p. 30, l. 3: *tad idam ubhayam api nikṛṣṭasaṃhitātyāgena utkṛṣṭasaṃhitāparigrahavacane śrīsāttvatapauṣkaranāradīyapādmādivirodhāt sāmānyena sarvasaṃkaraniṣeḍhaparasvapūrvāparagranthavirodham avadhārayanto dhṛṣṭabuddhayaḥ katicana tantratantrāntaramaryādāpravṛttasthānākramaṇalubdhāgamamantrasiddhāntābhimānipuruṣakṛtaprakṣepo 'yam iti manyante*. This passage is cited and translated in Cox 2017: 107-108.

[170] Or, as Cox 2017: 108 translates, "bold intellects."

nearly a millennium prior, who set out a theoretical framework for testing the authenticity *buddha-vacana* based on doctrinal consistency with the established corpus. This general orientation, which makes practical sense in the absence of a centralized institution capable of imposing the stamp of canonicity on certain forms and sets of scriptures, undoubtedly allowed for scriptural proliferation and helped to authorize a continuum of textual practices that blurred the lines between correction, clarification, and composition.

3.7 Summary and Conclusions

The early history of the Pañcarātra is opaque. A handful of references in the *Nārāyaṇīya* indicate that the Pāñcarātrikas likely had a textual corpus of some kind by at least the third or fourth century CE, but the nature of these texts remains unclear. The only clue we have may be found in a commentary on the *Spandakārikā*, which preserves a collection of fragmentary citations from seemingly early Pāñcarātrika works. Among them are several prose passages that Dyczkowski suggests might mimic the style of prose Upaniṣads. One of these citations, the *Pañcarātraśruti*, appears to attribute its teachings to Viṣṇu.

By the eighth or ninth century, Pāñcarātrika scripture had changed fundamentally, adopting a style and idiom of expression that was influenced by the burgeoning corpus of Śaiva texts. Like their Śaiva counterparts, many of these more recent Pāñcarātrika scriptures included depictions of their own descent into definite forms. The two earliest extant scriptures do not contain particularly detailed narratives of their revelation, they simply claim to be the teachings of Śiva and Brahmā, respectively. In the case of the *Devāmṛtapañcarātra*, we are given an additional detail: the text as we have it is supposed to have been produced through some sort of condensation. The agents of this process are all divine. Later texts, such as the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā*, tend to present their narratives

in a somewhat different fashion, claiming ultimately to originate with Viṣṇu himself. Yet they also more explicitly acknowledge the intercession of human beings, albeit usually Vedic seers.

The Pañcarātra scriptures bear witness to a degree of anxiety over their putative origins as well as an urge to hierarchize the various members of the corpus. The *Sātvatasaṃhitā* divides scriptural statements into three categories based on whether they were supposed to have been uttered by God, the seers, or ordinary human beings. Critically, this framework accepts that human statements may be held on a par with those of seers provided that they are broadly consonant with the higher two types of teaching. This mode of thinking would be carried further in South India, where it was correlated with a system of categorization that broke the Pañcarātra's scriptural corpus into four *siddhāntas*.

Anxiety over status may explain how the idea of the Ekāyana *śākhā* arose, which was seemingly used to invest a set of non-Vedic mantras with a pseudo-Vedic status. In South India, the notion of the Ekāyana *śākhā* developed into the Ekāyanaveda, which some Pāñcarātrikas regarded as the "root Veda," thereby claiming to be the mediate custodians of the foundation of both Pāñcarātrika and Vedic ritual traditions. Other South Indians, most likely those with traditional *śākhā* affiliations, instead understood the Ekāyanaveda to explain the social status and lifecycle rituals of Pāñcarātrikas of more contested Brahmanical status.

Chapter 4: Omniscient Authors and Authorless Texts

4.1 Introduction

My focus thus far has been on the text-historical shape of the "Age of Scripture," which was characterized by the emergence of a shared textual culture that enabled diverse religious communities to produce enormous bodies of material that they attributed to divine beings. The process whereby these new texts proliferated and evolved was complex, and its precise contours are often obscure. Yet it is nonetheless evident that the scriptural landscape of South Asia was radically changed over the course of the first millennium or so.

The second half of this same period marks the beginning of a sustained and increasingly intensified set of debates over scripture that crossed the boundaries dividing religious communities. Intellectuals rationalized the competing, if often only implicitly, claims to authority made by these different texts, casting them in the language of epistemological discourse. Although the positions that characterized these debates were many and nuanced, they may be divided into two basic groups: those that accepted, at least in some general sense, scriptural authority to be rooted in the exceptional sense faculties of some god or being and those that denied the possibility of supernormal perception out of hand, claiming instead that authoritative scriptures were necessarily eternal and could have no author at all.

In practice, the relationship between these two ways of thinking about authority were complicated. Many communities accepted more than one corpus of scripture as authoritative, setting out

a variety of pluralistic frameworks for coming to terms with multiple and sometimes quite distinct scriptural corpora. Others strongly denied this impulse, attempting to limit, albeit only in theory, the ultimate source of transcendent authority to one body of sacred texts. Although the tendency to accept multiple sources of scriptural authority was very old (recall that the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas tacitly presuppose the validity of the Veda insofar as they recruit only Brahmin men initiated in the Veda), its explicit formulation into various theological doctrines was relatively late. I will therefore return to positive arguments for pluralism in the following chapter. Here I want to concentrate on the practitioners of Mīmāṃsā, the system of traditional Vedic hermeneutics, who presented a strong denial of pluralism in defending the Veda as the sole source of transcendent knowledge. They rejected the very possibility of human or divine insight into the connection between actions and their results. They argued that the Veda was reliable because it had no author at all and that any text claiming to speak of *dharma* was trustworthy only insofar as it based itself on Vedic statements. This was not the only way in which the Veda was conceptualized, but it was one of the most important, and, throughout the "Age of Scripture," Mīmāṃsā's denial of scriptural pluralism was the position with which all other intellectuals would have to contend.

In order to understand the specific way in which Mīmāṃsā formulates its own positions, it is necessary first to consider the broader intellectual context to which it responds. As we have seen, the historical tendency to attribute scriptural materials to divine or exceptional beings was widespread, and it presupposes a theory of reliability rooted in personal, if often divine, capacities. In other words, it assumes that a scripture is reliable provided that its putative author has direct perceptual knowledge of its content and desires to communicate that knowledge in an accurate way. There were disagreements about who exactly these figures were, how their supernormal faculties worked, and whether their testimony was independent or was reducible to a kind of inference, but

the fundamental idea was basically the same. I will therefore begin by tracing the early history of this implicit theory of scripturality before returning to its rejection by Mīmāṃsā.

4.2 Omniscience Before Philosophy

The earliest philosophical accounts of supernatural perception pertain especially to the Veda and do not take account of the scriptural corpora that emerge during the "Age of Scripture." These represent an attempt to rationalize a widespread and unsystematic network of ideas shared by nearly all early religious communities. The oldest inflections of this web of notions are undoubtedly found within the Vedic corpus, where, Caley Charles Smith tells us, the Veda's hymns represent themselves as the codified products of poetic vision (*dhī*) passed down between generations.[1]

A similar but somewhat more developed tendency appears in the *brāhmaṇa*-type prose, where we encounter gods and seers who "see invocatory formulas" and "see *mantras*."[2] The authority guaranteed by this type of revelation seems unconnected, at least explicitly, with the meaning conveyed by these utterances; rather, revelatory vision was supposed to guarantee the validity of specific liturgical applications. Put differently, ritual-internal utterances and procedures are invested with a revealed origin, thereby implicitly ensuring their efficacy in a performative context.[3] We are told next to nothing about the operation of this supernatural vision. What does it mean, for example, to see a verbal utterance? Under what circumstances was it possible to have this type of vision? What were its limits, and how much of the Veda was understood to be rooted in these types

[1]For a fuller discussion of the early conceptualizations of the Veda, see Smith: Forthcoming, esp. pp. 9-10.

[2]For "seeing a *yajus*," see *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 2.4.3.1-2, p. 187: *té devā́ etád yájur apaśyann ójo 'si sáho 'si bálam asi | bhrā́jo 'si devā́nāṃ dhā́ma nā́māsi víśvam asi viśvā́yuḥ sárvam asi sarvā́yur abhibhū́r íti*. And for "seeing a mantra," see *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 2.6.8.5, p. 236: *sá etám mántram apaśyat sū́ryasya tvā cákṣuṣā práti paśyāmī́ti*. Note that this second quotation refers to Pūṣan, a Vedic deity.

[3]Other types of liturgical formulae and ritual instructions are likewise seen by various gods and seers. Especially frequent are references to "seeing *sāmans*" in the Sāmavedic corpus of *brāhmaṇa*-type texts. For example, see *Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa* 8.2.2 In some cases, a ritual procedure is "seen." For example, see *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* 7.17.

of experiences?

A somewhat more comprehensive position is developed in the literature ancillary to the Vedic corpus. A passage from Yāska's *Nirukta* (circa 4th c. BCE), a technical treatise dealing with the etymology of obscure Vedic words, speaks of seers who had rendered perceivable the properties of things (*sākṣātkṛtadharmāṇaḥ*).[4] Through instruction (*upadeśena*), they subsequently transmitted Vedic mantras to others who were unable to perceive the nature of things for themselves (*asākṣātkṛtadharman-*). Implicit here is a close connection between supernatural perception and Vedic *mantras*, albeit the precise nature of this connection is not made clear. Are the *mantras* supposed to be a linguistic record of the seers' insight into the properties of things, or is their correct ritual application simply dependent upon that insight? A subsequent passage indicates that "the seers have visions of *mantras*."[5] This statement suggests that the *mantras* were not understood as a linguistic summary of the seers' supernatural insight — they were its product.

I have already discussed the early Buddhist context (Chapter 1, pp. 43-44), where the idea of *buddhavacana* defines the category of scripture. The epistemological presupposition underlying the special status afforded to the "Buddha's words" should be obvious: the Buddha had the capacity to know things that were perceptually unavailable to everyday people — e.g., the Four Noble Truths and the operation of dependent origination — and his teachings about these topics are therefore reliable. The exact nature of the Buddha's capacities was a topic of some disagreement, as Sara McClintock's comprehensive study has shown, with the earliest texts tending not to present him as

[4] *Nirukta* 1.20, p. 41-42. There is a tendency among scholars to translate *dharman* as "duty," but I think Aklujkar 2009: 17 is right to translate it as "quality, attribute, property." See the parallel phrasing in Pakṣilasvāmin's commentary on *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7 that is discussed below on p. 201. For the dating of the *Nirukta*, see Bronkhorst 1984, 2007: 204, and 2016: 195.

[5] *Nirukta* 7.3, p. 134: *evam uccāvacair abhiprāyair ṛṣīnāṃ mantradṛṣṭayo bhavanti*. My translation follows that of Pollock 2011: 44.

omniscient.[6] For example, the *Tevijjavacchagottasutta* ("The *Sutta* on the Threefold Knowledge as Taught to Vacchagotta") explains that the Buddha explicitly denied being either omniscient (*sabbaññū*) or all-seeing (*sabbadassavī*).[7] He claims instead, as McClintock tells us, to possess the "Threefold Knowledge" (*tevijjā*), which refers to the capacity to see one's former lives, the ability to observe the transmigration of any being, and the freedom of mind and knowledge brought about by the destruction of mental defilements (note here the "normative inversion" of the Vedic concept of *trayī vidyā*).[8]

Other early Buddhist *sūtras* tell us that the Buddha denied the possibility of comprehending all objects at one and the same time. His criticism was directed at other ascetic movements, chiefly Jains, who held that their spiritual leaders possessed precisely this type of absolute omniscience.[9] The Jaina scriptural corpus presents a number of complicated historical and text-critical problems that make dating its texts difficult, to say nothing of explicating the ideas they contain. Yet several early Buddhist *sūtras*, which likely predate extant Jaina materials, preserve a passage in which a Jaina teacher claims to be omniscient and all-seeing. For example, the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandhasutta* tells us that Nātaputto, the 24th ford-maker and most recent founder of the Jaina monastic community, stated: "Knowledge and vision are permanently and continuously available to me, whether I am moving or standing still, whether I am asleep or awake."[10]

[6] McClintock 2010: 23-41 provides a comprehensive overview of traditional Buddhist notions of omniscience, their relevance to the Buddha, and their relationship to the ideas of other groups, especially but not limited to those of the Jains. My brief discussion summarizes a few of her key points with regard to earlier texts.

[7] *Tevijjavacchagottasutta*, Majjhimanikāya, vol. 1, p. 482: *ye te vaccha evam āhaṃsu | samaṇo gotamo sabbaññū sabbadassāvī aparisesaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti | carato ca me tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitan ti | na me te vuttavādino abbhācikkhanti ca pana man te asatā abhūtenāti*.

[8] *Tevijjavacchagottasutta*, Majjhimanikāya, vol. 1, p. 482, discussed in McClintock 2010: 28-29. For a discussion of Buddhism's "normative inversion" of certain aspects of Brahmanical culture, see Pollock 2006: 28-29. Pollock adopts the framework of normative inversion from Egyptologist Jan Assmann.

[9] See especially Jaini 1974 and McClintock 2012: 23.

[10] *Cūḷadukkhakkhandhasutta*, Majjhimanikāya, vol. 1, p. 92-93: *carato ca me tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitan ti*. This example is mentioned in McClintock 2012: 23 n. 53. See Bodhi 1995: 187 for another translation very similar to mine.

Although Buddhists were initially resistant to this "very strong version of omniscience," as McClintock puts it, some eventually followed suit in attributing similar capacities to the Buddha.[11] Buddhist texts from the first few centuries CE tend to present the Buddha as capable of knowing any particular thing, though many still denied that he could cognize everything at once.[12] Some eventually came fully to transcend this traditional limitation and claimed that the Buddha "understood all elements of reality (*dharma-*) with a thought occurring in a single moment; he knew all elements of reality through wisdom connected with a thought occurring in a single moment."[13] Mahāyāna scriptures and their associated commentarial literature develop a diverse set of models that describe the Buddha's omniscience in different and sometimes mutually incompatible ways.[14]

4.3 What Makes a Speaker Competent?

From an early period, a diverse group of religious communities transmitted texts concerning the sphere beyond the senses. They understood those texts to be reliable because they were attributed to figures believed to be omniscient or to have supernormal perceptual capacities. Yet the problem of textual reliability was not systematically thematized or rationalized until later. Perhaps the first intellectual tradition to consider speaker reliability in general terms was Nyāya ("Systematic Reasoning"). Its adherents conceptualized this problem within an epistemological framework that took a taxonomic approach to the "reliable sources of knowledge" (*pramāṇa-*). The oldest extant text

[11] McClintock 2010: 23.

[12] McClintock 2012: 31-32 points us to several examples, including *Milindapañho*, p. 102: *āma mahārāja bhagavā sabbaññū | na ca bhagavato satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitaṃ, āvajjanapaṭibaddhaṃ nhagavato sabbaññutañāṇaṃ āvajjitvā yadicchakaṃ jānātīti*.

[13] Yao 2005: 11, cited in McClintock 2010: 33, provides another translation of T.2031 15c4-5: 一刹那心了一切法。一刹那心相應般若知一切法. Yao also points out that the meaning of this sentence is clarified by a related passage in the *Mahāvastu*, though it does not directly express the idea of "knowing all *dharmas*." See *Mahāvastu* v. 1, p. 229, ll. 5-11.

[14] Several different models are given in McClintock 2010: 34-35.

allied with this tradition of thought, the *Nyāyasūtra* (c. 2nd century CE?), delineates four sources of knowledge — perception (*pratyakṣa-*), inference (*anumāna-*), analogy (*upamāna-*), and testimony (*śabda-*) — describes their nature, and critically examines various conflicting views about them.[15]

The *Nyāyasūtra* collapses all types of reliable verbal testimony into a single category and defines it as "the instruction (*upadeśa-*) of an *āpta*."[16] But what exactly is an "*āpta*"? This word literally means something like "obtained," but it also has the well-known sense of a "competent authority" or "reliable witness."[17] This meaning is undoubtedly appropriate here, and it reflects the understanding of the commentators. The earliest among them, Pakṣilasvāmin Vātsyāyana (4th c. CE?), states that *āptas* have two defining characteristics: they render perceivable the true properties of a things (*sākṣātkṛtadharman-*), and they teach out of the desire to communicate truthfully about whatever they have perceived.[18] Put more simply, an *āpta* has direct knowledge of a thing and is motivated by the desire to speak truthfully about it. It is evident that Pakṣilasvāmin's definition of *āpta* is partially adapted from the *Nirukta*'s description of the seers, though his revised formulation adds the epistemologically important condition of trustworthiness.

The *Nyāyasūtra* then divides testimony into two types: linguistic expressions that have a "seen object" (*dṛṣṭārtha-*) and those that have an "unseen object" (*adṛṣṭārtha-*). On its own, the *sūtra* is somewhat abbreviated. Pakṣilasvāmin explains that "[instruction] about a 'seen object' means one about an object seen here in this world; [instruction] about an 'unseen object' is one about an object perceived in the next world."[19] In other words, some statements concern things that are ordinarily perceivable to everyday people and some concern things that are not. Pakṣilasvāmin explains

[15] *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.3, p. 9: *pratyakṣānumānopamānaśabdāḥ pramāṇāni*.

[16] *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.7, p. 15: *āptopadeśaḥ śabdaḥ*.

[17] Note that this word is cognate with the Latin "*apta*" and English "*apt*."

[18] *Nyāyabhāṣya* on 1.1.7, p. 15, ll. 7-9: *āptaḥ khalu sākṣātkṛtadharmā yathādṛṣṭasyārthasya cikhyāpayiṣayā prayukta upadeṣṭā | sākṣātkaraṇam arthasyāptis tayā pravartata ity āptaḥ*.

[19] *Nyāyabhāṣya* on 1.1.8, p. 15, ll. 13-14: *yasyeha dṛśyate 'rthaḥ sa dṛṣṭārthaḥ | yasyāmutra pratīyate so 'dṛṣṭārthaḥ*.

that these two categories are meant to differentiate between the utterances of ordinary people and seers.[20] This explanation must be taken as expressing a prototypical difference rather than an absolute one because Pakṣilasvāmin himself later speaks of statements concerning perceptible objects uttered by seers.

It bears pointing out that the *Nyāyasūtra* and Pakṣilasvāmin's commentary thereon are different from the writings of Jains and Buddhists in that they show no interest in the problem of omniscience in the context of testimonial authority.[21] Early Nyāya was instead concerned with the far more limited problem of whether a speaker knows what he or she is talking about. This sharply delimited scope resembles the tendency among some Buddhists to see absolute omniscience as irrelevant to the specific problem of soteriological insight. It also reflects the rationalizing tendencies of Nyāya's epistemological project, which frames the problem of scripture (here understood pragmatically as speech about a perceptually unavailable object) as part of the larger issue of verbal testimony.

A portion of the *Nyāyasūtra*'s discussion of verbal testimony is concerned with establishing its place as an independent source of knowledge. The Vaiśeṣikas, an intellectual tradition that came to be closely associated with Nyāya but nevertheless maintained a number of distinct epistemological positions, held that testimony could be reduced to a form of inference.[22] Many Buddhists also promoted this view, though the first to do so was probably Dignāga (5th c. CE), who lived several centuries after the *Nyāyasūtra*'s composition.[23] This is not the place to consider testimony's epistemological independence in detail. Our concern is rather the *Nyāyasūtra*'s discussion of testimony

[20] *Nyāyabhāṣya* on 1.1.8, p. 15, l. 14: *evam ṛṣilaukikavākyānāṃ vibhāga iti*.

[21] Pakṣilasvāmin makes mention of God's omniscience in his commentary on *Nyāyasūtra* 4.1.21, p. 216, l. 16, but he does not seem to attribute the Veda's authorship to God.

[22] See *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.47, p. 82: *śabdo 'numānam arthasya anupalabdher anumeyatvāt*. The following *sūtras* deal first with the response to this objection and subsequently with the related issue of the connection between words and their meanings. The *sūtra* numbering here follows the Bibliotheca Indica edition.

[23] Eltschinger 2014: 159-161.

related to objects beyond the sphere of ordinary perception, which focuses on certain types of Vedic statements.[24]

As noted, the *Nyāyasūtra* divides testimony into two categories depending on whether the meaning or purpose of a verbal utterance concerns ordinarily perceptible things or not. The early Naiyāyikas believed the Veda to be composed of statements of both types (and there is nothing to suggest that they were specifically concerned with other sacred texts).[25] Their conceptual framework complicates the straightforward application of the category "scripture" to the early Nyāya thought-world because the *Nyāyasūtra* casts the problem of verbal testimony in terms of individual statements rather than definite texts. Yet textual coherence nevertheless plays an important if unexamined role insofar as the *Nyāsūtra* assumes that testing verifiable Vedic statements allows us to infer whether unverifiable ones are true or not; for this inferential process to work, we must assume the entire Vedic corpus was composed by the same author or set of authors.[26] (Note, however, that early Nyāya never explicitly addresses the implications of corporate authorship and the problems entailed by the admission that the Veda was created by a number of seers.)

The *Nyāyasūtra* presents an approach to verbal testimony that assigns a critical role to the cognitive and moral properties of extraordinary beings in accounting for the reliability of scriptural statements.[27] Although the specific ways in which it rationalizes these issues and integrates them

[24]See *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.56-67, pp. 85-91.

[25]For example, see they hypothetical objections raised in *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.56, p. 86, ll. 2-6. As Pakṣilasvāmin explains: *śabdasya pramāṇatvaṃ na sambhavati | kasmāt | anṛtadoṣāt | putrakāmeṣṭau putrakāmaḥ putreṣṭyā yajeteti | neṣṭau saṃsthitāyāṃ putrajanma dṛśyate | <u>dṛṣṭārthasya vākyasyānṛtatvād</u> adṛṣṭārtham api vākyam agnihotraṃ juhuyāt svargakāmetyādy anṛtam iti jñāyate*. The point here has to do with the testability of certain types of statements (i.e., can I see that uttering a certain *mantra* while performing a ritual results in a son?) rather than the capacity to come up with them in the first place (i.e., is it possible to intuit the words and ritual instructions needed to produce a son?). This latter issue is here deemphasized.

[26]For example, see *Nyāyasūtra* 2.1.67: *mantrāyurvedaprāmāṇyavac ca tatprāmāṇyam āptaprāmāṇyāt*. Pakṣilasvāmin explains how statements about "seen objects" serve as a means to prove the general reliability of their speakers, p. 91, ll. 19-22: *dṛṣṭārthenāptopadeśenāyurvedenādṛṣṭārtho vedabhāgo 'numātavyaḥ pramāṇam ity āptaprāmāṇyasya hetoḥ samānatvād iti | asyāpi caikadeśo grāmakāmo yajetety evamādir dṛṣṭārthaḥ tenānumātavyam iti*.

[27]I adopt the phrase "cognitive and moral properties" from Eltschinger 2014: 210.

into a wider epistemological framework are of uncertain antiquity, the underlying presuppositions may be traced back to a far earlier period and were of concern to many of India's religious communities and intellectual traditions. Yet this was not the only early framework conceptualized for the authorization of scriptural texts. Among the practitioners of Vedic hermeneutics arose the notion that the Veda was authoritative because it was eternal and authorless. This position became the one with which all others would ultimately have to contend, if sometimes only implicitly. I will now consider, first of all, the earliest evidence for a rationalized account of the Veda's eternal and unauthored character, and, second, its classical formulation in the foundational texts of the Mīmāṃsā system of Vedic hermeneutics.[28]

4.4 La mort de l'auteur

The problem of the Veda's nature more broadly (as opposed to that of the *mantras* specifically) captured the attention of a number of post-Vedic thinkers. Some of the earliest evidence of conflict over the Veda's character is found in Kātyāyana's supplements (*vārttikāni*) to Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* ("[Grammar in] Eight Chapters"). The pertinent discussion is connected with the grammatical rule "enunciated by X" (4.3.101: *tena proktam*), which prescribes a specific set of affixes that may be applied when deriving the name of a text from the name of its "enunciator."[29]

Kātyāyana objects to this rule because, in his view, the inclusion of "enunciated by" (*prokta-*) serves no purpose. He explains that texts are not named after those who enunciate them; they are named after their authors, and the process for deriving the name of a text from the name of its author is accounted for by a different rule (4.3.116: *kṛte granthe*). Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* provides us

[28]Earlier movements towards the idea of an eternal Veda may perhaps be found within the Vedic corpus itself. For a review of the evidence, see Smith Forthcoming.

[29]The translation "enunciated by X" is taken from Cardona 1997: 240.

with further insight: "The Kālāpaka and Kāṭhaka recensions [of the Yajurveda] are taught (*prokta-*) from village to village, [and yet the affixes prescribed by *tena proktam*] are not applied in [deriving their names]."[30] His point is that the Veda's various recensions do not simply take on the names of whomever happens to be teaching them in this or that village; rather, they maintain a stable designation based on the name of the seer who is credited with their initial creation.

Kātyāyana raises a hypothetical objection to his own argument, stating that the rule "*tena proktam*" might be required to account for the names of "sacred texts" (*chandāṃsi*). Patañjali explains that some people hold these materials to be uncreated and eternal, which removes them from the scope of "*kṛte granthe*" because they have no author. Both he and Patañjali ultimately reject this position, with the latter arguing that only the content (*artha-*) expressed by the sacred literature is eternal, not its wording, or, more literally, phonemic sequence (*varṇānupūrvī*).[31] Only by acknowledging the historically conditioned character of the sacred texts may we account for the variation in wording found between different textual recensions.

Although Patañjali and, we may presume, Kātyāyana deny that sacred texts, which is to say the Veda or at least certain parts of it, have an ahistorical and permanent phonemic sequence, we may infer that some of their contemporaries held precisely that position. Patañjali's framing of this discussion around recensions of the Black Yajurveda (i.e., Kālāpaka and Kāṭhaka) further suggests that the "uncreated Veda" here includes at least some *brāhmaṇa*-type prose.[32] But who exactly are his opponents? The use of "enunciation" (*prokta-*), in contrast with composition, as an explanation for the names traditionally given to supposedly unauthored Vedic material exactly mirrors an argument

[30] *Mahābhāṣya* on 4.3.101: *grāme grāme kālāpakaṃ kāṭhakaṃ ca procyate* | *tatrādarśanāt* | *na ca tatra pratyayo dṛśyate*.

[31] *Vārttika* on 4.3.101: *chando 'rtham iti cet tulyam*. See the *Mahābhāṣya*'s further elaboration: *nanu coktam* | *na hi cchandāṃsi kriyante nityāni cchandāṃsīti* | *yady apy artho nityo yā tv asau varṇānupūrvī sā 'nityā* | *tadbhedāc caitad bhavati kāṭhakaṃ kālāpakaṃ maudakaṃ paipalādakam iti*.

[32] Witzel 1997: 318 n. 305 tells us that "Kālāpaka" is an old name for the Maitrāyaṇīya recension.

found in the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (circa 2nd c. BCE?), the foundational text of the Mīmāṃsā tradition of Vedic hermeneutics.[33] Mīmāṃsā was the staunchest defender of the position that the Veda was eternal and uncreated, and it developed the most theoretically sophisticated approach to rooting textual reliability in these putative aspects of the Veda's character. It was also the first intellectual current unambiguously to attribute these types of special properties to the Veda's *brāhmaṇa*-type prose and not just to the *mantra* material.

In order to understand early Mīmāṃsā, we must first consider the problem around which it is oriented. The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* begins with a clear statement of its avowed purpose: "And now comes the investigation of *dharma*" (MS 1.1.1: *athāto dharmajijñāsā*). It then goes on to characterize *dharma* as "a purpose defined by injunction" (MS 1.1.2: *codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmaḥ*).[34] The broad terms of this definition reflect the fact that Mīmāṃsā sought to authorize its interpretive methods through an appeal to a general theory of language, but, in practical terms, its fundamental position is that, as Andrew Ollett puts it, "*Dharma* is what the Veda enjoins us to do."[35] Mīmāṃsā's self-appointed task is to determine what exactly the Veda is telling us through the systematic interpretation of *mantras* and, more prototypically, *brāhmaṇa*-type prose statements. Śabara, the author of the oldest extant commentary on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, makes the meaning of *dharma* clear by glossing it as "Vedic rites like the daily fire sacrifice" (*agnihotrādilakṣaṇa-*).[36]

There is another nuance to Mīmāṃsā's conceptualization of *dharma* that is critical for the justi-

[33]See *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.30: *ākhyā pravacanāt*. This *sūtra* claims that Vedic recensions bear the names of their "enunciators" or "expounders." As a consequence, we may not infer that these corpora have authors simply because they are named after historical figures.

[34]See Ollett 2013: 224 for a similar translation of this *sūtra*.

[35]Ollett 2013: 225. It should be noted that the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* elsewhere uses the term *dharma* to describe, in Francis X. Clooney's terms, "the functional description of a sacrificial element." In other words, an object's *dharma* is the specific function it plays within a sacrificial context. This information is, as Clooney notes, "known through the Vedic text." See Clooney 1990: 149-161, esp. 155.

[36]See *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.5 in Frauwallner 1968: 5-6. This definition is quoted in Pollock 1990: 317-318.

fication of its interpretive project. The Veda does more than lay down the bare details of sacrificial performance, it also invests those details, not to mention the sacrifices they constitute, with often transcendental results.[37] In other words, Mīmāṃsā takes *dharma* to be a complex comprising both sacrificial action and its capacity to produce beneficial results for its performer. Both of these aspects are understood to be collectively communicated or defined by Vedic injunctions. A commonly cited example of an injunction (*codanā*) makes this point clear: "A man who desires heaven should perform the fire sacrifice" (*agnihotraṃ juhuyāt svargakāmaḥ*).[38] For Mīmāṃsā, no other source of knowledge can ever provide this type of information because the connection between ritual performance and its result is categorically imperceptible.[39]

In order to make sense of the epistemically privileged position assigned to the Veda by Mīmāṃsā thinkers, we must first consider their understanding of perception. The Mīmāṃsakas characterized perception as a specific type of cognitive event, namely the arising of awareness (*buddhijanma-*) about an object that occurs when a sense-faculty comes into contact with it.[40] For example, if we see a woman standing in front of us (i.e., if our faculty of sight comes into contact with her), we become aware of that woman (i.e., a cognitive event makes us aware of her). As should be clear from this brief description, and as the later Mīmāṃsā tradition is at pains to show, the scope of perception is by

[37] Śabara makes it more or less clear that the purposefulness of these actions is what constitutes their identity as *dharma*. For example, see his commentary on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.2 in Frauwallner 1968: 16, ll. 11-12: *so 'rthaḥ puruṣaṃ niḥśreyasena saṃyunaktīti pratijānīmahe*. Later on in the same section, on p. 22, ll. 2-3, he says: *atha vā arthasya sataś codanālakṣaṇasya dharmatvam ucyata ity ekārtham*. Note also Kumārila's view as expressed in *Ślokavārttika Codanāsūtra* 13-14, p. 37: *dravyakriyāguṇādīnāṃ dharmatvaṃ sthāpayiṣyate | teṣāṃ aindriyakatve 'pi na tādrūpyeṇa dharmatā || śreyaḥsādhanatā hy eṣāṃ nityaṃ vedāt pratīyate | tādrūpyeṇa ca dharmatvaṃ tasmān nendriyagocaraḥ*. These verses are quoted and translated in Kataoka 2013: 242 n. 4.

[38] See, for instance, *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.26 in Kataoka 2020: 342.

[39] See McCrea 2010: 124-125.

[40] *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.4 in Frauwallner 1968: 22: *satsaṃprayoge puruṣasyendriyāṇāṃ buddhijanma tat pratyakṣam animittam vidyamānopalaṃbhanatvāt*. It should be noted that the dominant tradition does not take this *sūtra* as a definition of perception; rather, it understands it to exclude the possibility that *dharma* could ever be perceived directly. The problem, according to Kumārila, is that this definition does not exclude the possibility of error. The Vṛttikāra provides a different reading (see Frauwallner 1968: 26, ll. 1-2) that resolves this issue. For our purposes, this specific set of problems is somewhat beside the point. The intellectual-historical background is treated in some detail by Taber 2005: 15-29

nature limited to objects that exist at present. This delimitation of perception's scope categorically excludes the possibility that *dharma*, which pertains to action specifically qualified by its capacity to realize a future goal, could ever be perceived by anyone.[41]

Mīmāṃsā's approach to these issues complicates the use of scripture as a category of cultural analysis for traditional India. Most religious communities rooted, at least theoretically, the authority of their scriptural texts in the supernatural insight of some venerable or divine figure. Yet Mīmāṃsā denies this possibility out of hand, leaving no scope for the creative activity of any human or even divine being in the creation of the Vedic corpus. Where, then, did the Veda come from? And why should we consider its words authoritative? As noted, certain Vedic passages speak of revelatory episodes during which seers directly perceive Vedic *mantras*. Is this type of experience impersonal enough to be compatible with Mīmāṃsā's position? Could it resolve the problem of the Veda's origins? Note that, at least in this limited context, the seers are not said to see that ritual actions can produce certain types of results (i.e., *dharma* in the sense defined by Mīmāṃsā); one could therefore argue, wrongly I think, that the supernatural perception of Vedic utterances is at least theoretically reconcilable with Mīmāṃsā's basic characterization of perception, though it is debatable whether these transcendental *mantras* really meet the requirement of "existing at present."[42] Some scholars have nevertheless concluded that Mīmāṃsā not only allowed for but promoted the view that the Veda had been revealed to the seers.[43] This position is, in my view, mistaken because it relies on

[41] See, for instance, *Ślokavārttika Pratyakṣasūtra* 33-34, p. 103-104: *avidyamānasaṃyogāt syāc cet pratyakṣadhīḥ kvacit | bhaviṣyaty api dharme syāc chaktyety āha sad ity ayam || pratyakṣaḥ prāg anuṣṭhānān na dharmo 'nuṣṭhito 'pi vā | phalasādhanarūpeṇa tadānīṃ yena nāsty asau*. See Taber 2005: 56 for a translation of these verses.

[42] There are certain passages that speak of seers or other venerable figures "seeing" sacrificial performances in some sort of revelatory manner. Scharfe 2002: 14 cites the story of Śunaḥśepa in *Aitareyabhrāhmaṇa* 7.17. It seems, at least to me, that this type of experience is precisely the sort of thing that Mīmāṃsā seeks to deny.

[43] For example, Scharfe 2002: 14: "The Vedic *ṛṣi-s* (whom we call 'seers'), in the standard doctrine championed by the Mīmāṃsā, 'saw' the eternally existing Vedic hymns and ritual procedures — not with their physical eyes it seems but with a special vision."

unjustifiable semantic slippage. The seers are never described as "seeing" the *brāhmaṇa*-statements that serve as prototypical instances of *codanā*, and no work of early or classical Mīmāṃsā, to my knowledge, seeks to extend this revelational character to the *brāhmaṇas*. It also ignores the fact that what the seers are said to "see" is individual mantras; this type of revelation is wholly incompatible with Mīmāṃsā's context-dependent system of interpretation, which by nature requires that specific utterances be placed within a broader unitary text.

Perhaps the best reason to think that early Mīmāṃsā rejected revelation is that later commentators denied that the Veda was revealed and offered an entirely different account of the Veda's character. The earliest Mīmāṃsaka to consider the issue in detail was Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (6th or 7th c. CE).[44] He argues that the Veda has no author; that it is without beginning; that it has always existed as an orally transmitted body of texts; and that no one, not even the seers, started its transmission.[45] Kumārila likewise argues against a variety of beliefs common among his contemporaries that would have logically compromised the Veda's absolute eternality and independence; he denies the existence of a creator god and rejects the idea that the world undergoes a periodic process of creation and resorption.[46]

Historicizing Kumārila's specific understanding of the Veda presents a number of difficulties. Some elements of his theory are presupposed by the Vṛttikāra (5th c. CE?), whose work survives only in several fragments quoted in Śabara's commentary.[47] Śabara denies that exceptional beings

[44] Although Kumārila is usually dated to the seventh century, Krasser 2012: 535-594 adduces evidence that suggests he lived during an earlier period. His position is supported, if tentatively, by Eltschiner 2014: 116 n. 80.

[45] *Ślokavārttika Vākyādhikaraṇa* 366-369, pp. 668-669. But note that, in an entirely different context, Kumārila mentions, albeit only in passing, an argument that complicates his position here. See the discussion on p. 235 in n. 122.

[46] See especially *Ślokavārttika Sambandhākṣepaparihāra*.

[47] In his discussion of the connection between words and their referents (MS 1.1.5, Frauwallner p. 42), the Vṛttikāra poses the following hypothetical objection: *tasmān manyāmahe kenāpi puruṣeṇa śabdānām arthaiḥ saha saṃbandhaṃ kṛtvā saṃvyavahartuṃ vedāḥ praṇītā iti*. In what follows, he concentrates on demonstrating that no one could have created the connection between words and meanings. The implicit implication seems also to be that no one could have created the Veda.

could ever play an epistemically useful role in teaching about *dharma* because there is no way to be sure they are not mistaken or lying, and the same type of skepticism would presumably apply to anyone that claimed to have revelational access to the Veda as well.[48] Determining the position of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* itself is more complicated. It appears to present the Veda as eternal and to deny the Vedic seers a creative role in its production. It explains, moreover, that Vedic recensions are named after the people who "enunciated" (*pravacana-*) them, though the precise meaning of *pravacana* is not clear, and it could conceivably refer to an initial proclamation of some piece of revelatory text.[49]

From a broader perspective, the revelation of specific *mantras* is unreconcilable with the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*'s hermeneutic system. I am aware of no evidence that suggests the seers were ever understood to "see" entire collections of *mantras* or any part of the *brāhmaṇa*-type prose. It logically follows that individually revealed *mantras* and, granting for the sake of argument, *brāhmaṇa*-statements would need to be compiled together in order to produce the various recensions of the Veda as they were traditionally transmitted. The ordering of the elements making up these texts mattered because the instruction to use one set of procedural details instead of another was often left unstated and could be determined only by the proximity of a procedural passage to the primary injunction. As a consequence, correctly organizing the text would require perceptual insight into *dharma*, the possibility of which Mīmāṃsā denies out of hand.

The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, at least as it is understood by its commentators, therefore refutes the possibility of supernatural insight into *dharma* and rejects all conceptualizations of scripture, we might say, that depend upon it. Rather than appealing to the personal insight of a god or god-like promul-

[48] *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.2 in Frauwallner 1968: 18: *upadiṣṭavantaś ca manvādayaḥ* | *tasmāt puruṣāḥ santo viditavantaś ca* | *yathā cakṣuṣā rūpam upalabhyata iti darśanād evāvagatam* | *ucyate* | *upadeśo hi vyāmohād api bhavati*.

[49] The later commentators generally take *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.29 (*uktaṃ tu śabdapūrvatam*) as arguing for the Veda's eternality, though the *sūtra* itself is somewhat cryptic, and Śabara's comment is so brief as to be unclear.

gator, it invests the Veda with absolute independence from any grounding authority. The absence of a beginning, proven through an appeal to the putatively unique nature of Vedic transmission, removes the possibility of historical referentiality, thereby ensuring that the Veda by nature cannot refer to historical events and hence can never be accused of misrepresenting the past.[50] The Mīmāṃsā belief in the eternality of language and the fixedness of the relationship between words and their meanings guarantees that the Veda could be understood and was reliable in the meaning it conveyed.[51] The absence of an author, which is ensured by the supposed consensus opinion that it has no author (i.e., "no author is traditionally remembered"), guarantees its freedom from both intentional deception and unintentional misrepresentation, both of which are ultimately rooted in faults found in a speaker.[52] And by arguing that the entire Veda ultimately subserved injunctions to perform sacrificial actions qualified by future results, Mīmāṃsā seeks to ensure that its statements, when interpreted correctly, can never be falsified.

By claiming that the Veda's possession of these properties was, at least in part, proven by its transmission within the unique educational institution of the Vedic *caraṇa* ("recitation lineage"), Mīmāṃsā implicitly denies that any textual material outside of the Veda could, independently of the Veda, provide reliable information about things beyond the range of ordinary perception. In this respect, Mīmāṃsā sets itself apart from the various groups that ground their scriptures in the perceptual capacities of exceptional or divine beings, such as the Buddha, Viṣṇu, or Śiva, which typically do not exclude the theoretical possibility that multiple supernatural figures might serve as sources of scripture. The heresiological potential of Mīmāṃsā's project was not explicitly thema-

[50]See especially *Ślokavārttika Vākyādhikaraṇa* v. 366, p. 668: *vedasyādhyayanaṃ sarvaṃ gurvadhyayanapūrvakaṃ | vedādhyayanavācyatvād adhunādhyayanaṃ yathā*.

[51]These issues are broadly discussed in the commentaries on Mīmāṃsāsūtra 1.1.5.

[52]*Ślokavārttika Vākyādhikaraṇa* v. 367, p. 668 admits that some people do in fact traditionally attribute the Veda to an author, but it claims that this type of memory is based on a misreading of the Veda's explanatory statements, which, when properly interpreted, cannot tell us about a historical event, such as the composition of the Vedic corpus.

tized until the works of Kumārila, but it is an undoubtedly constant if unrealized presence in early works.[53]

In spite of Mīmāṃsā's uncompromising position regarding the Veda's unique capacity to provide information about *dharma*, its adherents were prepared to admit a significant exception, albeit one that did not compromise their epistemic commitments.[54] In doing so, they developed a conceptual formation critical for Indian cultural and intellectual history: dependent scripturality. Later Mīmāṃsakas would call dependent scriptures *smṛti* ("memory"), though it is not entirely clear whether this usage goes back to the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* itself. By Śabara's time, if not significantly earlier, the basic position was that certain non-Vedic texts (and non-textualized practices) could be taken as reliable sources of knowledge about *dharma* because they were supposed to be derived from Vedic rules. What complicates this position is that, from a critical perspective, most of the texts and practices that Mīmāṃsā categorizes as "derived from the Veda" have no clear Vedic basis.

All this raises several historical and conceptual problems of some complexity. Why and under what conditions did Mīmāṃsā accept certain non-Vedic texts and practices as authoritative on matters of *dharma*? Were both texts and practices always at stake? Which texts and practices were supposed to be included? Was the list more or less static? Was it ever formally delimited as a closed set? Finally, how did Mīmāṃsakas justify the authority of these texts and practices, and what can the nature of this justification tell us about their view of scripture? As these questions are all interrelated, I will try to answer them as a group, dealing with pertinent issues as they arise.

The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* introduces the problem of ritual actions that lack an explicit Vedic warrant in the third section of its first chapter, the so-called Smṛtipāda ("Section on *Smṛti*"), with a hypothetical

[53] I adopt the term "heresiology" from Eltschinger 2014, esp. 66ff., where the shift characterized by Kumārila's works is discussed within its broader historical and intellectual context.

[54] See McCrea 2010: 125-129.

objection: "*Dharma* is rooted in word, hence what has no basis in word is irrelevant [with respect to *dharma*]" (MS 1.3.1: *dharmasya śabdamūlatvād aśabdam anapekṣaṃ syāt*).[55] This position makes *prima facie* sense given Mīmāṃsā's epistemology, but it must have created practical problems in the context of Vedic ritualism, which traditionally included elements not expressly mentioned in the Vedas.[56] It also calls into question the general system of ritualized social custom and the specific program of domestic ritual. Although neither had obvious Vedic bases, both were held to be invested with transcendent results and textually codified within Vedic educational institutions at an early date. Could all these socially and traditionally sanctioned norms really be thrown out on epistemic grounds?

I doubt that the oppositional position adopted in *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.1 reflects anything more than a purely hypothetical problem prompted by Mīmāṃsā's epistemological commitments, though I do not think there is sufficient evidence to prove this textually.[57] But the manner in which this *prima facie* position was rejected matters, as do the presuppositions that made its rejection possible together with the broader intellectual implications that followed from it. The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* adopts a positive argument for the authoritative character of seemingly unauthorized practices (there is lit-

[55]For similar translations with slight differences in emphasis, see Clooney 1990: 119 and Pollock 2011: 47. There is a minor variant reading in this *sūtra*: instead of *anapekṣaṃ* some manuscripts read *anapekṣyam*, or "[what has no basis in word] is to be disregarded." It seems possible that *śabda* here has the more specific sense of "injunctive verbal form" given that, for example, the usage found in *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 8.2.25, vol. 6, p. 29: *api vā yajatiśruter ahīnabhūtapravṛttiḥ syāt prakṛtyā tulyaśabdatvāt*. "In fact, [the ectype] should be performed as an Ahīna because we hear [the word] 'to sacrifice' [mentioned in its injunction]; for [ectypes] are enjoined by the same word as their archetypes." See St. Amant 2021a: 130-131 for a discussion of this *sūtra*. This more restricted sense of *śabda* does not substantially change the meaning of *sūtra* 1.3.1.

[56]The practical insufficiency of the Vedas as a guide to performing sacrifice is noted by Kumārila: See *Tantravārttika* 1.3.11, A.232; A'.158: *vedād ṛte 'pi kurvanti kalpaiḥ karmāṇi yājñikāḥ | na tu kalpair vinā kecin mantrabrāhmaṇamātrakāt*. "Sacrificing priests perform rituals without the Veda, but no one can do so on the basis of *mantras* and *brāhmaṇas* alone without the help of ritual manuals." Recall that for Harikai's edition of the *Tantravārttika*, I provide the page numbers to the 1929 (A) and 1970 (A') Ānandāśrama editions as listed by Harikai. I do so because the easily available online version of Harikai's work has no page numbers.

[57]It should be noted that Olivelle 2018b: 55 argues that "this hypothetical opponent probably represented the real views of a segment of the thinkers in the Mīmāṃsā tradition, and, perhaps, even in Dharmaśāstra itself." He draws our attention to a lengthy excursus in Viśvarūpa's commentary on *Yājñavalkyadharmaśāstra* 1.7, which "reproduces an almost excessively long argument of the opponent."

tle to suggest that the problem was conceptualized as involving texts at this early stage) that yields no theoretical ground with respect to its general epistemological framework. The Veda is still considered the only authorless and beginningless text, and it remains the only possible basis for human knowledge of *dharma*. What Mīmāṃsā admits is that no person or institution could ever know the entirety of the Veda in its four divisions and their myriad recensions, and some of its adherents entertain the possibility that parts may have been forgotten over time. It was therefore impossible for someone to verify whether a ritual action had a Vedic basis by referring to the portion of the Veda he knew because the relevant section might always exist or have existed in some unknown, unavailable, or lost section of the corpus.

The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* provides a practical solution to this problem, offering a condition under which it was supposedly possible to infer whether an unattested ritual action was really rooted in the Veda: "In fact, the epistemic authority [for the performance of unattested ritual actions] is found in the inference [that they have a Vedic basis]; for they share the same agents" (MS 1.3.2: *api vā kartṛsāmānyāt pramāṇam anumānaṃ syāt*).[58] In other words, there are certain ritual activities explicitly prescribed by the Veda. The people who perform these Vedically authorized activities also perform rituals that lack an explicit Vedic warrant. We may accordingly infer the existence of a Vedic basis for this second group of rituals because the people who perform them also perform explicitly authorized rites.

The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* goes on to provide several caveats. The first pertains to practices that are in conflict with a known Vedic injunction: "But when there is a contradiction [with a known Vedic rule, the ritual action] cannot depend [upon a Vedic basis]; for we infer [a basis only] when there

[58]Here I am following Śabara's understanding of the passage, though, as Pollock 2011 points out, *anumāna* may more properly refer to the inferred Vedic statement rather than the process of inference. See also *Āpastambaśrautasūtra* 1.4.8-10 and 1.12.10-11.

is no contradiction" (MS 1.3.3: *virodhe tv anapekṣaṃ syād asati hy anumānam*).[59] The second instead relates to the suspicion that certain practices are motivated by selfish purposes: "[Certain practices likewise cannot depend upon a Vedic basis] because we see evidence of self-serving motivations" (MS 1.3.4: *hetudarśanāc ca*). It is difficult to know whether either of these disqualifying conditions were ever actively applied in adjudicating the legitimacy of certain ritual activities, and, if so, whether they were brought to bear on all sorts of practices or chiefly those appearing in the specific context of Vedic sacrifice.

Attention to this second condition reveals an implicit postulate that provides conceptual coherence to this section of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*: ritualized action must be caused by or have a basis in something that is both straightforward and identifiable. One possible cause is the Veda, which provides otherwise unknowable reasons why certain acts ought to be performed. And given that Vedic statements serve as our only source of knowledge about *dharma*, it makes sense to hypothesize that even those rituals without a known Vedic warrant are ultimately based on some unavailable part of the Veda, provided, of course, that the people who perform them are also part of the Vedic community and hence have access to the Veda.[60] But this hypothesis is negated when there are grounds to suspect another cause (or there is an explicit contradiction with an available Vedic injunction). The prototypical example is greed, though a handful of other stock examples are offered by the commentators.[61]

I suspect that this limiting condition rarely found meaningful application in the world of practice; if later works are any indication, the problem of self-interest was basically ignored, explained

[59]Note that here too some editions read *anapekṣyaṃ* instead of *anapekṣaṃ*. I am here following the *sūtra* as it appears in the citation found in the *Ṛjuvimalā*; see *Bṛhatī* on 1.3.3, vol 2, p. 82, l. 12.

[60]See, for instance, *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.3.2, vol. 2, p. 77, ll. 3-4: *granthas tv anumīyeta kartṛsāmānyāt smṛtivaidikapadārthayoḥ | tenopapanno vedasaṃyogas traivarṇikānām*.

[61]*Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.3.4, vol. 2, p. 102, ll. 6-7: *lobhād vāsa āditsamānā audumbarīṃ kṛtsnāṃ veṣṭitavantaḥ kecit | tat smṛter bījam*.

away, or directed towards religious communities outside the Vedic fold. Yet the same was not true for the reverse notion: "[We may infer that certain unattested practices have a Vedic basis because] we perceive them to be carried out in the absence of any other cause" (MS 1.3.7: *api vā kāraṇā-grahaṇe prayuktāni pratīyeran*).[62] Or, as Sheldon Pollock puts it: "Any noninstrumental cultural rule could be viewed as Vedic in origin."[63] The universalizing potential of this claim becomes clear when we consider the fact that the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* makes neither self-interest nor instrumentality a subject of sustained consideration. Part of the issue (and this was recognized by many subsequent commentators) is that no clear-cut distinction can be made between instrumental and non-instrumental activities.[64]

The pertinence of this mode of thinking to the problem of scripture should be clear. Early Mīmāṃsā articulates a set of principles that pragmatically define scripture as deontic language (*codanā*) and then restricts the sphere of reliable instances of deontic language to the Veda alone. (The problem of Mīmāṃsā's approach to deontic language is in practice quite complicated because its adherents use non-injunctive passages to infer injunctions.)[65] It also stipulates that the Veda's unique nature ensures that its statements are teleologically oriented towards communicating information about *dharma* in its transcendental aspect. These positions sharply limit the sphere of scripture, at least in theory. But by opening up the possibility of inferring unavailable Vedic bases for certain types of practices, Mīmāṃsā transmutes the Veda into a theoretical construct with no

[62]It should be noted that Śabara's discussion of this principle is limited to cases of suspected contradiction involving subsidiary ritual actions traditionally performed in the course of a larger sacrificial ritual. While this *sūtra* is certainly pertinent to that specific context, the thinking behind it is both logically more broadly applicable and was historically more broadly applied.

[63]Pollock 1990: 320.

[64]As is noted in Pollock 1990: 319-322 and Pollock 2011: 56.

[65]Uskokov 2018: 55ff. makes the important point that Mīmāṃsā presents itself as primarily interested in "linguistic utterances that are considered non-testimonial in character." Mīmāṃsakas do sometimes appeal to non-injunctive statements as secondary evidence about the nature of things (often *liṅgadarśana-*). See, for example, *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.23, which uses the Vedic statement *vācā virūpa nityayā* as part of its argument that words are eternal. This passage is edited in Kataoka 2007: 531-530. The Veda is, however, categorically excluded from historical referentiality.

firm boundaries beyond the socio-cultural acceptability of certain types of practices.

The cryptic and abbreviated nature of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* makes it impossible to know whether its arguments were meant to pertain to texts in addition to practices, though it is worth noting that the only other roughly contemporaneous treatment of the same set of problems is exclusively concerned with custom (*ācāra-*).[66] At some point, however, Mīmāṃsā began unequivocally to apply the same mode of thinking to verbalized rules concerning practices not found in the available portion of the Veda and to texts comprised of those rules. The basic position may be reduced to the idea that there are two ways to access the Veda: directly and indirectly. Mīmāṃsā calls the directly accessible part *śruti* ("hearing") and the indirectly accessible part *smṛti* ("remembering"'). For much of India's history, "*smṛti*" was understood to refer to a loosely defined body of texts that were supposed to preserve the content (but not the exact form) of lost or unavailable parts of the Veda.

In early and more technical contexts, *śruti* and *smṛti* tend to refer to specific types of statements rather than the texts that contain them.[67] This way of thinking about these two terms is most relevant for Mīmāṃsā's inward-facing attempts to provide a hierarchical framework for interpreting the Veda through the comparison of directly and indirectly preserved rules. Śabara makes these usages clear in his commentary on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.1-4, where he uses *śruti* to mean discrete rules found in the directly accessible part of the Veda.[68] The conceptual relationship between this type of Vedic statement and the specific Mīmāṃsā notion of "hearing" is somewhat complicated, but in brief the connection consists in the fact that a listener can access these rules by hearing them directly.

[66] *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 1.4.8-10, p. 8: *śrutir hi balīyasy ānumānikād ācārāt* | *dṛśyate cāpi pravṛttikāraṇam* | *prītir hy upalabhyate*. See also Uskokov 2018: 61-64.

[67] Uskokov 2018: 61-72. See also St. Amant 2021a.

[68] See the discussion in Uskokov 2018: 64-65. Uskokov also draws our attention to a possible exception. In his commentary on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.2, Śabara's uses the term "*grantha*," which is commonly translated as "composition." The relevant sentence may be found quoted above in footnote 60. It should be noted that elsewhere Śabara uses the term *grantha* simply to mean a stretch or portion of text. See *Śābrabhāṣya* on 3.1.21, vol. 4, p. 107, ll. 6-8: *asya copavyayata iti vacanasya nividāṃ vidhāyakena sāmidhenībhir asaṃbaddhena granthena vyavadhānaṃ bhavati*.

Standing in contrast with directly accessible injunctions are those that cannot be heard in the same way. As noted, Mīmāṃsā conceived of this category as a set of inferentially accessible rules preserved in certain customary practices and the texts that codified them. The name *smṛti* was justifiably applied to the rules found in these texts because they were based on "recollections" of underlying Vedic statements. In other words, the authors of these texts first "heard" Vedic rules and later reformulated them in their own words. These reformulated rules are therefore like memories because they recall a "prior cognition" (*pūrvavijñāna-*; i.e., the cognition that arose when the author first heard a particular Vedic rule), though, being reformulations, they only provide access to the general content and not exact form of the original utterance.[69]

What makes Mīmāṃsā's theorization of *śruti* and *smṛti* important for the larger history of scripture in India is the fact that a general version of this model of dependent scripturality was widely accepted as the principal authorizing function for an enormous and diverse body of texts. It is however difficult to say with any precision when exactly Mīmāṃsā's theorization of *śruti* and *smṛti* first emerged or how quickly it came to exercise influence outside the sphere of Vedic hermeneutics. It is also unclear whether and to what extent the epistemic commitments that were so critical to Mīmāṃsā may have been adopted by groups that accepted the general and often unexamined notion that *śruti* was somehow derived from or connected with *smṛti*.

Setting aside these vexed historical problems, it is evident that *smṛti* had begun to refer to *dharmaśāstra* by at least the time of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (circa 2nd or 3rd c. CE) if not earlier.[70] It later came conventionally to include the two epics and the Purāṇas. Yet the self-representational narratives found in many *smṛti* texts often stand in a degree of contradiction with the notion that

[69]For example, see *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.3.2, vol. 2, p. 77, ll. 7-9: *tad upapannatvāt pūrvavijñānasya traivarṇikānāṃ smaratāṃ vismaraṇasya copapannatvād granthānumānam upapadyata iti pramāṇaṃ smṛtiḥ*.

[70]Olivelle 2005: 18-25 discusses the dating of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*. See Brick 2006 for a discussion of the historical relationship between the term *smṛti* and *dharmaśāstra*. See also St. Amant 2021b.

they were rooted in Vedic precedent. For example, the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* attributes its initial composition to God himself and claims that the text was subsequently transmitted to his son, Manu, and his son's pupil, Bhṛgu.[71] It is true that the text later goes on to qualify its teachings by claiming that "Whatever *dharma* has been proclaimed by Manu for whatever person — it has all been said in the Veda; for the Veda consists of all knowledge."[72] What this statement directly admits, at least in my view, is that Manu's teachings are fully Vedic in character, not that the text itself was composed in dependence upon the Veda.[73]

The self-representation of the *Yājñavalkyadharmaśāstra* (c. 500 CE) is similarly ambiguous. The text clearly sees the Veda as the preeminent source of knowledge about *dharma*, but there is little to suggest that it presupposes a conceptualization of the Veda that matches with the one promoted by classical Mīmāṃsā. The problem is never explicitly thematized, but a verse in its third chapter explains that the Veda, together with all other types of textual material, comes from the seers.[74] Elsewhere, the *Yājñavalkyadharmaśāstra* expands the scope of *dharma* to include conventional agreements (*sāmayika-*) and rules promulgated by the king (*rājakṛta-*), neither of which are consonant with Mīmāṃsā's strict understanding of *dharma*.[75] At another point, however, it states that "the Veda consists of all *dharmas*" (*sarvadharmamayaṃ brahma*).[76]

[71] The importance of this aspect of the text is pointed out in Olivelle 2005: 26-29.

[72] *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 2.7 in Olivelle 2005: 404: *yaḥ kaś cit kasya cid dharmo manunā parikīrtitaḥ | sa sarvo 'bhihito vede sarvajñānamayo hi saḥ*. See also the translations given in Olivelle 2005: 94 and McCrea 2010: 126 n. 7.

[73] Note also *Mānavadharmaśāstra* 1.23 in Olivelle 2005: 387: *agnivāyuravibhyaś ca trayaṃ brahma sanātanam | dudoha yajñasiddhyartham ṛgyajuḥsāmalakṣaṇam*. Here it is said that God, in order to establish sacrifice, milked the eternal triple Veda from fire, the wind, and the sun. This verse appears to attribute some sort of ontological permanence to the essence of the Veda, but its definite form depends on the intercession of God. See Olivelle 2005: 88 for a translation.

[74] *Yājñavalkyadharmaśāstra* 3.190 in Olivelle 2019: 260: *yato vedāḥ purāṇaṃ ca vidyopaniṣadas tathā | ślokāḥ sūtrāṇi bhāṣyāṇi yat kiṃcid vāṅmayaṃ kvacit*. This edition of the text provides a translation on the adjacent page.

[75] *Yājñavalkyadharmaśāstra* 2.190 in Olivelle 2019: 174: *nijadharmāvirodhena yas tu sāmayiko bhavet | so 'pi yatnena saṃrakṣyo dharmo rājakṛtaś ca yaḥ*.

[76] *Yājñavalkyadharmaśāstra* 1.210 in Olivelle 2019: 66: *sarvadharmamayaṃ brahma pradānebhyo 'dhikaṃ tataḥ | pradadat tat samāpnoti brahmalokam avicyutaḥ*.

The *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* (c. 700 CE) distinguishes itself by more explicitly rooting its own authority in the identity of its speaker, Viṣṇu, and by dispensing with any formal recognition of the Veda as a source of knowledge about *dharma*. Although a passage dealing with animal sacrifice contains an isolated verse that states "*dharma* shone forth from the Veda" (*vedād dharmo hi nirbabhau*), this notion is otherwise absent from the text, and the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* seems anyway to take Viṣṇu to be the author of the Veda.[77] The *Nāradadharmaśāstra* concentrates on legal procedures and largely ignores the Veda, mentioning it only in passing and elsewhere elevating custom to a preeminent position.[78] The *Parāśarasmṛti* places its own narration in the mouth of Parāśara, who proclaims that "Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara fix *śruti*, *smṛti*, and learned custom throughout the ages."[79] What exactly it means for them to be "fixers" (*nirnetṛ*) of these things is not entirely clear, but the subsequent verse explains that no one created the Veda. Brahmā recalls it, and Manu cyclically remembers the *dharmas*.[80]

The available Dharmaśāstras therefore cannot be said to adopt the strong version of Mīmāṃsā's theory of *śruti* and *smṛti*, and, even when they admit a degree of dependence upon the Veda, they tend not to make the issue a theme of any importance. Their authors seem more interested in the collection of rules than the justification of their authority and do not appear to hold the same uncompromising epistemological commitments as the Mīmāṃsakas. The Dharmaśāstric texts that address the relationship between their rules and the Veda do so in a desultory fashion, revealing

[77] See the discussion in Olivelle 2018a: 16-17 and 26-28 and *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* 51.67, p. 362 for the quoted text. For Viṣṇu's creation of the Veda, see 1.16, p. 213.

[78] *Nāradasmṛti* 18.8, p. 221: *śrutismṛtiviruddhaṃ ca janānām ahitaṃ ca yat | na tat pravartayed rājā pravṛttaṃ ca nivartayet*. See also 1.34, p. 62: *dharmaśāstravirodhe tu yuktiyukto 'pi dharmataḥ | vyavahāro hi balavān dharmas tenāvahīyate*. Translations of these passages are provided on pp. 261 and 425-426.

[79] *Parāśarasmṛti* 1.20, p. 84: *kalpe kalpe kṣayotpattyā brahmaviṣṇumaheśvarāḥ | śrutismṛtisadācāranirṇetāraś ca sarvadā*.

[80] *Parāśarasmṛti* 1.21, p. 102: *na kaścid vedakartā ca vedaṃ smṛtvā caturmukhaḥ | tathaiva dharmān smarati manuḥ kalpāntare 'ntare*. The syntax of this verse seems rather abbreviated.

thereby a mode of consciousness that accepts a vague connection between Dharmaśāstric and Vedic rules without expressing anxiety over the need to clarify that connection or even to present it in a consistent manner. This somewhat pragmatic approach is reflected in Medhātithi's ninth-century commentary on the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, where he says:

> Although Manu and the authors of the other Dharmaśāstras are, with respect to *dharma*, connected with the Veda, we are unable to ascertain exactly how they are connected. When those who know the Veda are utterly convinced that some action must be performed, we may then suppose that it has a basis in the Veda and not in something like a mistaken notion.[81]

This passage, as Patrick Olivelle notes, appears after a lengthy discussion of the various possible ways in which Dharmaśāstric rules might have been derived from Vedic statements. Medhātithi considers a number of possibilities that were current in different strands of Mīmāṃsā thought. For example, they might have been drawn from some lost portion of the Veda, brought together from scattered recensions, or inferred from indications found in mantras and descriptive prose passages (*arthavāda-*).[82] Yet he ultimately admits that we simply have no way of knowing how exactly *smṛti* rules were derived from the Veda and is content to accept an indeterminate connection. I suspect that Medhātithi's position reflects, albeit in rationalized and highly theoretical terms, a widespread and pragmatic consensus. Most were presumably satisfied to maintain that the various texts categorized as *smṛti* were somehow derived from the Veda while holding the precise nature of their derivation to be both unknowable and ultimately inconsequential.

The model of *śruti* and *smṛti* entails a dependent form of scripturality that stands in contradiction with the widespread notion that religious texts were authorized by the exceptional insight of their

[81] *Manubhāṣya* on 2.6, p. 65, ll. 17-19: *tasmād asti manvādīnām asminn arthe vedasambandhī na punar ayam eva prakāra iti nirdhārayituṃ śakyam | draḍhīyasī kartavyatāvagatir vedavidāṃ vedamulaiva yuktā kalpayituṃ na bhrāntyādimūleti*. See Olivelle 2018b: 57 for a discussion of this passage and another translation. See also *Manubhāṣya* on 2.6, p. 63, l. 26: *viśeṣanirdhāraṇe tu na kiñcit pramāṇaṃ na ca prayojanam*.

[82] *Manubhāṣya* on 2.6, p. 63-65. The preceding passage is briefly discussed in Olivelle 2018b: 56-57.

promulgators and was for the most part adopted by Dharmaśāstric commentators in spite of the self-authorizing claims found in some of the Dharmaśāstras themselves. A commitment to the axiom that *dharma* was by nature beyond the scope of perception prompted them to ignore or over-interpret passages that seemingly root these texts in the authority of their speakers. What made this way of thinking important for Indian intellectual history more broadly was the fact that it prompted a massive expansion of the Veda's theoretical scope. This development invested dynamic social customs with an air of transcendent inerrancy and timeless immutability.

4.5 What Scripture Isn't

Śabara's rationalized efforts to deny the possibility of superhuman perception and to root all knowledge of *dharma* in the eternal Veda stand out in a world where the appeal to omniscient (or at least supernormal) authorship was, as we have seen, spreading rapidly through the composition of ever-growing bodies of sacred texts. This tendency extended even to works that might not fall as obviously into the category of scripture, revealing an important cultural orientation towards systematic forms of knowledge in general. The conceptual overlap between scripture and other forms of systematic knowledge raises a number of challenging theoretical and methodological questions. If we suppose that scripture should be defined pragmatically by the exceptional character of its putative author (or lack thereof), how can we account for self-authorizing narratives like the one found at the beginning of the most famous work on dramaturgy, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which claims to have been cast forth by Brahmā as a fifth Veda and thereafter taught by Bharata, who learned it from Brahmā, to his hundred sons?[83] Does that make this text scriptural in some sense?

Scholars have largely differentiated between "scriptures" and "non-scriptures" silently. They

[83] *Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.1-25, p. 1-3.

apply external and largely unexamined criteria in distinguishing between "religious" and "non-religious" texts, usually defining the former as a work revered by a religious community and characterized by a particular type of content. This distinction works fairly well when applied to the Indian data, and it is especially useful for studies that seek to examine comparable textual phenomena that developed in geographical isolation from one another and are therefore related typologically rather than genetically. Yet it also obscures the fact that for much of Indian history "scriptures" sat somewhere on a larger continuum of texts that were understood to be derived from some divine or primordial knowledge. The semantic scope of the word *śāstra* underscores the conceptually tangled relationship between different forms of systematic teaching: it refers to "a verbal codification of rules," as Sheldon Pollock puts it, "whether of divine or human provenance," and may signify, for instance, the Veda, Śaiva scriptures, astronomical treatises, or books on cooking.[84]

In spite of the widespread tendency to root all forms of systematic knowledge in a divine source, there were certain discursive spheres that made a clear distinction between texts that dealt with what we might call sacred and mundane topics. Most important among them was the debate over the reliability of verbal testimony, where issues like how to dance, cook rice, run a kingdom, or engage in sexual intercourse appear to have aroused no interest. The supposedly divine origins of the texts and disciplines that taught these types of skills were largely ignored, with debates over testimony largely focused on teachings oriented around some kind of soteriological content.[85]

What makes this discursively limited categorization of "scripture" interesting is that it does

[84]Pollock 1985: 501. It should be noted that the Buddhists tend to draw a distinction between *sūtras* and *śāstras*; see Li 2012. But, as we will see, the Buddhists attributed some *śāstras* to divinized figures.

[85]The one partial exception is the Āyurveda, which is of a somewhat unique character. The *Nyāyasūtra* introduces the issue as a confirmatory example meant to shore up its defense of the Veda's validity, and subsequent discussions generally follow this trend. For an exceptional consideration of the Āyurveda, albeit still rooted in its function as the example required for a well-formed inference concerning the Veda's reliability, see the discussion in Bhaṭṭa Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*, vol. 1, pp. 605-609.

not correspond with the notion of scripture as it has been understood in the discipline of religious studies. A passage from Kumārila's *Tantravārttika* makes this discrepancy clear when it states that the texts "embraced" (*pratigṛhīta-*) by Sāṃkhyas, followers of Yoga, Pāñcarātrikas, Pāśupatas, Buddhists, and Jains are "irrelevant" (*anapekṣaṇīya-*) with respect to *dharma*.[86] Through rejecting these textual categories, Kumārila tacitly affirms that they constituted a distinct — albeit contested — category united by a shared concern with, at least in his terms, *dharma*, or, perhaps more expansively, content that was both normally unknowable and soteriologically useful. Of the groups listed by Kumārila, the final four fit more or less easily into the category of "religions" or "religious communities," though what exactly these terms denote, especially in the case of the Pāñcarātrikas, is admittedly unclear (recall that Kumārila lived well before the emergence of the extant Pāñcarātirka corpus; see Chapter 3, p. 146).

Sāṃkhya and Yoga are potential outliers. The histories of these two intellectual traditions and their interrelationship raise complicated historical problems, but it seems fairly clear that by Kumārila's time they formed two closely connected systems of organized thought (scholars often call them "philosophies") and not "religions" in the conventional sense of the term.[87] From Kumārila's perspective, however, they belong together with the other members of this list because they claim to teach how to attain liberation, an issue that falls outside the sphere of ordinary perception. Although the problem of liberation and its place in Kumārila's philosophy is complicated, we may speculate that he saw these two systems to be especially problematic because, much like the other members of this group of traditions, the adherents of Sāṃkhya and Yoga often held their systems to be based on the extraordinary insight of their avowed promulgators and not the Veda (but note

[86] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.194; A'.112. See also Sanderson 2015: 160-162, which discusses and translates the relevant passage.

[87] This point perhaps deserves further nuance because these terms also denote what were presumably various ascetic communities, at least during the period preceding Kumārila.

that, unlike Buddhism and Jainism, Sāṃkhya and Yoga accept the Veda as reliable and position themselves as part of the larger Vedic community in spite of their rejection of animal sacrifice).

Kumārila's attempt to identify and condemn as unreliable specific textual corpora was groundbreaking for Mīmāṃsā and the Veda-aligned traditions more generally. As he himself notes, "The irrelevance of these textual corpora to *dharma* is not set out in any other section of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*."[88] This development marks a critical turning point for the rationalization and systematization of debates over scriptural reliability, an issue about which I will have more to say later. Here I want to concentrate on what exactly Kumārila is criticizing in the case of Sāṃkhya and Yoga. He tells us relatively little, mentioning only: "treatises on *dharma*-cum-*adharma*" that are "embraced by Sāṃkhya and Yoga."[89] But what exactly were these treatises, and how did they present themselves?

The oldest extant Sāṃkhya text (and here I mean exclusively and self-avowedly Sāṃkhya rather than influenced by or containing speculations consonant with Sāṃkhya thought) is Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (4th or 5th century CE), though many references to earlier texts and teachers are extant. Kumārila, for example, discusses the writings of a certain Vindhyavāsin, who seems to have predated Īśvarakṛṣṇa and wrote on a number of philosophical issues.[90] But what Kumārila really has in mind here are the putative origins of the system as a whole. In his *Bṛhaṭṭīkā*, a work preserved only in fragmentary form, he draws our attention to the contested omniscience of Kapila, the supposed promulgator of the Sāṃkhya system of thought:

> Given that there are numerous "omniscient beings" who teach things that are in mutual contradiction and whose "omniscience" is proven by the same evidence, how can we ascertain which one [is actually omniscient]? If the Buddha is omniscient, what basis is there for saying Kapila is not? But if both are omniscient, how could they disagree?

[88] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.194; A'.112. This point is noted in Kataoka 2013: 249.

[89] I adapt the translation "*dharma*-cum-*adharma*" from Sanderson 2015: 160, where the same phrase is translated "religion-cum-irreligion."

[90] For Kumārila's knowledge of Vindhyavāsin, see *Ślokavārttika Anumānapariccheda* 143cd, *Ākṛtivāda* 76ef, and *Ātmavāda* 62ab. For Vindhyavāsin's predating Īśvarkṛṣṇa, see Bronkhorst 2016: 371.

> Everyone is truthful when it comes to certain things, such as mathematics, so no difference between the Jina, Buddha, and other such beings may be determined [on the basis of their statements about ordinarily perceivable things].[91]

Kumārila's decision to group these three figures together reveals the overwhelmingly intellectual orientation of his priorities. The followers of the Sāṃkhya system did not, at least insofar as can be seen from the evidence, have an extensive corpus of "scriptures" or a meaningful institutional presence.[92] The influence of their thinking was, however, widespread. Although the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is not totally clear with respect to its putative origins, ultimately ascribing its teachings to an unnamed "sage" (*muni-*), its commentary, the *Yuktidīpikā* (8th c. CE?), clarifies that this figure is Kapila, the "world's first born" (*viśvāgraja-*) whose "body was permeated with innately established *dharma*, knowledge, detachment, and sovereignty."[93] The final authority for Sāṃkhya is therefore rooted in his exceptional capacities, and the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* is simply a condensed version of the original teachings passed down through a chain of teachers and students and made fit for the reduced capacities of human beings (note here the similarity with Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava scriptures, among others).[94]

What exactly Kumārila means by "Yoga" (and whether it ought to be understood independently from Sāṃkhya) is a problem of some complexity.[95] His *Ślokavārttika* criticizes two arguments that find close parallels in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* (4th to 5th century CE), a work that Phillip Maas tells us was "the authoritative exposition of Yoga at the beginning of the seventh century."[96] This

[91] *Bṛhaṭṭīkā* quoted in *Tattvasaṃgraha* 3148-3150, p. 822: *sarvajñeṣu ca bhūyaḥsu viruddhārthopadeśiṣu* | *tulyahetuṣu sarveṣu ko nāmaiko 'vadhāryatām* || *sugato yadi sarvajñaḥ kapilo neti kā pramā* | *athobhāv api sarvajñau matabhedas tayoḥ katham* || *gaṇitādyekadeśe tu sarveṣāṃ satyavāditā* | *jinabuddhādisattvānāṃ viśeṣo nāvadhāryate*. This passage is translated and discussed in Kataoka 2011: 350 n. 397.

[92] Jacobsen 2018.

[93] *Yuktidīpikā* on 69b, p. 267, ll. 13-14: *paramarṣir bhagavān sāṃsiddhikair dharmajñānavairāgyaiśvaryair āviṣṭapiṇḍo viśvāgrajaḥ kapilamuniḥ*.

[94] *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 70-72, esp. 71ab: *śiṣyaparamparayāgatam īśvarakṛṣṇena caitad āryābhiḥ* | *saṃkṣiptam āryamatinā samyag vijñāya siddhāntam*.

[95] See Nicholson 2010: 79-83 for a discussion of some of the relevant issues.

[96] Maas 2013: 66.

text is traditionally attributed to a certain Patañjali, and it gives no explicit indication that it was composed as the words of an omniscient being. But a widespread and early tradition attributed the ultimate origins of Yoga to the deity Hiraṇyagarbha, which means that Patañjali was probably seen as an intermediary whose chief role was the simplification of a larger and more complex body of knowledge into a text suitable for ordinary people.[97]

Kumārila is largely unconcerned with the specific makeup of the textual corpora associated with these six groups and does not engage with the types of narratives that tend to account for the origins of individual texts. He is interested in denying the far more general notion that the putative founders of these groups were really divine beings with exceptional perceptual capacities. The manner in which their teachings were ultimately realized in definite textual forms is irrelevant once their foundational claims to authority have been refuted. This type of generalizing argument makes sense in the context of Kumārila's larger project, which sets out to deny both the possibility of omniscience in general and its epistemic usefulness in particular.

Kumārila's engagement with the problem of textual authority raises questions about the notion of scripture and its use as a category of cultural analysis for traditional India. Precisely the same sort of issue arises when we consider problems outside the context of Mīmāṃsā as well, including the *ex post facto* attribution of philosophical texts to divine figures and the often permeable boundary between human and divine authorship. These problems are important, and I will return to them towards the end of this chapter. Before doing so, it will be necessary first to consider how Kumārila turned Śabara's largely inclusive arguments about *smṛti* into a means to deny the authority of texts

[97]This notion is attested in the *Nārāyaṇīya*. See *Mahābhārata* 12.337.60, vol. 16, p. 1974: *sāṃkhyasya vaktā kapilaḥ paramarṣiḥ sa ucyate | hiraṇyagarbho yogasya vettā nānyaḥ purātanaḥ*. The *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha* attributes this verse to the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, though it does not appear in any of the versions of this text that are available to me. See the chapter on Pātañjaladarśana, p. 343, l. 10. Vācaspatimiśra also notes Hiraṇyagarbha's connection with Yoga in his *Bhāmatī* on 2.1.3, p. 331, ll. 17-18: *nānena yogaśāstrasya hairaṇyagarbhapātañjalādeḥ sarvathā prāmāṇyaṃ nirākriyate*.

standing outside the Vedic sphere.

4.6 The Limits of Dependent Scripture

Kumārila's treatment of dependent scripturality introduces a number of significant innovations. He rejects that we need to rely on "sameness of agents" in order to infer that a *smṛti* rule is derived from the Veda, arguing that we may assume it to have a Vedic basis on the grounds of logical economy.[98] This shift appears, in a certain sense, to reflect Kumārila's broad commitment to the intrinsic validity of cognitions, but it is also critical for his effort to reformulate Mīmāṃsā's traditionally inclusive arguments about *smṛti* into a framework for exclusion.[99] Earlier Mīmāṃsakas emphasize that certain texts and practices may be taken as Vedic in origin because the Vedic community accepted them as authoritative. Kumārila reverses this notion and argues that certain texts and practices cannot be taken as authoritative because they are not accepted by the Vedic community, at least insofar as he defines it.

We can see Kumārila's exclusionary reinterpretation clearly in his discussion of texts that fall "outside the Veda" (*vedabāhya-*), where, as noted above, he emphasizes that they are accepted by the adherents of Sāṃkhya, Yoga, the Pāśupatas, Pāñcarātrikas, Buddhists, and Jains and "rejected by those who know the triple Veda" (*trayīvidbhir na parigṛhītāni*).[100] The crux of this point is sociocultural: when the wrong people, in Kumārila view, revere a certain body of texts as authoritative, we may infer that those texts are not rooted in the Veda and must instead be the product of base motives or mere confusion. Kumārila makes his position clear when he claims that the Buddha

[98] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.2 in Harikai 2008: A.163; A'74: *bhrānter anubhavād vā 'pi puṃvākyād vipralambhanāt | dṛṣṭānuguṇyasādhyatvāc codanaiva laghīyasī*.

[99] This shift is noted in Kataoka 2013: 248-249.

[100] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.194; A'.112. See Sanderson 2015: 160-161 for a translation of this passage.

and others like him delivered their teachings to people excluded from Vedic culture, namely, in his words, "stupefied masses consisting mainly of Śūdras and untouchables," proving thereby that their words cannot have a Vedic basis.[101]

The artificial character of Kumārila's reinterpretation of *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.4 is obvious because he addresses himself to a largely artificial problem: the possibility that Buddhists, Jains, and other groups might claim a Vedic basis for their teachings.[102] The real issue, which Kumārila addresses at length elsewhere, is whether omniscience is possible. His refutation is long, multifaceted, and becomes more refined between its expression in the *Ślokavārttika* and *Bṛhaṭṭikā*. Its main features may be summed up as follows. Kumārila first establishes that the proper sphere of perception categorically excludes *dharma*.[103] This much already serves to rule out the possibility of an omniscient being. He then argues that, even if omniscience were theoretically possible, we could never prove that an omniscient being existed.[104] None exist at present (a claim Kumārila takes to be uncontroversial), and, without present perceptual experience, there is no way to infer that one existed in the past either. Kumārila likewise denies that scriptural sources may be used to establish the existence of an omniscient being. Were we, for example, to look for proof in the Buddha's own statements, we would be relying on circular argumentation. The utterances of non-omniscient figures are equally useless (how would they know?), and the Veda (i.e., an eternal scripture) is of no help because it cannot speak of historical people or events. And even were we to grant the existence of omniscient beings, we would have to assume that they would be unable to teach because

[101] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.195; A'.113-114: *trayībāhyebhyaś ca caturthavarṇaniravasitaprāyebhyo vyāmūḍhebhyaḥ samarpitāni | na tāni vedamūlatvena saṃbhāvyante*. Here Kumārila clearly draws out the negative implications of a point found in the *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.3.2, vol. 2, p. 77, l. 4: *granthas tv anumīyeta kartṛsāmānyāt smṛtivaidikapadārthayoḥ | tenopapanno vedasaṃyogas traivarṇikānām*.

[102] This issue is perhaps more salient for some of the other groups he mentions, but his arguments target the Buddhists most directly.

[103] For example, see *Ślokavārttika Codanā* 114-115, p. 60. See Kataoka 2011: 326-329 for a translation.

[104] *Ślokavārttika Codanā* 117-120, pp. 61-62. See Kataoka 2011: 332-340 for a translation.

omniscience is supposed to follow from an absolute freedom from desire. Without desire of some sort, what would motivate them to speak?[105]

In the *Ślokavārttika*, Kumārila concludes his arguments first by refuting the specific type of omniscience postulated by the Jains and then by denying that a being could become omniscient through recourse to an eternal scripture.[106] There is, however, another argumentative undercurrent that runs through Kumārila's entire consideration of the issue of supernormal perception. As Lawrence McCrea notes, Kumārila "attempts to show that the perceptually privileged status ascribed to yogis would create an unbridgeable epistemic divide between us and them, such that their own knowledge, however accurate it might be, would necessarily remain inaccessible to us."[107] In other words, even if we provisionally grant that the Buddha was able to perceive things ordinarily beyond the scope of perception, his supernatural capacities are epistemically meaningless to us ordinary people because we have no way of confirming that he is telling the truth.

Another critical innovation introduced by Kumārila concerns the problems of contradiction and self-interested action in the assessment of *smṛti*. Śabara follows the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* closely in explaining that *smṛti* rules (and social customs) cannot be taken to have a Vedic basis if they stand in conflict with an available Vedic injunction. For Śabara, the principal purpose of this qualification is to identify unauthorized activities adopted in the course of Vedic sacrificial performance. It is an inward-facing condition meant, at least in theory, to root out spurious traditions among the members of Vedic society and especially the Brahmin priesthood.[108] The identification of self-interested action is meant to serve the same purpose: certain people (all the stock examples concern Vedic priests) have concocted *smṛti* rules or invented baseless social customs out of greed or some other

[105] *Ślokavārttika Codanā* 137-140, pp. 64-65. See Kataoka 2011: 366-373 for a translation.
[106] *Ślokavārttika Codanā* 141-151, pp. 65-67. See Kataoka 2011: 374-385 for a translation.
[107] McCrea 2009: 58.
[108] *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.3.3-4, vol. 2, pp. 81-115.

self-interested purpose; whenever this types of motivating factor is detected, we may rule out the possibility of a Vedic basis.

Kumārila ultimately argues that these qualifications should not be used to delegitimize *smṛti* texts and social customs accepted by the members of Vedic society. He attempts to demonstrate, both logically and hermeneutically, that the examples traditionally given to illustrate contradictions between *śruti* and *smṛti* rules are not in fact contradictory, and he likewise provides a variety of alternative explanations meant to show that stock attempts to identify self-interested motives are inconclusive.[109] He then proposes that these two qualifications are more properly used to deny the possibility of a Vedic basis for texts outside the Vedic fold because, first of all, they stand in nearly complete contradiction with the Veda and its associated discourses, and, second, their promulgators were acting out of the selfish desire for "social approval, wealth, veneration, and fame."[110]

Kumārila similarly repurposes the subsequent section of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* in order to further strengthen his rejection of non-Vedic and particularly Buddhist scriptures. According to Śabara, *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.5 means: "Can't we say that [customary practices without an express Vedic basis involve] no contradiction unless they upset something directly enjoined?" (*śiṣṭākope 'viruddham iti cet*). The next *sūtra* then poses a hypothetical objection: "That's not the case because [ritual performance] is delimited by rules" (*na śāstraparimāṇatvāt*). In other words, adding extra elements would interrupt the sequence of actions enjoined by the Veda. The closing *sūtra* rejects this objection, stating that there is no real contradiction provided a self-interested motive is not de-

[109] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.3 in Harikai 2008: A.171; A'.84ff. and A.188; A'.105ff; A.192; A'.110, and esp. A.193; A'.111: *tena naiva śrutismṛtyor virodho 'tīva dṛṣyate | śrutyor eva hy asau dṛṣṭaḥ kvacid vā naiva vidyate*. These issues are discussed in Pollock 2011: 55-56.

[110] For example, see *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.195; A'.113-114: *śākyādivacanāni tu katipayadamadānādivacanavarjaṃ sarvāṇy eva samastacaturdaśavidyāsthānaviruddhāni*. Similarly relevant is a passage found at A.194; A'.112, which is translated in Sanderson 2015: 160-161. I quote the translation "social approval, wealth, veneration, and fame" from his article.

tected (see p. 216). But Kumārila offers an alternate interpretation, arguing that *sūtras* 1.3.5-6 may be understood as an independent unit that addresses seemingly unobjectionable practices enjoined in the scriptures of the Buddhists and others like them.[111]

Kumārila's argument begins on familiar ground: educated people (*śiṣṭa-*) accept only the traditionally enumerated fourteen or eighteen "fields of knowledge" (*vidyāsthāna-*) as trustworthy sources of information about *dharma* (note that "educated people" means Brahmins who live in the Vedic heartland and speak correct Sanskrit by virtue of their upbringing). The "fields of knowledge" comprised their idealized curriculum, and Kumārila gives us a more or less conventional list: the Vedas, Upavedas, the auxiliary sciences and their subsidiaries, the eighteen Dharmaśāstras, the Purāṇas, Vedic phonetics, and governance.[112] Conversely, the texts of the Buddhists, Jains, and other similar figures do not appear among the traditionally enumerated fields of knowledge, so we may infer that educated people do not accept them as valid means to know about *dharma*.

This appeal to traditionally recognized fields of knowledge is meant to demonstrate that not just anyone is authorized to reformulate a scriptural rule. Kumārila explains that only those people approved by the Veda may promulgate Dharmaśāstras and that the words of others are not reliable. He draws our attention to the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, which he connects with the Vedic statement: "Whatever Manu says is efficacious medicine."[113] This approach runs into trouble because, as Lawrence McCrea notes, Mīmāṃsā categorically denies that the Veda may speak of historical peo-

[111] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.201; A'.121-122: *vihārārāmamaṇḍapakaraṇavairāgyadhyānābhyāsāhiṃsāsatyavacanadamadānadayādi tad buddhādibhāṣitaṃ pramāṇenāviruddham iti cet na śāstraparimāṇatvāt*.

[112] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.201; A'.121-122: *vedopavedāṅgopāṅgāṣṭādaśadharmasaṃhitāpurāṇaśāstraśikṣādaṇḍanītisaṃjñakāni*. This passage is discussed and translated in Dezső 2004: 270 n. 79. It is unusual to see *śikṣā* listed separately given it is conventionally considered to be one of the six *vedāṅgas*. According to Someśvara, there are two types of *śikṣā*, namely the general type and the more specific type. See his *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 183, ll. 26-30.

[113] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.202; A'.122: *tathā ca manor ṛcaḥ sāmidhenyo bhavantīty asya vidher vākyaśeṣe manur vai yat kiṃcid avadat tad bheṣajaṃ bheṣajatayā iti prāyaścittādyupadeśavacanaṃ pāpavyādher bheṣajam*. See also McCrea 2010: 128-129 and esp. n. 10.

ple. Kumārila solves this problem by claiming that "Manu" does not refer to a specific person who promulgated a specific *smṛti* at a specific past time; rather, it refers to a category of person who invariably appears in every era in order to teach a *smṛti*.[114] Kumārila eventually generalizes his position by arguing that we may accept a created (*kṛtrima-*) field of knowledge to be a true auxiliary of *dharma* only if its creator is mentioned in a descriptive passage or *mantra* found in the Veda.[115]

It should be clear that Kumārila's approach relies on tradition to identify which texts were composed by authorized figures and to ensure that those texts are not modified over time. Although he never thematizes the issue, we may hypothesize that he took their identification and transmission to be protected by the fact that they were studied by many people and therefore could not be changed unilaterally.[116] Kumārila flatly denies the types of textual practices that were actually used in the continual production of Dharmaśāstras and Purāṇas. In both contexts, authors-cum-redactors made use of earlier material in producing new works. But Kumārila states unequivocally:

> Something pertaining to the meaning of an earlier teaching that has been recast in a new form is not a valid means to know about *dharma*.
>
> If a man, when bestowing a gift for expiation or some other purpose, first utters either his own statement or one composed by some other poet, whether a verse or an aphorism, and then bestows an expiatory gift in accordance with the teachings of Manu, no one will take [his reformulated statement] as subserving *dharma*.[117]

The implications of this position are difficult to square with what we know about the production

[114]The Purāṇas and *itihāsas* are authorized in a somewhat different fashion. See *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.202; A'.123: *itihāsapurāṇaṃ ca kṛtrimatvena niścitaṃ | tathāpy akṛtrime vede tadvidyātvena saṃmatam*. Kumārila then refers us to *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 7.1.2, which counts *itihāsapurāṇa* as a "fifth Veda."

[115]*Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.202; A'123: *tena pratikalpaṃ manvantarayuganiyatanityarṣināmābhidheyakṛtrimavidyāsthānakārā ye vede 'pi mantrārthavādeṣu śrūyante tatpraṇītāny eva vidyāsthānāni dharmajñānāṅgatvena saṃmatāni*.

[116]He makes this argument explicitly with respect to the Veda. See *Ślokavārttika Codanā* 149-150ab: *anekapuruṣasthatvād ekatraiva ca janmani | grahaṇasmaraṇād vede na svātantryaṃ vihanyate || anyathākaraṇa cāsya bahubhyaḥ syān nivāraṇam*. See Kataoka 2011: 383-384 for a translation.

[117]*Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.201; A'121-122: *pratikañcukarūpeṇa pūrvaśāstrārthagocaram | yad anyat kriyate tasya dharmaṃ praty apramāṇatā || tathā ca prāyaścittādikāle yo vākyam ātmīyam anyakavikṛtaṃ vā ślokaṃ sūtraṃ voccārya mānavādisaṃvādiprāyaścittaṃ dadyān na tat kaścid api dharmārtham pratipadyeta*. For a discussion of the word *pratikañcuka* in the context of this passage, see Aklujkar 1977/1978: 21-23. I adopt the translation "recast" from his article.

and transmission of the Dharmaśāstras and other similar corpora. It seems likely that Kumārila represents an extremely conservative voice searching for a way to close the doors to the production of new *smṛti* texts while remaining unwilling to question the viability of tradition in maintaining the fidelity of the text-traditions that he accepted as legitimate.

Kumārila likewise deals with a number of more specific issues related to the validity of Buddhist scriptures. He seems to have been aware that some, especially Mahāyāna *sūtras*, were held to be eternal teachings passed down through an unbroken chain of awakened beings (Chapter 1, p. 79 n. 176). This notion likely developed out of what Ronald Davidson has described as an "increasing permeability" between the truth discovered by the Buddha (*dharma-*) and the definite expression of that truth in linguistic form (*dharma-*).[118] Whether the Buddhist notion of the eternal *dharma* discovered by the Buddha or even of an ahistorical *sūtra* passed down by a beginningless chain of buddhas really implied a permanently stable text is somewhat doubtful, but the general idea appears to have become increasingly prevalent over time.[119]

In criticizing this particular phenomenon, Kumārila departs from his tendency to deal in abstractions.[120] He quotes a statement found in a variety of Buddhist scriptural contexts: "Whether Tathāgatas arise or do not arise, the permanence of their Dharma stands established" and interprets it as a claim that Buddhist "Dharma," in the sense of the Buddha's verbalized teaching, is eternal.[121] Kumārila then raises the hypothetical possibility that the arguments used to establish the eternality

[118]See Davidson 1990: 295-296, though note that he deals with the relationship between a larger number of related concepts and refers specifically to the "reality discovered by the Buddha" (*dharmatā*).

[119]This issue is discussed briefly by Davidson 1990: 313-314, which also notes the adoption of this narrative by Vajrayāna texts.

[120]Important aspects of this section of the *Tantravārttika* are discussed in Yoshimizu 2015: 47-49.

[121]*Tantravārttika* on 1.3.11 in Harikai 2010: A.230; A'.156: *śākyādayo 'pi hy evaṃ vadanty eva | yathā utpādād vā tathāgatānām anutpādād vā sthitaiveyaṃ dharmanityatā*. As is pointed out in Yoshimizu 2015: 48 n. 27, this phrase appears to have developed from an older formulation found in Saṃyuttanikāya, vol. 2, p. 25, ll. 18-20: *uppādā vā tathāgatānam anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhitā va sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idapaccayatā*. The meaning here certainly does not refer to an eternal and permanently fixed verbal utterance.

of the Veda could likewise be applied to Buddhist scriptures. For example, one could argue that the Buddha did not compose the statements traditionally attributed to him — he only explained (*pravaktṛ*-) or saw (*draṣṭṛ*-) them.[122]

Kumārila sees these arguments as little more than Buddhist attempts to plagiarize Mīmāṃsā ideas. He points out that disputants engaging in a debate often develop counterarguments in response to the opposing position, and they are at times willing to protect a mere semblance of their original point in order to argue speciously by echoing their opponents words.[123] Kumārila explains that the Buddhists, finding themselves unable to respond to the criticisms of even bog-standard Mīmāṃsakas, resort to childishly imitating their words.[124] This strategy is ultimately self-defeating, in Kumārila's view, much like that of a bridegroom who, when asked by the bride's father about his *gotra*, replies by saying "It's the same as yours" and thereby unwittingly renders his marriage impossible.[125] The problem here is that the Buddhists famously hold that "all mental formations are transient." How can they surrender one of their most fundamental tenets in order to claim that their scriptures are eternal?[126]

As Kiyotaka Yoshimizu notes, Kumārila is likewise keen to point out another reason why claiming to have an eternal scripture stands in contradiction with well-known Buddhist tenets: it is laugh-

[122] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.11 in Harikai 2010: A.234-235; A'.161-162: *yenaivākṛtakatvaṃ hi vedasya pratipādyate* | *nyāyena tena śākyādigranthasyāpi bhaviṣyati* || *bodhakatvāt pramāṇatvaṃ svatas tasyāpi labhyate* | *na ca saṃdihyate buddhir na viparyayate kvacit* || *akartṛkatayā nāpi kartṛdoṣeṇa duṣyati* | *vedavad buddhavākyādikartṛsamaraṇavarjanāt* || *buddhavākyasamākhyā 'pi pravaktṛtvanibandhanā* | *tad draṣṭṛtvanimittā vā kāṭhakāṅgirasādivat*.

[123] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.235; A'.162: *pareṇa saha keṣāṃcid vākovākyāni jalpatām* | *uktayaḥ prātibhāsikyo jāyante paravākyataḥ* || *svasaṃvedyaṃ ca siddhāntam ātmīyam api jānatām* | *chāyāṃ tathāpi rakṣanto jalpanti pratiśabdakaiḥ*.

[124] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.236; A'.163: *yādṛśatādṛśamīmāṃsakair apy atīndriyaviṣayapuruṣavacanaprāmāṇyanirākaraṇād apauruṣeyatvādhyavasāyanirākṛtakāraṇadoṣāśaṅkānirapavādavedaprāmāṇyasiddhiṃ pratihantum aśakyāṃ manyamānā niruttarībhūtā bālānukaraṇavākyasadṛśaiḥ svavākyair vyavalikhyamānahṛdayāḥ santo 'pi prakṣīṇakuhetuvacanajālāḥ kanyāvaraṇārthāgatamūrkhavaragotrapraśnottaravat* | *yad eva bhavatāṃ gotraṃ tad asmākam apītivat* | *āhuḥ svāgamanityatvaṃ paravākyānukāriṇaḥ*.

[125] Yoshimizu 2015: 48-49 discusses this passage.

[126] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.236; A'.163: *tatra śākyaiḥ prasiddhāpi sarvakṣaṇikavāditā* | *tyajyate vedasiddhāntāj jalpadbhir nityam āgamam*.

able to argue for the existence of an eternal scripture while simultaneously denying (as the Buddhists do) that words and their meanings have an eternal connection. Anyone who attempts to do so will end up resembling a weaver who, eschewing the use of thread, tries to produce cloth by simply grabbing a shuttle and punching the air with his fist. The eternality of words serves as the wood necessary to build the house that is eternal scripture. Once you've burned up the wood with fallacious argumentation, you can't then expect to build the house.[127]

The problem of language creates another issue for the Buddhists and, Kumārila adds, the Jains. Both of these groups accept scriptures that are "composed of incorrectly formed words largely taken from the languages of the East and South as well as their corrupted daughter languages."[128] Linguistic deviance from the norms of Sanskrit usage raises two questions for Kumārila. First, how can we expect an incorrectly formed word to convey its object reliably? And, second, how can words that are manifestly corruptions possibly be beginningless? Logically speaking, the notion of corruption entails a beginning point at which the corruption occurred.[129] Kumārila gives an example of a passage from an unknown Buddhist scripture written in an unidentified Middle Indic language:

> *mama vi hi bhikkhave kammavacca isī save* ||
> *yathā ukkhitte loḍammi ukkheve atthi kāraṇam* |
> *paḍaṇe ṇatthi kāraṇam aṇṇam ubbhave kāraṇā* ||
> *ev' ime sakkaḍā dhammā saṃbhavanti sakāraṇā* |
> *akāraṇā viṇassanti aṇṇam uppattikāraṇā* ||[130]

[127] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.236; A'.163: *evamādibhiḥ sarvapadapadārthasaṃbandhānityatvapratipādanāt tadviparītam āgamanityatvam abhyupagamyamānaṃ lokopahāsāspadamātram eva bhavet* | *tathā hi* | *yas tantūn anupādāya turīmātraparigrahāt* | *paṭaṃ kartuṃ samīheta sa hanyād vyoma muṣṭibhiḥ* || *yāvad āgamanityatvaveśmadārūpakalpitam* | *hetvābhāsāgninirdagdhe tasmiṃs tadveśma duṣkaram*. Yoshimizu 2015: 48 draws our attention to this broader point.

[128] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.237; A'.164: *māgadhadākṣiṇātyatadapabhraṃśaprāyāsādhuśabdanibandhanā hi te*. See Ollett 2017: 125 for another translation of this sentence.

[129] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.237; A'.164: *tataś cāsatyaśabdeṣu kutas teṣv arthasatyatā* | *dṛṣṭāpabhraṣṭarūpeṣu kathaṃ vā syād anāditā*.

[130] *Tantravārttika* 1.3.12. in Harikai 2010: A.237; A'.164. I am following the reconstruction of this passage found in Yoshimizu 2015: 53-54. I also adopt the two changes suggested in Ollett 2017: 244 n. 52.

Kumārila is at particular pains to demonstrate that Buddhist scriptures contain forms even more corrupted (*apabhraṣṭatara-*) than the well-known degraded local dialects (*prasiddhāpabhraṣṭadeśabhāṣābhyaḥ*), perhaps in order to substantiate his argument that these texts cannot be beginningless.[131] He points out that the ending of *bhikkhave* (i.e, *bhikṣavaḥ*) is non-standard; we find Prakrit words (*prākṛtaṃ padam*) that take an "e" at the end of plural nouns in the accusative case, but never after nominative or vocative plurals.[132] Kumārila also notes that *sakkaḍā* (i.e., *saṃskṛta*) appears differently in Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa languages. (Andrew Ollett tells us that the expected form is *sakkaa*.) According to Kumārila, the transformation of "t" into "ḍ" serves as evidence of further corruption.[133]

These examples of utterances with a manifestly human provenance stand in contrast with the language of the Vedic corpus and especially its *mantra* texts. As noted in Chapter 2, Kumārila claims that the experience of hearing no more than the beginning of each Veda is enough to disabuse someone of the impression that it has an author.[134] He argues that both their content and form is simply unimaginable to human beings, who compose literary compositions about the everyday world using words found in everyday speech.[135] They do not compose texts with fixed pitched accents and would never think to use words like *īḷe* (an archaic verb meaning "I implore" that appears in the first line of the *Ṛgveda*) or to compare the fire god Agni with the sacrificial priest. Nor could

[131] See again Ollett 2017: 125.

[132] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.239; A'.166: *kim uta yāni prasiddhāpabhraṣṭadeśabhāṣābhyo 'py apabhraṣṭatarāṇi bhikkhave ity evamādīni dvitīyābahuvacanasthāne hy ekārāntaṃ prākṛtaṃ padaṃ dṛṣṭaṃ na prathamābahuvacane saṃbodhane 'pi*. This transformation and the following one are discussed in Ollett 2017: 243 n. 52 and Yoshimizu 2015: 54 n. 68.

[133] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.239; A'.166: *saṃskṛtaśabdasthāne ca kakāradvayasaṃyogo 'nusvāralopa ṛvarṇākārāpattimātram eva prākṛtāpabhraṃśeṣu dṛṣṭam | na tu ḍakārāpattir api*.

[134] Yoshimizu 2008: 65-66 discusses this passage in detail.

[135] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.237; A'.164: *ādimātram api śrutvā vedānāṃ pauruṣeyatā | na śakyā 'dyavasātuṃ hi manāg api sacetanaiḥ || dṛṣṭārthavyavahāreṣu vākyair lokanusāribhiḥ | padaiś ca tadvidhair eva narāḥ kāvyāni kurvate || prapāṭhakacatuḥṣaṣṭiniyatasvarakaiḥ padaiḥ | lokeṣv apy aśrutaprāyair ṛgvedaṃ kaḥ kariṣyati*. See Yoshimizu 2008: 65 nn. 62 and 64 for translations covering most of this passage.

they ever conceive of the modifications found in Sāmavedic chants, such as the transformation of *agna* into *o3 gnā i*.[136]

Kumārila's citation of a particular passage from a Buddhist scripture is remarkable. He normally works at a relatively higher level of abstraction, and his chief aim is usually to discredit entire systems of thought (or perhaps ways of life) rather than individual texts. This particular exception underscores the fundamental importance of language to Mīmāṃsā thought. Kumārila perhaps felt that showing his readers the aberrant linguistic shape of the Buddhist scriptures would provoke a far stronger reaction than argumentation ever could. Elsewhere his attacks against Buddhism, not to mention Jainism and indeed all religious communities he held to be outside the Veda, are largely rooted in his denial of omniscience and insistence that human and divine beings were fundamentally incapable of perceiving *dharma*. In this context, as noted, he seems totally uninterested in text-specific problems and self-representations and prefers instead to deal with purely theoretical issues.

4.7 Omniscience at the Boundary of Scripture

The importance of Kumārila's ideas for the intellectual history of traditional India can hardly be overstated. Yet they exerted no discernible effect upon the production of scriptural material. They also stand relatively alone, subsequent Mīmāṃsakas excepted, in decrying the increasingly dominant tendency to ascribe all sorts of foundational works, or at least foundational knowledge systems, to God or some other supernatural being. Kumārila's concern with this issue, together with its culture-wide prominence, complicate the application of scripture as a category of cultural

[136]For example, see *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.12 in Harikai 2010: A.237; A'.164: *agneḥ purohitatvaṃ ca kva dṛṣṭaṃ yena kīrtyate | īḷeśabdaprayogaś ca kva dṛṣṭaḥ stotragocaraḥ*. And see also A.238; A'.165: *ko nāma buddhipūrvakārī puruṣo 'rthābhidhānaparāṇām ṛgakaṣarāṇāṃ lokavyākaraṇādiṣv anavagatapūrvam agna ity asya padasyākāram o-kāreṇa plutena vikuryāt*. The reference here is to the first line of the first *sāman* of the *Grāmegeya* songbook of the Sāmaveda, which is derived from *Ṛgveda* 6.16.10.

analysis for traditional India, where the problem was cast in terms of types of knowledge and the ostensible source of authority for texts that speak of ordinarily imperceptible things. As a consequence, Kumārila's arguments, at least logically speaking, transcend the boundaries of "scripture" as it is usually defined, especially given that, in traditional India, certain philosophical and exegetical works were also invested with a putatively supernormal origin.

One representative case of this phenomenon is found in the traditions concerning the future Buddha Maitreya and his connection with various polemical texts. For example, take the *Yogācārabhūmi*, a lengthy scholastic work that systematizes a great deal of doctrinal material and often makes reference to Buddhist *sūtras* (recall that these are discourses attributed to the Buddha). The text itself makes no explicit claim to be the product of any particular author, and the Indian record is, as Ulrich Kragh tells us, "reticent about the original conditions under which the [*Yogācārabhūmi*] was composed."[137] Yet Kragh points us to a Tibetan tradition, preserved by the historian Bu ston, that provides some information: Asaṅga (4th c. CE), an important Buddhist monk, encountered Maitreya and visited the Tuṣita heaven. Upon arriving, Maitreya taught him a number of Mahāyāna texts, including the *Yogācārabhūmi*.[138]

Kragh likewise draws our attention to the oldest Chinese version of this narrative, which is found in Paramārtha's (6th c. CE) biography of Vasubandhu, who is traditionally said to be Asaṅga's younger brother. In this account, Asaṅga uses his "supernormal cognition" (神通) to visit the Tuṣita heaven, where Maitreya teaches him about emptiness. After returning to earth, Asaṅga attains awakening and frequently travels to Tuṣita in order to ask Maitreya about Mahāyāna scriptures. Yet when Asaṅga tries to teach the Buddhist community what he has learnt, they do not have faith in his

[137] Kragh 2013: 32.

[138] Kragh 2013: 32 n. 27. See also Kragh 2013: 33 n. 29 for a discussion and translation of the *Yogācārabhūmi*'s final colophon. A translation of Bu ston's account may be found in Obermiller 1932: 138-139.

words. He asks Maitreya to come down and preach on earth in order to inspire confidence in those who do not believe. In accordance with this request, Maitreya visits earth at night, emits a great light, and teaches the *Seventeen Bhūmi Sūtra*, which refers, Kragh tells us, to the root section of the *Yogācārabhūmi* (this section sets out the seventeen *bhūmis* of Yogācāra).[139] Asaṅga's mediation is presented as a crucial part of the teaching process:

> Although [the assembly] was gathered together in a single hall to listen to the Dharma, only Asaṅga was able to approach Maitreya. The rest could only listen from a distance. At night, they together listened to Maitreya teach the Dharma, and, during the day, Asaṅga again explained to the remaining people everything that Maitreya had said. Many people therefore came to hear and have faith in the Mahāyāna.[140]

There is much to consider in Paramārtha's narrative of Asaṅga's life, including especially the nature of his mediative experience and Maitreya's specific role as a guarantor of a body of unfamiliar teachings. It is also interesting that the narrative refers to the *Yogācārabhūmi* as a *jing* (經), a word typically translated as *sūtra*. It should be noted, however, that *jing* was, especially during the early period, frequently used to translate "*dharma*," and may therefore point only to the idea of a teaching in general rather than a particular type of *buddhavacana*.[141] Whatever the case may be, the *Yogācārabhūmi* is neither a clear work of ordinary human authorship nor an indisputable instance of scripture.[142]

Another philosophical text often attributed to Maitreya is the *Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā*, which analyzes the Buddhist "Middle Way" and contrasts it with other extreme views.[143] This example is of particular importance because the commentary of Sthiramati, which discusses the putative ori-

[139] T.2049, 188b29-188c16. See Kragh 2013: 32-34 and n. 27.

[140] T.2049 188c16-188c20: 雖同於一堂聽法。唯無著法師得近彌勒菩薩。餘人但得遙聞。夜共聽彌勒説法。晝時無著法師更爲餘人解釋彌勒所説。因此衆人聞信大乘. See Takakusu 1904: 274-275 for another translation of this passage. His translation is cited by Kragh.

[141] See Karashima 2015a: 116.

[142] Note especially that we find here the scholastic tendency to cite scriptures, which is rare in scriptures themselves. These tend instead to incorporate passages without explicit indication rather than to refer to external sources. Some Vinayas are different in this regard.

[143] Stanley 1988: xii.

gins of the text, is partially extant in the original Sanskrit. The first few folios of the manuscript are damaged, but, when taken together with their Tibetan translation, they preserve enough to reconstruct an explicit discussion of Maitreya's authorial role, specific capacities, and connection with Asaṅga:

> Or else, he is the "son of the Sugata" because he was born with the character of the Sugata. As is stated in another *sūtra*: "He is born in the lineage of the Tathāgata because he has obtained the properties that comprise the Tathāgata's nature." Hence, for a *bodhisattva* who has reached the tenth stage of spiritual advancement, the whole object to be known[144] appears like an amla fruit sitting in the palm of his hand, though it is as if his eyes were covered with silk gauze. For the Fortunate One, it is as if that covering were removed. That is the difference [between the two]. For here, "son of the Sugata"[145] indicates the author's complete understanding, and the fact that he composed this work with no regard for money or honor shows his compassion and wisdom.
>
> "The expositor" means the person who did the exposition. This word should be construed together with "after honoring." Others take "son of the Sugata" [to qualify] him as well. He is the noble Asaṅga; for this work was revealed (*abhivyakta-*) and explained to him [through the *samādhi* called] the "Stream[146] of *Dharmas*" on the basis of Maitreya's power.[147]

Sthiramati provides ample insight into complex problems of religious and textual authority, positing a subtle difference between the perceptual capacities of an advanced *bodhisattva* and a fully enlightened Buddha. Yet he subsequently downplays this distinction by claiming for Maitreya a "perfect understanding of reality." Sthiramati also implies that a human intermediary need not be possessed of such exalted insight, only the meditative capacity to access beings capable of seeing things as they really are.

I should be clear that the traditional attribution of a number of philosophical treatises to Maitreya does not make them *buddhavacana* in the strict sense, though this fact seems to have exercised little

[144] Stanley 1988: 5 n. 21 emends to *jñeyavastu*.
[145] Stanley 1988: 5 n. 22 suggests an important emendation.
[146] Stanley 1988: 5 n. 23 suggests reading *srotasā* instead of *saṃtānena*.
[147] *Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā* p. 4, ll. 8-20. See also Stanley 1988: 5 for a translation and critical notes on this passage. My translation follows his, though I have modified the style and wording. Note that parts of this passage are extant only in Tibetan.

bearing on the authoritative status of these texts. We cannot know how the authors or compilers of the material making up the *Yogācārabhūmi* or *Madhyāntavibhāga* understood their activities, and we cannot say whether a figure named Asaṅga was involved in their production. What makes these examples important is that they draw attention to the conceptual difficulties that follow from trying to differentiate strictly between philosophical and religious texts, at least in certain circumstances, and to the difference between the abstract debates over verbal testimony and the messy world of textual authorization on the ground.

One final set of examples may serve to remind us how little we know about the historically and geographically localized conditions of textual production, the specific practices judged to be acceptable by individual communities, and the authorizing narratives that surrounded their textual products and untextualized traditions of practice. A string of recent studies by Péter-Daniel Szántó and Catherine Dalton have clarified the life and work of Buddhajñānapāda, an eighth-century Buddhist exegete who is especially associated with the *Guhyasamājatantra* and its associated ritual systems.[148] Among his many writings is an autobiographical work preserved only in Tibetan translation called the **Dvitīyakramatattvabhāvanāmukhāgama* (hereafter *Mukhāgama*), which Catherine Dalton has critically edited and translated in her recent dissertation. What makes this text unique, as both Szántó and Dalton note, is that Buddhajñānapāda wrote about his own life in a consciously historical manner, yet he imbeds his autobiograhpy with a visionary revelation delivered by an awakened being.

Buddhajñānapāda begins the *Mukhāgama* with an abbreviated account of his travels to study with various teachers. He eventually describes his arrival on the Koṅkan coast, where he studied the *Guhyasamājatantra* with a renowned tantric master. Yet Buddhajñānapāda failed to realize its

[148] Szántó 2015, 2018, Dalton 2019, and Dalton and Szántó 2019.

meaning, and, on announcing this failure, was met with a similar admission on the part of his teacher (an unusual occurrence in traditional India).[149] Buddhajñānapāda thereupon set out to Vajrāsana and took up ascetic practice in a nearby forest, where he eventually encountered "an emanated monk with two gurus" (*sprul pa'i dge slong bla ma gnyis*) According to the commentator Vaidyapāda, the monk then created an emanated *maṇḍala*.[150] Buddhajñānapāda then propitiated the *maṇḍala*, with Mañjuśrī at its center, and Mañjuśrī subsequently delivered a variety of teachings in verse.[151] He then commanded Buddhajñānapāda to compose a number of ritually oriented texts and disappeared.[152]

The text ends with a brief description of Buddhajñānapāda's subsequent activities: he composed the *Mukhāgama* and the other works ordered by Mañjuśrī, taught them to others, set up a community of some sort, and visited one of his former teachers.[153] What matters for our purposes is that he composed a text that sits, as Catherine Dalton puts it, "on the borderline of scripture and authored commentary."[154] The *Mukhāgama* claims to contain the words of Mañjuśrī and yet presents itself as a historical (or historicized) autobiographical work purportedly recording events that happened to its author over a particular span of time and in a particular set of places. Its uniqueness raises a number of questions. What exactly is unusual about this text? Is its particular mode of self-representation truly unique? Could it be that similar self-authorizing narratives commonly circulated but were not included in the texts with which they were associated? Was this a specifically Buddhist mode of authorization, or is it representative of a larger cultural pattern in traditional India?

[149] Szántó 2018: 2-3 notes the surprising character of this admission.

[150] Dalton 2019: 9 cites and translates the relevant passage from the commentary.

[151] We cannot know for sure whether the Sanskrit was versified, but the Tibetan translation of the section comprising Mañjuśrī's teachings is versified in contrast with the rest of the *Mukhāgama*, which is translated in prose. This much suggests the underlying Sanskrit of the visionary teaching was also versified.

[152] See Dalton 2019: esp. 301-303 and 348-349. See pp. 355-361 and 439-441 for a translation.

[153] See Dalton 2019: esp. 348-349 and 441-442 for a translation.

[154] Dalton 2019: 230 n. 93.

Although the evidence does not allow us to answer these questions definitively, there are a handful of narratives associated with Śaiva treatises that bear a certain resemblance to the *Mukhāgama*. Take, for example, the short passage found at the end of the *Śivadṛṣṭi* (10th c. CE), the fundamental text for the Pratyabhijñā-form of non-dual Śaiva philosophy, which was composed by a Kashmiri Brahmin named Somānanda. He concludes his text with a brief discussion of his family history (though, as John Nemec notes, it may have been added by someone else at a later date).[155] It begins, as Nemec tells us, with the dawning of the Kali age, at which time Śiva visited earth and ordered the famous Śaiva seer Durvāsas to preserve his teachings. Durvāsas then generated a mind-born son named Tryambakāditya and thereupon transmitted Śiva's teachings to him. Tryambakāditya similarly generated a son in order to pass on the teachings, and we are told this process was repeated fourteen times before the fifteenth son ended up marrying a Brahmin woman and gave birth to Saṃgamāditya, who moved to Kashmir and had a son named Varṣāditya, who in turn gave birth to Aruṇāditya, Somānanda's father.[156]

This short autobiographical coda indicates that Somānanda's family was in possession of secret teachings that ultimately originated with Śiva. Although this claim is in some ways different from the Buddhist examples discussed above, all of which center on visionary experiences, it is nevertheless functionally similar insofar as it serves to invest a work of a human author with the authority of a divine being. Similar narratives accounting for the origins of another roughly contemporaneous Śaiva work, the *Śivasūtra*, are even closer in character to the Buddhist appeals to visions of supernormal beings. This text comprises a systematic presentation of the so-called Spanda school of non-dual Śaiva thought and was composed by a Kashmiri Brahmin named Vasugupta. The text

[155] See Nemec 2011: 20-21, esp. n. 45.

[156] See Nemec 2011: 23-24 for a translation. The relevant portion of the *Śivadṛṣṭi* is edited cited and critically edited in Nemec 2011: 22 n. 48.

itself is incredibly abbreviated and tells us nothing about its putative origins, but a verse ascribed to Vasugupta's direct pupil, Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa, explains that "Śiva taught the ocean of the *Śivasūtra* [to Vasugupta] in a dream" (*maheśasvapnopadiṣṭāc chivasūtrasindhoḥ*).[157] Later commentators provide alternative narratives. Kṣemarāja (recall that he was a famous 11th century exegete from Kashmir) explains as follows:

> And, at a certain time, the exalted Śiva, intending to stop the loss of the secret tradition in a world that was largely enamored with dualistic viewpoints, out of his desire to bestow grace, favored Vasugupta in a dream and bestowed upon him a vision: "On this mountain, there is a great slab of rock upon which there is a secret teaching. Once you have obtained it, reveal it to people fit for my grace." After waking up, Vasugupta sought out that great rock, and, overturning it with no more than a brush of the hand, saw that it corresponded with his dream and thereupon obtained these *Śivasūtras*, which consist of a collection of Śiva's secret doctrines.[158]

As Sanderson points out, this narrative makes the *Śivasūtra* into the direct teaching of Śiva and provides a historicized account of its appearance in the world.[159] This particular mode of self-authorization was not unprecedented. A number of Mahāyāna *sūtras* and their associated commentarial traditions speak of texts that were hidden in caves or under rocks, and the stories that surround the *gter ma* ("Treasure Texts") of Tibet are basically analogous as well.[160] Other commentators, as Sanderson likewise notes, provide the *Śivasūtra* with yet another authorizing narrative: "The *Śiva-*

[157] *Spandakārikāvṛtti* 52, p. 40: **dugdham* (em. [Sanderson 2007: 406 n. 580] : *dṛbdhaṃ* : Ed.) *mahādevigirau maheśasvapnopadiṣṭāc chivasūtrasindhoḥ | spandāmṛtaṃ yad vasuguptapādaiḥ śrīkallaṭas tat prakaṭīcakāra*. It should be noted that the provenance of this verse is doubtful. As J. C. Chatterji tells us, a scribe seems to have understood it as belonging to the *Spandakārikāvivṛtti* of Rāmakaṇṭha. This attribution is also problematic, see Chatterji 1914: 27-28 n. 2. Whether or not this verse was written by Kallaṭa is, however, somewhat immaterial to my point here, which concerns how lineages understood the material they transmitted in general. Sanderson 2007: 406-407 discusses and translates this verse, providing critical notes in n. 580.

[158] *Śivasūtravimarśinī* on 1, p. 2: *kadācic ca asau dvaitadarśanādhivāsitaprāye jīvaloke rahasyasaṃpradāyo mā vicchedītyāśayataḥ anujighṛkṣāpareṇa paramaśivena svapne anugṛhyonmiṣitapratibhaḥ kṛtaḥ yathā atra mahībhṛti mahati śilātale rahasyam asti tat adhigamya anugrahayogyeṣu prakāśayeti | prabuddhaś cāsav anviṣyan tāṃ mahatīṃ śilāṃ karasparśanamātraparivartanataḥ saṃvādīkṛtasvapnāṃ pratyakṣīkṛtyemāni śivopaniṣatsaṃgraharūpāṇi śivasūtrāṇi tataḥ samāsasāda*. See Sanderson 2007: 404 n. 574 for another translation and a discussion of some other traditions related to this text.

[159] Sanderson 2007: 403-404.

[160] See the discussion in Harrison 2003: 123.

sūtras appeared to Vasugupta at the command of a perfected being" (*siddhādeśāt prādur āsan*).[161] Here too the ultimate origin of the text was understood to be Śiva himself.[162]

Considering these Buddhist and Śaiva works as an ensemble draws attention to the fact that diverse types of narrative traditions were used to connect historicized narratives of textual production with divine sources of authority. All of these texts seem to sit at an uneasy and historically unstable juncture between scripture and human authorship. On the one hand, they are ascribed to divine or at least supernormal figures, but, on the other, they are closely associated with particular people who were instrumental in bringing them into a definite form. Another issue concerns how these texts position themselves with respect to clear instances of scripture. The *Yogācārabhūmi*, for example, openly quotes from a variety of *sūtras*, which is rare among less ambiguously scriptural works (these tend adaptively to reuse passages rather than quote them, excepting certain Vinaya texts that do both). The *Śivadṛṣṭi* likewise makes occasional reference to and engages with hypothetical objections to its positions on the basis that they seemingly contradict "statements spoken by Śiva" (*śivoktair virodaḥ*).[163] The *Śivasūtra* stands somewhat apart from the others in adopting a matter-of-fact tone that does not engage explicitly with other bodies of Śiva's word.

[161] *Śivasūtravārttika*, p. 2: *śrīmanmahādevigirau vasuguptaguroḥ purā | siddhādeśāt prādur āsan śivasūtrāṇi tasya hi*. This statement is cited and translated in Sanderson 2007: 403 n. 573.

[162] *Śivasūtravārttika*, p. 89: *iti prakaraṇatrayaṃ sughaṭam īṣadunmīlitaṃ mayā śivamukhodgataṃ sumatisiddhaye sāṃpratam | vicārya gatamatsarabudhair janair guṇagrāhibhiḥ susevyam iha teṣv alaṃ bhavatu siddhimokṣapradam*. See also p. 5, where we find expressions such as *śivaḥ sūtram arīracat* and *tadāvṛter upanyāsasūtram āha maheśvaraḥ*.

[163] See, for example, *Śivadṛṣṭi* 3.32: *viśvasyāsatyarūpatvaṃ yair vākyair varṇitaṃ kvacit | śivoktais tair virodhaḥ syāt sarvasatyatvavādinaḥ*. The resolution to this concern may be found in *Śivadṛṣṭi* 3.95cd-96ab: *viśvatucchatvavākyānāṃ vairāgyādyarthavādinām | tātparyeṇa na doṣo 'sti nānācittvaṃ na kalpate*. See Nemec 2011: 233 and 269 for a translation of these verses.

4.8 Summary and Conclusions

Theoretical disputes over scriptural authority were generally articulated in ahistorical terms, but they were nevertheless influenced by historical developments. Prior to the onset of the "Age of Scripture," intellectual traditions with varying religious commitments set out to define the conditions under which verbal testimony could serve as a reliable warrant for certain courses of action. One of the chief concerns of this early epistemological discourse was how to judge the trustworthiness of statements concerning matters that were beyond the perception of ordinary people. Early attempts to come to terms with this issue respond to the broad and longstanding cultural tendency to ascribe teachings to omniscient beings or figures with supernatural perceptual capacities, casting divine attributions in the language of *pramāṇa*-theory.

The Mīmāṃsā tradition of Vedic hermeneutics formulated a completely different approach to scripturality. Its practitioners deny the possibility of individual insight into *dharma* and assert that the Veda is authoritative precisely because it is eternal and has no author. They were nevertheless willing to concede that other texts and practices could be authoritative provided that they were held to be derived from underlying Vedic material. Mīmāṃsā's interest in these types of issues was initially inward-facing. Its adherents sought to maintain the absolute primacy of the Veda while simultaneously authorizing other texts and customs that had come to be associated with Vedic ritual and culture. Yet, after the onset of the "Age of Scripture," Kumārila Bhaṭṭa redeployed Mīmāṃsā's intellectual resources in service of a new aim: proving the invalidity of other scriptural traditions.

Kumārila's work is unprecedented in the depth and ferocity of its attack against the scriptures of other communities. Chief among his targets are the Buddhists, and he devotes significant effort to disproving the Buddha's omniscience. Yet his arguments are meant to refute the possibility of

omniscient beings more generally, and he intends for them simultaneously to invalidate the foundational texts of many other groups, including "scriptures" accepted by the followers of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, Pāñcarātrikas, Pāśupatas, and Jains. Not all of these fall naturally into the category of scripture as it is commonly conceived, but, for Kumārila, what mattered was their claim to convey knowledge beyond the sphere of ordinary perception.

Kumārila formulates traditional India's most intellectually consequential and philosophically effective set of arguments against scriptural pluralism, though in doing so he generally works at a relatively high level of abstraction. This orientation is perhaps unsurprising given that his chief concern is the wholesale rejection of competing systems of thought. He is less concerned, at least in his outward-facing writings, with the problems that pertain to individual texts. Yet in spite of the overwhelming presence of his ideas in the work of subsequent thinkers, he seems to have exerted relatively little practical influence, at least insofar as stemming the tide of scriptural production was concerned. Not only did Buddhists, Śaivas, and Vaiṣṇavas produce enormous bodies of scriptures during his life and long after his death (to say nothing of the people who composed and redacted Purāṇic compositions), even the tendency to attribute semi-scriptural works to omniscient beings appears to have become increasingly widespread.

Chapter 5: Pluralism in Theory

5.1 Introduction

Kumārila was the most historically influential proponent of a strong form of exclusionism, and his writings came to serve as the principal touchstone for nearly all subsequent thinkers dealing with the problem of scriptural authority.[1] His philosphy remained discursively important even as it became increasingly divorced from the world of practice, and intellectuals affiliated with a number of different religious communities continued to address themselves to his work many centuries after his death. The Buddhists were his most dogged detractors, undoubtedly because they bore the brunt of his attacks. In responding to his challenge, they sought, first of all, to establish the validity of Buddhist scriptures (or, more precisely, the rationality of accepting *buddhavacana* in the absence of epistemological certainty) and, second, to refute the authority of the Veda.[2] From the perspectives of social and religious history, however, the most important alternatives to Kumārila's exclusionary framework were worked out among the adherents of the various theistic movements that produced vast and new scriptural corpora during the "Age of Scripture," notably those devoted to Śiva and Viṣṇu, many of whom adopted some form of pluralism in their approaches to scriptural authority.

Three representative visions of scriptural pluralism may be recovered through the examination

[1]The mode of argumentation adopted by Naiyāyika thinkers in their refutation of Buddhism and, on occasion, Jainism is different, but they do not generally concern themselves with the validity of other scriptural collections, such as those of the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas. Bhaṭṭa Jayanta and, to a far lesser extent, Bhāsarvajña are the exceptions to this rule.

[2]See McClintock 2010: 58-59 and Eltschinger 2014: 221-245.

of a constellation of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, and Nyāya texts dating from between the seventh and eleventh centuries. The first type, which I call "hierarchical pluralism," is found in the writings of Śaiva exegetes who, from the seventh century onwards, formulated increasingly sophisticated philosophical justifications for a hierarchical approach to scriptural authority that attributed varying degrees of validity to the scriptures of a wide variety of religious communities.[3] They sought especially to clarify the relationship between the Śaiva scriptures and the Vedic corpus, sometimes categorizing the latter as a "general" (*sāmānya-*) or "mundane" (*laukika-*) body of scripture that was transcended by the "special" (*viśeṣa-*) scriptures specific to the Śaivas.[4]

The second type of pluralism, "theoretical pragmatism," appears in the works of Bhaṭṭa Jayanta (10th c. CE), a unique Naiyāyika thinker who was personally devoted to Śiva. He was deeply concerned with establishing the Veda's authority, so much so as to reimagine the very purpose of Nyāya as directed towards this end.[5] Yet he also posits, among several possible approaches to scriptural authority, a thoroughly pluralistic framework that accepts a wide variety of scriptural traditions, including those of the Buddhists and Jains, so long as they do not pose a threat to the wider fabric of the social world. The third and final model is worked out by Yāmunācārya (11th century CE), a staunch defender of the Pañcarātra. He does not see himself as advancing a pluralistic approach to scripture; I have therefore called his approach "hidden pluralism." Yāmuna seeks to refute the notion that accepting both the Veda and Pāñcarātrika scriptures entailed the acceptance of two truly distinct sources of authority, arguing that the latter were in fact fully Vedic in character.

[3] A brief summary of previous scholarship on this issue may be found in Bisschop 2019: 511-513. It should be noted that these hierarchical frameworks generally include a variety of "systems of thought" or "soteriological systems" that do not always fit well into the category of "religions." See the related discussion as it pertains to Kumārila's categorization of Sāṃkhya and Yoga in Chapter 4, pp. 225-227.

[4] Sanderson 2012, Handout 5: 14-15 and Handout 6: 19-22 notes several examples where *laukika-* is used in this sense, including one instance from the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* and several from the commentarial writings of Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha II.

[5] Kataoka 2003.

5.2 Dependent Transcendence

A uniquely Śaiva approach to pluralism first emerges in their scriptures, which often assign a relative value to sacred texts conventionally associated with various religious communities. I have already considered the appearance of this phenomenon in the *Niśvāsamukha*, which divides the broader scriptural landscape into five hierarchically ordered "streams" that are said to emerge from Śiva's five faces (recall that each stream represents a sort of textual super-category, including worldly *dharma*, the Vedic corpus, Sāṃkhya and Yoga, the Atimārga, and the Mantramārga; see Chapter 2, pp. 126-127).[6] Later texts tend to use the notion of streams to organize an exclusively Śaiva corpus, yet the idea that Śiva was the ultimate source of all scriptures, including especially the Veda, persisted.[7]

Inscriptions indicate that, from a pragmatic perspective, royal devotion to Śiva was not held to conflict with the support of Brahmanical institutions.[8] Yet the theoretical challenge posed by Kumārila loomed large in Śaiva circles. The intellectual pressure exerted by his thought is keenly felt in the work of Sadyojyotis (7th or 8th century CE), who authored some of the earliest extant commentaries on Mantamārgic scriptures.[9] He also composed an independent treatise called the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* ("Investigation into God and the Self"), which, as Sanderson notes, does not root

[6]Kafle 2015: 20-28.

[7]The five-stream framework formulated in the *Niśvāsamukha* appears to have retained some resonance even after it was displaced. See, for example, *Mṛgendratantra* Kriyāpāda 8.76-78 and Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha's commentary thereon: *anekarūpāṇi ca karmāṇi laukikavaidikādhyātmikātimārgaśaivākhyāni adhvano bhāgeṣu yathāsaṃbhavaṃ tulyakālaṃ pakvāni bhāvayet*. This set of verses and their commentary is mentioned in Watson, Goodall, and Sarma 2013: 444-445 n. 833.

[8]Sanderson 2009: 41-45 notes that inscriptions regularly describe kings as both the protectors of the *varṇāśrama-dharma*- and as wholly devoted to one of the principal deities, chiefly Śiva. He later (pp. 301-303) explains what he calls the "Śaiva-brahmanical Order."

[9]Sadyojyotis' dates are considered in Sanderson 2006b. As he notes, "That distinction [i.e., of composing the earliest "post-scriptural" works of Saiddhāntika Śaiva learning] belongs to Bṛhaspati and Sadyojyotis (also known as Kheṭapāla, Kheṭakabāla, and Kheṭakanandana) whom Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha II acknowledges at the beginning of two of his works as the founding fathers of his exegetical tradition." See Sanderson 2006b: 45; the addition in brackets is my own.

itself in the teachings of any particular scripture.[10]

The first two chapters of the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* examine the nature of the self and God, respectively.[11] The third and final chapter deals with opposing views about God and a variety of other related topics. It is here that we find a discussion of scripture, which begins with a Mīmāṃsaka objection to postulating the very existence of God: "The consummation of ritual action proceeds on the basis of Vedic injunctions, and those actions, once completed, bestow results. Given that Vedic injunctions are uncreated (*akṛtaka-*), what purpose could Śiva serve?"[12] The objector's point is that we need not assume the existence of God to account for our knowledge of ritual efficacy, nor do we need God to oversee the dispensation of results. Our knowledge of actions and their results is provided by the Veda, which, the objector argues, has no author, and those actions yield their results naturally.

Sadyojyotis deals with the second issue in an earlier chapter of the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā*, and here he simply refers the reader to his earlier examination of God's role in overseeing the connection between actions and results.[13] This is not the place to consider those arguments in detail. Our chief concerns are only the following: Sadyojyotis' refutation of the standard Mīmāṃsā understanding of the Veda, his arguments to establish God as its author, and his attempt to delineate the relationship between the Vedic corpus and the Śaiva scriptures.

As discussed in Chapter 4 (pp. 209-211), Mīmāṃsā holds that the Veda is eternal and authorless,

[10] A list of his works is given in Sanderson 2006b: 46-47. Note that, in addition to commentaries and the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā*, he also wrote two semi-commentarial works that consider the ontological frameworks of the *Rauravasūtrasaṃgraha* and the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṃgraha*. See also Sanderson 2014: 15.

[11] For an overview of the first chapter, and especially Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary on it, see Watson 2006: 117-124.

[12] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.28, p. 171: *śāstrataḥ karmaniṣpattiḥ karmataś ca kṛtāt phalam | śāstraṃ cākṛtakaṃ tena kim hareṇeti nārthavat*. Note that the final *nārthavat* forms part of the reply to this objection.

[13] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.29, p. 171: *karmasāphlayakaraṇam uktaṃ śambhoḥ prayojanam | upariṣṭāt pravakṣyāmaḥ puṃmuktikaraṇaṃ param*. This verse points us back to *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 2.26cd-27ab, p. 149: *yena yādṛgvidhaṃ karma kṛtaṃ tasya tathāvidham || vidadhāti phalaṃ puṃsaḥ karmāpekṣitayā prabhuḥ*.

and Sadyojyotis systematically attacks the logical preconditions required for the coherence of these claims. He argues, for example, that phonemes are not eternal, refuting especially the notion that they are only manifested and not produced. His position is not novel; it largely rehearses old lines of debate established in disputations between Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, and the Buddhists and need not be repeated here.[14]

Sadyojyotis subsequently seeks to establish that the world undergoes periodic resorption, something that Kumārila denies because it threatens the notion that the tradition of Vedic recitation is absolutely without beginning.[15] The objector echoes Kumārila's concern by arguing that there can be no time "without Vedic injunctions" (*śāstrojjhita-*).[16] The dense nature of the *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* makes the intended force of the argument here somewhat unclear, but the point seems to be that the interdepedent nature of certain Vedic injunctions involving the eligibility to study the Veda precludes the possibility of their initialization at any point in time.[17] After cycling through several counterarguments, Sadyojyotis provides the following response: we know that the world was at some point created because it has a particular form; we may therefore infer that it will subsequently be destroyed in its entirety. His position is rooted in the common presupposition that all created things or "effects" (*kārya-*) eventually undergo destruction.[18]

The *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* then moves to consider the nature of the Veda more directly. The Mī-

[14] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.31-42, pp. 173-181. Note especially his concluding point: *ittham akṣarajātasya nityatvaṃ nopapadyate | padatadyogavākyānāṃ dūrotsāritam eva tat*. For some of the precursors to Sadyojyotis's arguments, see *Nyāyabhāṣya* on 2.2.14ff. and Śābarabhāṣya on 1.1.6-23.

[15] See *Ślokavārttika Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* v. 68ab, p. 466.

[16] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.46, p. 183: *śāstrojjhito na kālo 'sti pralayo nopapadyate | prabhātam api naivātas tena śāstram akṛtrimam*.

[17] *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa* on 3.46, p. 183, ll. 8-12: *brāhmaṇena ṣaḍaṅgo vedo 'dhyeyaḥ garbhādhānādivaidikasaṃskārasaṃskṛto brāhmaṇyāṃ brāhmaṇāj jāto brāhmaṇa ity āryāgamāvailakṣaṇyenādhikārisaṃvalanayaiva vedasya vyavasthiter bījāṅkurādipravāhavad anityatve 'py anidaṃprathamatvam iti*.

[18] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.51-52, p. 187-188: *kṣmādeḥ sākāratā proktā janmanas tasya pūrvataḥ | gamyate jagataḥ svāpas tasmāt prāk ca jagatkṣayaḥ || bhaviṣyat pralayaś cāpi kāryatvād eva gamyate | kṛtsnanāśo 'pi kāryasya dehādeḥ saṃpradṛśyate*.

māṃsaka opponent declares: "We come to know of objects on the basis of Vedic injunction; for this reason, the Veda cannot be created. From created statements we perceive [only] a desire to speak [on the part of the speaker]."[19] This argument recalls Śabara's notion that human speech can only tell us what a person thinks; it cannot tell us anything definite about an object in the world. Yet Sadyojyotis' hypothetical opponent employs this idea in the reverse manner. He is not seeking to deny the epistemological value of human speech (though he takes this point for granted); rather, he aims to show that anyone who accepts human speech to be unreliable and simultaneously holds that the Veda is reliable must logically conclude that the Veda has no author.

Sadyojyotis' response to this challenge is multifaceted. On the one hand, he casts doubt on the possibility that a linguistic utterance could ever exist naturally, and, on the other, he argues that all statements, whatever their origin, cause us to cognize objects, not just supposedly uncreated ones. It should be noted that the second part of his argument subtly misrepresents the standard Mīmāṃsaka position. Śabara's point is epistemological (i.e., what can we definitely know when we hear a certain type of statement?), whereas Sadyojyotis twists it into a phenomenological one (i.e., what do we appear to cognize when we hear any kind of statement?).[20]

The objector eventually turns to the Veda's content, which prototypically concerns perceptually inaccessible things. Although this section is brief, it is nevertheless clear that the objector is advancing a stereotyped Mīmāṃsā view that defines *dharma* as "something to be done" (*kārya-*). In other words, it exists in the future and can never be the object of perception, which, according to Mīmāṃsā, is by its very nature limited to things that are already in existence. Given that *dha-*

[19]*Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.56, p. 190: *śāstrād artheṣu vijñānam ato no kṛtakaṃ hi tat | kṛtakād vacaso yasmād vivakṣā saṃpratīyate*. Rāmakaṇṭha draws our attention to a passage from the *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.2: *laukikād dhi vākyād evaṃ ayaṃ puruṣo vedeti bhavati pratyayo vaidikāt tv evam artha iti*. Note that the readings are slightly different in the printed editions of the *Śābarabhāṣya* available to me. See, for instance, Frauwallner 1968: 18, ll. 13-14.

[20]*Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.57cd, p. 191: *vākyāc ca sarvataḥ pūrvam arthe dhīr aviśeṣataḥ*.

rma cannot be perceived directly, there is no way, according to the objector, that God could have composed the Veda. He would simply have no way of knowing the information that it contains. Perception is by nature excluded, as is inference, which depends upon perception and requires a properly established inferential reason to operate. But Sadyojyotis does not accept the notion that God's perception is any way limited, stipulating instead that he possesses inerrant awareness of all things at all times.[21]

Sadyojyotis next sets out to show that God, as opposed to some other being, composed the Veda. He argues that "no one with a limited lifespan and without omniscience could have created the Veda; for it is free from inconsistencies, enormous, and does not contradict [things known through the other means of knowledge]."[22] These arguments are clearly addressed to an audience that accepts Mīmāṃsā's hermeneutic methods, which allow us to explain away the Veda's internal inconsistencies and interpret seemingly untrue statements figuratively.[23] Sadyojyotis' point is that the putatively exceptional character of the Veda requires us to assume that it has an exceptional author.

The supposed absence of inconsistency is, in Sayojyotis' view, sufficient to deny the possibility that multiple authors were responsible for composing the Veda's various parts. One could object that a number of different people might have contributed to its creation under the direction of a single figure, but this position would run contrary to the rule of logical economy (i.e., postulating

[21] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.60-63, pp. 194-197: *parokṣo nanu śāstrārtho viśeṣatvād alaiṅgikaḥ* | *liṅgisāmānyagamakaṃ tadvyāptaṃ liṅgam iṣyate* || *aviditvā ca tat kaścit kathaṃ śāstraṃ kariṣyati* | *prāmāṇye tasya saṃsiddhe vaktuṃ yuktam idaṃ budhāḥ* || *siddham eva yataḥ kuryād akṣādyaviṣaye matim* | *na ca bādhāsti yenāsya tatprāmāṇyanivāraṇam* || *itthaṃrūpaṃ tatas tarhi sādhukāraṇajaṃ hi tat* | *trikālārthāvisaṃvādi jñānaṃ ceśe 'bhidhāsyate*. Note that the opponent specifically excludes inferential knowledge of *dharma* on grounds related to the impossibility of establishing an inferential reason.

[22] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.64, p. 197: *na cāpy asarvavit kaścid alpāyuś ca karoti tat* | *parasparāviruddhatvamahadavyāhatatvataḥ*.

[23] See, for example, Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary on *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.64, p. 197, ll. 18-19: *siddhārthapratipādakānāṃ tadekadeśānāṃ pratyakṣādivirodhasaṃbhave 'py arthavādādināpy upapattitaḥ*.

multiple things when one would suffice) and must therefore be motivated by a "mere hatred for Śiva" (*pradveṣaḥ kevalo hare*).[24] The *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* then confronts Mīmāṃsā's well-known objection to the epistemic usefulness of speakers who teach about perceptually unverifiable things. Even if they really have supernormal powers of perception, they still might be lying to us; there is just no way for us to know for sure.[25] Sadyojyotis largely ignores the nuance of this argument and concentrates instead on denying that the root cause of deceptive speech applies to God. People lie, he argues, because they stand to gain something, and God simply has nothing to gain from lying.[26]

In order to demonstrate God's moral qualities, Sadyojyotis points to his composition of *mantravāda* texts (seemingly a reference to works dealing with alchemy and related topics), which provide no benefit to God and serve the sole purpose of helping others to achieve a variety of objectives.[27] This proves, he contends, that God acts for the benefit of others and not out of his own selfish interests, a precondition for deceptive speech. One might object that the *mantravāda* material is different from the Veda, but Sadyojyotis claims that both deal with perceptually inaccessible content; as a consequence, we may infer that both were created by God.[28]

Sadyojyotis next explains that God must have created the world and the Veda simultaneously because "the entire multitude of results [that follow from the performance of ritual actions] is established for human beings on the basis of the Veda."[29] In other words, the world and Veda must

[24] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.65, p. 198: **bahūnāṃ* (corr. [Errata, p. 6] : *bahūnā* : Ed.) *karaṇe na syāt proktalakṣaṇasaṃgatiḥ* | *ekasya śaktiklṛptau syāt pradveṣaḥ kevalo hare*.

[25] See Chapter 4, pp. 207-208.

[26] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.67, p. 199: *na ca pratārakaḥ śarvo yasmāt sarvajagatpatiḥ* | *pratārya prāṇinas tebhyaḥ kim apūrvam avāpsyati*.

[27] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.68, p. 199: *parārthaṃ mantravādāś ca yena sarvavidā kṛtāḥ* | *sarvaśreyoyutāḥ sarve sa kathaṃ hi pratārayet*. Rāmkaṇṭha comments as follows on p. 200, ll. 1-3: *paropakārāyaiva yena mantravādā rasarasāyanapātālaguṭikāḥ sarvasya kāmyamānasya śreyasaḥ sādhakā bahavo viracitās tasya pratārakatvaṃ na saṃbhavaty*.

[28] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.69, p. 200: *parokṣo mantravādārtho viśeṣatvād alaingikaḥ* | *setikartavyatāko 'pi jyotiṣṭomādivan nṛṇām*.

[29] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.72-73ab, pp. 201-202: *asmāc ca pratyuteśānaḥ sarvajñaḥ saṃpratīyate* | *śāstraṃ hi kurvatānena sarvam eva kṛtaṃ bhavet* || *phalajātaṃ yataḥ puṃsāṃ sarvaṃ śāstrāt prasiddhyati*.

have been created in conjunction with one another, otherwise we would be unable to account for the resonance between the actions prescribed by the Veda and their results in the world.

Sadyojyotis concludes his examination of the Veda by posing the following hypothetical question: why, given his religious commitments, would he devote so much effort to demonstrating the authority of the Veda? His response, as Sanderson has already shown, reveals something very important about the relationship in which the Vedic and Śaiva scriptural corpora were held to stand by Śaiva thinkers:[30]

> [Objector]: Everyone makes an effort with respect to the authority of their own system and no other. Why have you needlessly exerted yourself with respect to the authority of the Veda too?
>
> [Sadyojyotis]: Without the Veda, there would be no action [leading to consequences in future rebirths], and, without that, there would be no [collection of *tattvas* ("ontological levels")] beginning with *kalā* [and ending with earth, which together form *saṃsāra*. In the Śaiva scriptures,] it is stated that initiation serves to cut off [the future effects of] action [and other elements conducive to transmigration]. What's more, the Śaiva scriptures assent to things mentioned in the Veda, such as the systems of caste and life-stage. I have therefore made efforts with respect to the validity of the Veda too.[31]

Sadyojyotis' argument has two parts. First, Śaiva scriptures acknowledge and assent to the basic socio-cultural structures that underpin the Vaidika ritual program; as a consequence, their validity is dependent upon the Veda inasmuch as they presuppose it. Second, Śaiva scriptures depict themselves as offering methods that transcend the reward structure of the Vaidika ritual system, which was believed to create merit and demerit, thereby ensuring the continual transmigration of its participants.[32] The Śaiva claim to transcendence is only intelligible if the Veda remains authoritative

[30] Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 7

[31] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.74-76, pp. 202-203: *svamatasyaiva mānatve yatnaṃ *sarvaḥ* (em. [Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 7; Pandit 2, p. 192] : *sarvaṃ* : Ed.) *karoti hi* | *vedasyāpi pramāṇatve kiṃ mudhaiva kṛtaḥ śramaḥ* || *vedaṃ vinā na karmāsti kalādi ca na tad vinā* | *chettavyaṃ dīkṣayā sarvaṃ karmādīti prabhāṣitam* || *anujñātāś ca vedoktāḥ śaive varṇāśramādayaḥ* | *vedasyāpi pramāṇatve yatno 'smābhir ataḥ kṛtaḥ*. Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 7 cites and translates this passage. My understanding of these verses has been informed by his translation and by Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary.

[32] See also Sanderson 2015b: 171-172, where Sadyojyotis' reasoning is similarly analyzed.

in its own sphere and thereby constitutes the lower standard that is ultimately to be transcended.[33]

We may therefore understand Sadyojyotis' argument as an attempt to show that a hierarchy of goals places the Veda and the Śaiva scriptures in harmony. The former is concerned with the actions that govern transmigratory existence, and the latter provides a method for freeing oneself from transmigration. There is a problem, however, because the Veda also contains emancipatory teachings. One might therefore object that there is no need for the Śaiva scriptures at all.[34]

Sadyojyotis counters this objection with the theoretical foundations for what I call "hierarchical pluralism." He explains: "In the Śaiva scriptural corpus, the highest form of liberation is taught to be the Śiva-state (i.e., the state of being identical to Śiva in omniscience and omnipotence), and that should be regarded as better than all [other] results."[35] The *Nareśvaraparikṣā*'s dense mode of expression makes this verse somewhat difficult to unpack, but it clearly presupposes the existence of ranked forms of "liberation" with a distinctively Śaiva one situated at the apex. Its commentator, Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha II (c. 10th century CE) expands:[36]

> We would have to admit the fault [of teaching something already taught elsewhere only] if [the form of] liberation [taught in the Śaiva scriptures] amounted to nothing more than reaching the [twenty-fifth] *tattva* of *puruṣa*. Yet here [in the Śaiva scriptures] we learn how to obtain the [thirty-sixth] *tattva* of Śiva, which [sits at the top of the entire cosmography,] consists in the experience of omniscience and omnipotence, and which is unprecedented because it cannot be attained through other systems of thought. It must therefore be understood as totally superior to the forms of liberation taught by the Buddhists, Vaiśeṣikas, Jains, Sāṃkhyas, Pāñcarātras, and Vedānta, each of which is superior to the one that proceeds. So how could there be the previously mentioned fault [of teaching something already taught]? As it is said [in a Śaiva scripture]:
>
> "The Buddhists stand in the *tattva* of *buddhi*, and the Jains stand in the [three] *guṇas*. The Sāṃkhyas stand on top of the *guṇas*, and the Pāñcarātrikas in *avyakta* (i.e.,

[33] As Rāmakaṇṭha says in his commentary on *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.76, p. 203, l. 18 to p. 203, l. 1: *na cājñātasya cchedyatvam upapadyate na ca vedaṃ vinā tasyāvikalasya jñānaṃ sambhavati*.

[34] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.78ab, p. 205: *vede mokṣasya siddhatvāt kiṃ śaivena prayojanam*.

[35] *Nareśvaraparīkṣā* 3.80, p. 206-207: *sarvamuktyuttamā gītā śivatā śivaśāsane | phalebhyaś cāpi sarvebhyo vijñeyā sādhikādhikā*.

[36] For Rāmakaṇṭha's date, see Watson 2006: 114-115.

prakṛti). Those who know the Veda stand in *puruṣa*."[37]

Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary clarifies Sadyojyotis' notion of a hierarchy of "liberation." Each of the major soteriological systems offers a certain degree of success, leading its followers to one of the *tattvas* that constitute the Śaiva cosmography. (Note that the Śaivas adopted and expanded Sāṃkhya's cosmographical framework of twenty five *tattvas*. They augmented this collection by adding additional levels, with the total number growing steadily over time and eventually reaching 36.)[38] But only Śaiva scriptures provide access to true liberation, which consists in the experience of residing at the Śiva *tattva* in a state of absolute omniscience and omnipotence.

5.3 Hierarchical Pluralism

Scriptural evidence for the association of various soteriological systems with different cosmographical levels predates Sadyojyotis by about a century or so. The oldest extant example is perhaps found in the *Nayasūtra* of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*, though, as Goodall notes in his translation, the meaning of the relevant verse is not entirely clear.[39] The text appears to speak of "various teachings (*śāstrāṇi*) situated within the *tattvas*."[40] What is likely the next oldest reference, also noted by Goodall, appears in the *Sarvajñānottara*, an early Saiddhāntika scripture of uncertain date.[41]

The *Sarvajñānottara* contains a chapter that deals with the removal of the imprint made by

[37] *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa* on 3.80, p. 207. ll. 3-12: *bhaved eṣa doṣo yadi puruṣatattvāvadhir evātrāpi mokṣo bhavet | atra tu śivatattvāvāptir darśanāntarānadhigato 'pūrva eva sarvajñatvasarvakartṛtvātmakaḥ śrūyata iti bauddhavaiśeṣikārhatasāṃkhyapāñcarātravedāntādyuktebhyaḥ krameṇa sātiśayebhyo mokṣebhyo 'tiśayena sātiśayo jñeya iti kutaḥ pūrvokto doṣaḥ | yac chrūyate | buddhitattve sthitā bauddhā guṇeṣu tvārhatāḥ sthitāḥ | guṇamūrdhni sthitāḥ sāṃkhyā avyakte pāñcarātrikāḥ || sthitā vedavidaḥ puṃsi | ityādi*. This scriptural citation, but not the preceding commentary, is quoted and translated in Watson, Goodall, and Sarma 2013: 445 n. 836.

[38] The historical formation of the Śaiva cosmography based on *tattvas* has been considered in some detail by Goodall 2016: 77-112.

[39] The dating of this text is complex. Goodall 2015: 19ff. tentatively dated the various strata of this text to between the fifth and seventh centuries, though he does not assign the *Nayasūtra* a firm place within that range.

[40] *Niśvāsasaṃhitā Nayasūtra* 2.21, p. 197: *bhuvanāni vicitrāṇi śataśo 'tha sahasraśaḥ | tattvābhyantarasaṃsthāni śāstrāṇi vividhāni ca*. See also Goodall et al. 2015: 434-436 for a translation and discussion of this verse.

[41] See Goodall et al. cited in the preceding note and Watson, Goodall, and Sarma 2013: 75.

adherence to non-Śaiva soteriological systems on the soul (*liṅgoddhāra-*), a process normatively required of the former members of other religious groups who wished to be initiated into the Śaiva Siddhānta. The chapter opens with the god Kārttikeya questioning his father Śiva about the final destinations attained by various types of ascetics.[42] Śiva replies with a hierarchical framework that follows the same basic structure as the scriptural passage quoted by Rāmakaṇṭha, though the correspondences between teachings and *tattvas* differ. As I have not been able to reconstruct the relevant verse satisfactorily from the Nepalese manuscript, I follow the version edited from citations and translated by Alex Watson, Dominic Goodall, and S. L. P. Sarma (though I exclude a problematic verse that does not appear, as they note, in the old manuscript):

> A Buddhist possessed of knowledge and conduct reaches the *tattva* of *buddhi*. Devotees of the Jina [stand] in [the *tattva*] consisting in *tamas*. The *brahma*-knowers [stand] in the *puruṣa*-level, and the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, having conquered their sense-faculties, reach [the *tattva* of] *kāla*. Those who profess the Somasiddhānta [attain the *tattva* of] Vaidyeśvara. Being liberated falsely, none attain the perfect level of Śiva.[43]

There are a handful of differences between this quotation and the one found in Rāmakaṇṭha's citation. The names of the levels are somewhat different, the groups involved are not totally consistent, and the goals attainable through their teachings differ in certain ways. But the basic concep-

[42] *Sarvajñānottara*, NAK MS 1-1692, NGMPP A 43/12, f. 37r1-2 (following Sanderson 2009's numbering) exposure 35, top folio = N; IFP T.334, p. 96, ll. 7-10 = P; following N: *evaṃ dīkṣā tvayā proktā mṛtānām api *śaṅkara* (corr. [P] : *śaṃkaraḥ* : N) | *tathaivācārahīnānāṃ anteṣṭhiḥ pāpaśodhanī* || *naiṣṭhikānāṃ samākhyāhi vratacaryojjhitātmanāṃ* | *jñānacaryānvitasyāpi *kā* (em. : *ko* : Cod.) *vā kasya gatir bhavet*. Variant readings from the IFP transcription are only noted when used to support corrections or emendations. Some difficulties I encountered in reading this passage were resolved with the help of Shaman Hatley. Professor Hatley also pointed out that *ācāra* may have read *ācāru* prior to a correction in the manuscript.

[43] Watson, Goodall, and Sarma 2013: 279 n. 235: *jñānacaryānvito bauddho buddhitattvam avāpnuyāt* | *tāmase jinabhaktās tu pauruṣe brahmavedinaḥ* || *kevalārthavidaḥ kālaṃ prāpnuvanti jitendriyāḥ* | *vaidyeśvaraṃ nāma tattvaṃ somasiddhāntavādinaḥ* || *nāpnuvanti mṛṣāmuktāḥ śaivaṃ padam anāmayam.* I follow the translation provided by Watson et al. with small modifications, though I have excluded the half-verse that appears before *nāpnuvanti* and reads: *pāśupatās tu māyāyāṃ vidyāyāṃ ca mahāvrataḥ*. It does not appear, as Watson et al. note, in the old manuscript. For the identification of *kevalārthavidaḥ* as a reference to the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, see Sanderson 2012, Handout 3: 9. See also NAK MS 1-1692, NGMPP A 43/12, f. 37r1-2 (following folio numbers as cited in Sanderson 2009: 301 n. 715), exposure 35, top folio = N; and IFP T.334, p. 96, ll. 11-15 = P. The following section appears relevant, so I attempt to transcribe it here. Note again that my understanding is doubtful: **ye* (om. N) *bhavanty ajitātmānaḥ teṣāṃ yuktis tu dīkṣayā* || *na śaive* (conj. : *na caiva* : Cod.) *tāni paṭhyante muktisthānāni ṣaṇmukha* (corr. : *ṣaṇmukhaḥ* : N) *muktānām api puṃsānāṃ śaive śodhyāni yatnataḥ* | *muktisthānaṃ bhaved ekaṃ vimalaṃ sarvatomukham* | *acalaṃ vyāpakaṃ śāntaṃ *liṅgāśramavivarjitaṃ* (corr. : *-vivarjitāṃ* : Cod.).

tual structure is entirely the same, and we may therefore presume that the underlying thinking was a common part of the Śaiva milieu even if the specifics were somewhat fluid. This conclusion is bolstered by the frequency with which similar passages appear in other texts; Sanderson has already compiled a list of relevant instances.[44]

For example, the eleventh chapter of the *Svacchandatantra* includes a brief account of the *tattvas* and worlds (*bhuvanādhvan*) reachable through adherence to various soteriological systems.[45] Here the Buddhists are said to reach the level of *buddhi*; the Jains reach the *guṇas*; the Vedavādins (presumably some form of Vedānta) make it to *prakṛti*; the Sāṃkhyas arrive at the level of *puruṣa*; the adherents of the Yogaśāstra reach the twenty-sixth level (seemingly Īśvara, i.e., the permanently liberated soul taught in the Yoga system); the followers of the Pāśupata observance make it to the level of Īśvara.[46] Two other groups of Pāśupatas, the Mausulas and Kārukas, are then said to reach the worlds presided over by Kṣemeśa and Brahmasvāmin, both of which are contained within the level of *māyā*. The Vaimalas arrive at the world of Tejīśa, and the Pramāṇa scriptures of the Lākulas allow their adherents to reach Dhruva. But the Vaimalas and Lākulas are relegated to the level of Īśvara if they follow the ritual activities enjoined in the *Pañcārthasūtra*, such as muttering *mantras* and bathing in ashes.[47] Only Śaivas, which Kṣemarāja takes to mean those people who follow the group of Śaiva scriptures traditionally divided into six streams (i.e., what scholars often call the

[44]Sanderson 2009: 301 n. 715 lists the following: *Svacchandatantra* 11.69-74; *Sarvajñānottara* f. 37r1-3 and IFP 334 p. 96; the scriptural citation given in the *Nareśvaraparīkṣāprakāśa*; *Somaśambhupaddhati* 3.553, vv. 7-8; *Siddhāntasamuccaya*, pp. 73-87; *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* on 8; and *Manthānabhairava* quoted in Sanderson 2009: 47-48 n. 13. See also Torella 1999: 556 and especially note 6.

[45]*Svacchandatantra* 11, vol. 6, p. 49-55. For an overview of Chapter 11, see Arraj 1986, vol. 2: 298-333. Note that the *bhuvanādhvan* serve as another type of cosmographical level frequently mentioned in Śaiva contexts and sometimes correlated with the *tattvas*. The *Svacchandatantra* gives an extensive account of these worlds in its tenth chapter.

[46]See *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 11.70, vol. 6, p. 51, which explains that the twenty-sixth level correlates with God as taught in the Yogasūtra. For a translation a translation of vv. 71-74, see Sanderson 2006a: 169.

[47]See *Svacchandatantra* 11.74ab, vol. 6, p. 54: *japabhasmakriyāniṣṭhās te vrajanty aiśvaraṃ padam*. Note that this verse does not appear at NAK 1-224, NGMPP B28/18, f. 140r, l. 4. Verses 11.73-74ab are translated in Bakker 2019b: 288 n. 20.

Mantramārga together with the Kaulas), reach the level that transcends all worlds.[48]

There is, as Alex Watson points out, an underlying logic to this framework, which ostensibly correlates the highest attainment of a particular system with the highest ontological- or world-level accepted within that system.[49] For example, knowledge of *puruṣa* is taken to be liberation in the Sāṃkhya system; its adherents may therefore reach only the level of *puruṣa* because nothing further is known to them (although note the discrepancy with the *Sarvajñānottara*, which assigns this level to the Vedāntins). Similarly, the *Svacchandatantra* states that Lākulas can reach Dhruva. As Sanderson has shown, this group sought liberation through knowledge of all world-levels up to Dhruva, which serves as the pinnacle of their cosmography.[50]

Not all soteriological systems accept a cosmography based on either *tattvas* or *bhuvanādhvans*, which presumably made the determination of their highest possible attainment somewhat less straightforward. The underlying logic for associating these groups with particular cosmographical levels often appears somewhat ad hoc. Watson points out that the Buddhists are said to reach the level of *buddhi* because they hold that there is no self and accept only a sequence of momentary cognitions in its place (though perhaps phonetic similarities play a role here).[51] Why the Jains are regularly assigned to the *guṇas* is less obvious. Trilocanaśiva, a Śaiva thinker from South India, explains that they hold reality to be multifaceted (*anekāntavāda-*).[52] They therefore mistakenly take the three *guṇas*, which are in a state of constant flux, to be the self, and, as a consequence, their teachings

[48] *Svacchandatantra* 11.69-74, vol. 6, pp. 49-54. Sanderson 2006a: 169 quotes and translates verses 11.71-73. See also NAK 1-224, NGMPP B28/18, f. 140r, ll. 1-4, exposure 321. For the interpretation of Śaiva, see the introductory commentary offered in the *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 11.74, vol. 6, p. 55, ll. 15-16: *ye tu ṣaṭsrotobhedabhinnaṃ śaivaśāstram āsthitāḥ teṣāṃ*.

[49] Watson 2006: 78-79, though the discussion here pertains to an analogous framework set out in a different text.

[50] See *Niśvāsamukha* 4.96 in Kafle 2015: 188: *tejīśam pañcamañ khyātaṃ dhruvaṃ ṣaṣṭham prakīrttitam | avīcyādi dhruvāntañ ca etaj jñātvā vimucyate*. This correspondence is noted by Sanderson 2006a: 169.

[51] Watson 2006: 78-79 specifically notes that cognitions are considered "a function of the *buddhi*."

[52] For some problems with the identification of Trilocanaśiva, see Goodall 2000, and especially pp. 213-214.

lead only so far within the larger cosmography.[53]

What is important here is not the exact position assigned to the Jains or any other group. It is the notion that different textual systems can present teachings that are both "wrong" in the sense that they fail to comprehend the absolute reality available through Śaiva scripture but "right" in the sense that they are still capable of leading their adherents to a certain degree of spiritual success. This way of thinking constitutes a sort of hierarchized pluralism that allows Śaiva thinkers to attack, sometimes vehemently, the views of their opponents while simultaneously acknowledging that their scriptures and practices are authoritative within their own self-limiting spheres.[54]

The relativistic nature of this form of scriptural pluralism raises the question of how exactly Śaiva thinkers accounted for their hierarchical approach to truth. Did they ever theorize the issue beyond simply stating that various bodies of teaching remain uncontradicted in their own spheres?[55] One of the more philosophically developed considerations of this framework is found in a fragment of the *Sarvāgamaprāmāṇyopanyāsa* of Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha. This text is a sub-commentary on a work that was probably called the *Sarvāgamaprāmāṇya*, itself part of Sadyojyotis' partially extant commentary on an early Saiddhāntika scripture called the *Rauravasūtrasaṃgraha*.[56] The fragment is short, comprising only twenty-three verses, and it seems to be corrupted at points.[57]

The first ten and a half verses of the *Sarvāgamaprāmāṇyopanyāsa*, which have been translated

[53] *Siddhāntasamuccaya* A = IFP T.284, p. 146, ll. 10-13; B = IFP T.206, p. 78, ll. 15-19: *ārhatās tu anekāntavādam abhyupagamya calaṃ guṇavṛttaṃ iti pātañjaloktanyāyena guṇatattvam* (A: *-tatvam*) *eva tādṛgrūpam avyāpakaśarīraparimita*[*ṃ*] (B: *avyāpakam avyāpakaśarīra-*) *pariṇāminaṃ* (A: *pariṇaminañ*) *cātmānaṃ nityaṃ manyamānāḥ* † *tasyānādimohādisaṃkṣayād iti* † *tatas te guṇasiddhāḥ* (A: *-siddhaḥ*) *kathyante*.

[54] See, for example, the *Paramokṣanirāsakārikā* of Sadyojyotis and its commentary, which is edited and translated in Watson, Goodall, and Sarma 2013. This text both refutes all but the Saiddhāntika notion of liberation while acknowledging that other systems produce more limited results.

[55] For an example of this view, see Sadyojyotis' *Mokṣakārikā* 145cd: *na ca svagocare tāsāṃ bādhate tatpramāṇatām*.

[56] The structure of Sadyojyotis' *Rauravavṛtti* and the place of the *Sarvāgamaprāmāṇya* within it are discussed in Watson, Goodall, and Sarma 2013: 68-70.

[57] The entire fragment is preserved in the *Siddhāntasamuccaya* of Trilocanaśiva. See IFP T.284 and IFP T.206. Portions of the fragment are quoted in Umāpati's *Pauṣkarabhāṣya* and Śivāgrayogin's *Śivāgrabhāṣya*; the relevant portions of these two texts have been collated and translated in Goodall 1998: xxii-xxv.

and discussed by Dominic Goodall, give an expansive list of soteriological systems and the various cosmographical levels that their adherents may ultimately reach; the details differ at points from the corresponding passages found in the *Sarvajñānottara* and *Svacchandatantra*. An explicit division is made between the "pure" (*śuddha-*) types of liberation (*muktibheda-*) and those available from the "viewpoints of bound souls" (*paśudṛś*). The former category is composed of three groups: people who believe that liberation is identity with *śakti*; people who believe that it is to be god-like yet under God's command; and people who believe it to be omniscienience without omnipotence. These views are all taken from various Śaiva systems, broadly defined. The bound souls include the Vedāntins, Pāñcarātrikas, Sāṃkhyas, Jains, Buddhists as well as a number of other groups that take differing views on the nature of liberation.

The remaining part of the *Sarvāgamaprāmāṇyopanyāsa* deals with more theoretical issues.[58] It begins with a discussion of the relationship between the goals actually asserted within the various systems and the levels to which they have been assigned. This section is poorly transmitted, and I cannot provide a satisfactory analysis of all its components. The general idea seems to be that the adherents of various soteriological systems are mentally absorbed in a particular *tattva* and are therefore limited by it in terms of their final attainment. The text then proceeds to set out a theory of error. Rāmakaṇṭha gives the example of people who see a sun-stone (a mythical crystal that produces heat when exposed to the sun) and mistakenly believe it to be a piece of glass that is capable of producing fire. What difference does it make that they have wrongly conceived of the stone? Do they not still achieve their aim insofar as it produces fire?[59] A real error, per contra,

[58]IFP T.206, p. 84, l. 8 to p. 85, l. 14 and IFP T.284, p. 152, ll. 1-18. Note that the scanned version of IFP T.284 available through Muktabodha's online archive is missing page 151, which contains a relevant portion of this text. A duplicate scan of page 153 stands in its place. My readings follow the draft version of this portion of the *Siddhāntasamuccaya* provided by Dominic Goodall in a personal communication on December 15, 2021.

[59]One might expect the illustration to involve people mistaking a piece of glass for a sun-stone, but, in Goodall's draft edition, the text reads: *kāco 'gni hetur iti yaiḥ sūryakāntaḥ pratīyate | kācabhrāntyāpi kiṃ tatra te bhrāntāḥ*

is defined by the incapability of producing an intended result. We may therefore understand all of the various soteriological systems as possessing a pragmatic sort of validity that applies to their particular subject matter but is ultimately limited in its ability to confer only limited results.[60]

What can this hierarchical framework tell us about the Śaiva conceptualization of scripture in traditional India? Scholars have interpreted it in different ways. Drawing on a similar passage from the so-called *Somaśambhupaddhati*, Heinrich von Stietencron casts the Śaiva's scriptural hierarchy as indicating an exclusivist tendency. He argues against the notion that something like Hinduism existed, in this case *avant la lettre*, during this period, and states that "there can be no question of an equality of faiths."[61] He recognizes that this mode of thinking postulates a relative value for various "religions" (as he calls them), but he sees this relativity as evidence of fragmentation rather than some sort of qualified unity.[62] Alexis Sanderson takes a somewhat different tack, describing this framework as "an inclusivist model of revelation," though, as Bisschop notes in a different context, Sanderson does not invest the term "inclusivism" with the same theoretical implications as Paul Hacker.[63] Sanderson embeds this point in a larger argument about the relationship between Mantramārgic Śaivism and Brahmanism, which he sees as forming complementary components of a single complex of Śaiva religious practice.[64]

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paramārthataḥ.

[60]Note here the family resemblance with the Buddhist notion of *arthakriyā*.

[61]v. Stietencron 1995: 59-66; the quoted material is from p. 63.

[62]See also v. Stietencron 1995: 70-71: "The above discussion has shown that there existed an acute awareness of a plurality of competing Hindu religions in pre-Muslim India. Each of these claimed to know the shortest path leading to liberation. The major theistic religions had developed a tendency to absorb other cults. They did so both by superimposing a part of their ritual structure on already existing rituals … and by integrating other religious groups within the framework of their metaphysical world construction by means of a sophisticated technique of theological subordination."

[63]Sanderson 2009: 301. See also Bisschop 2019: 512, which notes that, in a different article, Sanderson uses the term inclusivism "in a neutral manner, without the ideological connotations of Hacker's use of the term."

[64]As Sanderson 2009: 302 puts it: "The religion of the Śaivas, then, was not Śaivism alone but rather Śaivism and Brahmanism, a fact borne out not only by their literature but also by biographical data and the epigraphic record of the activities of Śaiva kings."

Sanderson is surely correct to underscore the largely overlapping worlds of Śaiva and Vaidika religious practice and especially the constitutive part played by the socio-cultural and ritual norms of the latter in the construction of the former. He elsewhere notes that "the orthoprax majority" accepted the Pañcarātra and Śaiva Siddhānta as possessing valid scriptural corpora and therefore considered them to be "acceptable co-religionists."[65] Here again Sanderson provides an insightful account of the religious world of traditional India, and I will discuss the sources from which he draws his conclusion in more detail below. Yet the hierarchical framework of soteriologies found in sources like the *Sarvajñānottara* and *Sarvāgamaprāmāṇyopanyāsa* presents a somewhat more complex theoretical picture because it makes room for the Buddhists and Jains, at least in a qualified sense.

It is also important to ask how far this "inclusivist hierarchy" was really meant to extend. All the scriptural and theoretical discussions mentioned so far deal exclusively with the problem of liberation and tell us nothing explicit about the broader world of religious practice. Yet there is evidence to suggest that the same sort of thinking was in fact applied more expansively. As Sanderson has already pointed out, the *Sarvajñānottara* separately prescribes an order of precedence that is to be followed when injunctive statements from different scriptural corpora (here conceptualized in accordance with their putative authors) come into contradiction with one another. The statement of an ordinary person is superseded by that of a seer; that of a seer is superseded by that of a god; that of a god by that of Brahmā; that of Brahmā by that of Viṣnu; and that of Viṣnu by that of Śiva.[66] The *Sarvajñānottara* presents this hierarchy in terms of the application of increasingly specialized rules (*uttarottaravaiśiṣṭya-*), which accords, again as Sanderson notes, with the organization of rules in

[65] Sanderson 2015b: 198.

[66] *Sarvajñānottara*, edited in Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 14: *na puruṣair ārṣaṃ vākyaṃ daivikam ṛṣibhis tathā* | *na devair brahmaṇo vākyaṃ vaiṣṇavaṃ padmajanmanā* || *na śaivaṃ viṣṇunā vākyaṃ bādhyate tu kadā cana*. Sanderson's translation may be found on p. 18 of the same handout.

the context of traditional grammar, where we find general rules (*utsarga-*) and their exceptions (*apavāda-*).[67]

Although I doubt whether this order of precedence was ever seriously applied in some sort of hermeneutical context, it is presumably symptomatic of an important Śaiva orientation towards scriptural authority. The prescriptions of various types of scriptures, which are here conceptualized so generally as to point to the broader systems of practice associated with different scriptural corpora, were all authoritative in a certain sense. In other words, even if general rules are sometimes overridden in certain contexts, they are still an authority within their own sphere. It should be noted that this conceptual framework is theorized in the broadest possible terms, though I have no doubt that Sanderson is right in noting that the practical concern here is the relationship between specifically Śaiva practices and those incumbent upon all members of the broader Vaidika religious sphere. This more limited focus comes out clearly in the following verses of the *Sarvajñānottara*, which Sanderson translates as follows:

> [The initiated Śaiva] should not call into question the established practices of his caste and brahmanical discipline, the mundane penances [imposed for their neglect], [the rules restricting his] connections (*saṃbandhāḥ*), or any duties specific to his region (*deśadharmāḥ*). [Moreover,] O Skanda, it is only after he has gone through all the brahmanical rites from that of conception to that of marriage that he may [take initiation and then] devote himself exclusively to the teachings of Śiva. [And even after his initiation] he should [continue to] observe his mundane religious duties (*lokadharmāḥ*), though not, [as we have seen, as duties] in the full sense (*na mukhyavṛttaye*).[68]

The *Sarvajñānottara* here draws our attention to an important practical issue: initiatory Śaivism assumes the socio-religious system associated with the Veda to be operative in its own sphere and sees itself as a sort of superstructure that sits on top of that sphere. This orientation brings us back to the notion of general and specialized forms of religious practice, which the tradition thematizes

[67] For a discussion of *utsarga* and *apavāda*, see Cardona 1997: 401.
[68] Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 18. Here I quote his translation verbatim.

in terms of the textual injunctions understood to underpin them. A particularly detailed account is given in Jayaratha's (13th c. CE) commentary on Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*. The relevant passage concerns the distinction between pure and impure things, which Abhinavagupta ultimately rejects as a conceptual construction. Yet, as Jayaratha explains, God laid down general Vedic rules about purity for everyone (*sarvapuruṣaviṣayatayā*), while the specific injunctions denying the distinction between purity and impurity found in certain Śaiva scriptures are meant only for a specific audience (*viśiṣṭaviṣayatayā*) of initiates.[69]

Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha's theorization of scripture is a matter of some interest, but I do not wish to consider it in detail here; it is informed by a complex general theory of consciousness that would take us too far afield.[70] I want only to emphasize the notion that certain types of scripture apply to specific types of people. This way of thinking resolves the tension between the commitment to a particular set of scriptures as offering the highest form of knowledge (to the exclusion of others) and the acceptance of multiple corpora of unrelated scriptures as operating with some degree of authority. I also want to consider the purpose Abhinavagupta, Jayaratha, and others ascribe to the Vaidika scriptural corpus in light of its hierarchically subordinated position. One reason given for its existence, as noted, is that the Śaiva scriptures do not attempt to account for a great deal of socio-cultural ritual associated with the Vaidika textual corpora. Jayaratha quotes a verse from the *Sarvajñānottara* just discussed above, which I repeat here, again in Sanderson's translation, for emphasis: "It is only after he has gone through all the brahmanical rites from that of conception to that of marriage that he may [take initiation and then] devote himself exclusively to the teachings

[69]*Tantrālokaviveka* on 4.230ab, vol. 3, p. 253: *adhikāribhedena tathopadeśāt | bhavatā hi śuddhyādi sāmānyena sarvapuruṣaviṣayatayā coditaṃ viśiṣṭaviṣayatayā tv idam iti na kaścid anayor aprāmāṇyaparyavasāyī doṣaḥ | tad ubhayor api codanayor bhinnaviṣayatvenāvasthiteḥ sattvam aviśiṣṭam eveti siddham.*

[70]For a comprehensive account, see Ratié 2013. See also Lawrence 2003.

of Śiva."[71]

The *Sarvajñānottara*, together with the exegetes who interpret it, make clear that exclusive devotion to Śaiva scriptures does not actually entail an eschewal of the Vaidika socio-cultural program of rituals and norms (at least insofar as householders are concerned); rather, it requires, at least in theory, a change in one's mental disposition towards the performance of those rituals, which are no longer to be understood as merit-producing activities.[72] They are to be maintained simply for the sake of the socio-cultural order ([*loka*]*sthiti*-).[73] For non-dualists like Abhinavagupta, the need to protect mundane society through the provision of general scriptures arises from the dangers monism presents to the unenlightened, who, motivated by greed and passion, would undoubtedly destroy day-to-day intercourse.[74] And we find a similar notion in Saiddhāntika scriptural sources, albeit without any sort of reasoning rooted in the potential threat posed by Śaiva prescriptions to the broader social order.[75]

Jayaratha makes one final point that is worth considering in this context. He explains that God taught various conflicting scriptural systems for "people with distinct entitlements."[76] He makes this point in the course of explaining when it is appropriate to use different categories of scripture in supplementing procedural information. Our principal interest, however, is in the broader

[71] *Tantrālokaviveka* on 4.251ab, vol. 3, p, 278, ll. 1-2: *garbhādhānād itaḥ kṛtvā yāvad udvāham eva ca | tāvat tu vaidikaṃ karma paścāc chaive hy ananyabhāk*. See above.

[72] See also Sanderson 2015b: 175-176.

[73] See Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 16-17 for a discussion of these issues and especially n. 29 for the meaning of *sthiti* in this context. See also *Tantrālokaviveka* on 4.251ab, vol. 3, p. 277: *niṣṭhāśūnyatayā tu gauṇyā vṛttyā lokasaṃrakṣaṇārthaṃ lokadharmān ācarato na kaścid doṣaḥ*. The verse and part of the comment are translated by Sanderson.

[74] *Tantrāloka* 4.244ab, vol. 3, p. 269: *lokasaṃrakṣaṇārthaṃ tu tat tattvaṃ taiḥ pragopitam*. Jayaratha explains on p. 270, ll. 1-3: *evam upadiṣṭe hi alabdhasaṃvidaikātmyo 'pi loko lobhalaulyābhyāṃ yat tat kurvāṇo lokayātrām ucchindyāt*. See Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 17 n. 29 for a translation of the half-verse cited above.

[75] See Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 21 for the notion of "mundane convention" (*saṃvṛti*-) in the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* and elsewhere.

[76] *Tantrālokaviveka* on 4.251cd, vol. 3, p. 279, ll. 1-3: *bhagavatā hi pṛthagadhikāribhedena parasparavilakṣaṇāni śāstrāṇy upadiṣṭāni*.

implications that follow from his notion of entitlement, which the Śaivas adopt from Mīmāṃsā. In its original context, the idea of entitlement applies to different aspects of Vedic ritual, whereas Jayaratha conceives of it in terms of different scriptural systems. Although he does not explain further, this mode of thinking was accepted well beyond the limited world of initiatory Śaivism and provided an expansive theoretical framework for conceptualizing the pluralism of traditional India's scriptural landscape.

5.4 Theoretical Pragmatism

The pluralistic frameworks theorized by Śaiva intellectuals undoubtedly reflect an important cultural orientation towards scriptural authority that developed as theistic communities rose to increasing prominence from the fifth or sixth century onwards. It should however be noted that, beyond scriptural commentators like Sadyojyotis, most of the participants in the dominant current of epistemological discourse, both Vaidika and Bauddha, largely ignored or minimized their discussion of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava scriptures.[77] Those on the Vaidika side sought only to establish the Veda as a valid instance of verbal testimony, which, at least in the case of Mīmāṃsā, involved an extensive consideration of the works supposed to be derived from unavailable parts of the Vedic corpus. Arguments in favor of the Veda's authority usually entailed a concomitant consideration of Buddhist scriptures, which were rejected as invalid. The Buddhists, for their part, were at great pains to show that their own scriptures were authoritative (or at least were the most rational choice in the absence of epistemological certainty) and to prove that the Veda's was not authoritative. They

[77] As we have seen, Kumārila is principally interested in establishing the Veda as authoritative, showing that the *smṛti* texts are derived from it, and proving Buddhist scriptures to be untrustworthy. His discussion of theistic systems is limited to a short comment, and the Jains receive somewhat limited attention. The Buddhist are similar in directing almost all of their sustained attention towards the Veda, though Dharmakīrti, for example, betrays his knowledge of Śaiva scripture from time to time. See Sanderson 2001: 10-13, esp. n. 7 and 10.

too show little sustained interest in any other body of scriptural material.

One significant outlier to this broader tendency is Bhaṭṭa Jayanta, a Brahmin who served as a government minister under the Kashmiri King Śaṅkaravarman (r. 883-902 CE). He was, according to his son Abhinanda, an expert in all disciplines of systematic knowledge (*sarvaśāstrārthavādin-*) as well as an accomplished poet.[78] Csaba Dezső tells us that "Jayanta seems to have written three works on Nyāya, of which only two are extant."[79] The *Nyāyamañjarī* ("A Cluster of Blossoms [Picked from the] Nyāya[-Tree]"), undoubtedly his magnum opus, is a discursive commentary on selected portions of the *Nyāyasūtra*. And the *Nyāyakalikā* ("A Bud from the Nyāya[-Tree]") is an introductory work focused on the sixteen fundamental categories (*padārtha-*) enumerated in the Nyāya system.[80]

Jayanta also composed a dramatic work called the *Āgamaḍambara* ("Pomp and Scripture").[81] Its hero is a Mīmāṃsaka named Saṅkarṣaṇa, who, having just graduated from his studies, sets out, as Dezső translates, to "humiliate the enemies of the Veda."[82] The play follows his interactions with a variety of religious communities, including Buddhists, Jains, Śaivas, Vaiṣṇavas, Carvākas ("Materialists"), and Vedic priests. The *Āgamaḍambara* climaxes with a Brahmanical assembly called to assess the Pāñcarātrika scriptures, during which a Naiyāyika named Bhaṭṭa Sāhaṭa delivers a lengthy speech upholding the validity of all established scriptural corpora.[83] Sāhaṭa's proclamation corresponds with a similar discussion that appears in the *Nyāyamañjarī* at the conclusion of

[78]See Dezső 2004: v-vi.

[79]Dezső 2004: vi.

[80]Dezső 2004: v-vi notes that a fragment of another work by Jayanta called the *Pallava* is mentioned in the *Syādvādaratnākara* of Vādidevasūri, and he suggests that the full name may have been *Nyāyapallava*.

[81]Dezső 2004 and 2005 translates the title of this text as *Much Ado About Scripture*.

[82]*Āgamaḍambara*, Act 1, p. 11, ll. 3-10: *svādhyāyaḥ paṭhito yathāvidhi parāmṛṣṭāni cāṅgāni ṣaṇ mīmāṃsāpi nirūpiteti vihitaṃ karma dvijanmocitam | nityādhūtakutarkadhūsaragirāṃ yāvat tu vedadviṣāṃ nyakkāro na kṛtaḥ kṛtārtha iva me tāvan na vidyāśramaḥ*. This passage is quoted and translated in Dezső 2004: xiv.

[83]See *Āgamaḍambara*, Act 4.

its examination of different approaches to the problem of scriptural authority.

The *Nyāyamañjarī*'s consideration of scriptural pluralism forms a small part of a much broader consideration of verbal testimony. With respect to this larger problem, Jayanta's chief concern, unlike many of the Naiyāyikas who preceded him, is the validity of the Veda, the preeminent form of verbal testimony.[84] In attempting to establish that the Veda must have an author, he engages far more deeply with Mīmāṃsā arguments than Vātsyāyana Pakṣilasvāmin or Uddyotakāra, the most celebrated of the the *Nyāyasūtra*'s earlier commentators. Jayanta's basic position may nevertheless be reduced to a single inference: "Vedic compositions have an author because they are compositions, just like everyday compositions."[85] The general contours of this argument were likely first formulated by Buddhists who sought to disprove the validity of the Veda, but Jayanta adapts it to his own purposes: demonstrating that God is its author.[86]

Jayanta's addresses God's authorship of the Veda in a largely desultory fashion, punctuating his discussion with a number of related topics, including an extended proof of the existence of God and a similarly extended effort to disprove the Mīmāṃsā postulate of the eternality of language. He also engages directly with several of Kumārila's attempts to establish the Veda as beginningless and authorless. Two of these are dispatched quickly. Jayanta quotes the following verse from Kumārila's *Ślokavārttika*: "All instances of Vedic recitation presuppose that the teacher himself learnt the Veda [from his own teacher] because [that instance of recitation] is [also] denoted by the term 'recitation,' just like recitation today."[87] Jayanta then poses a long-established hypothetical objection, noting

[84]See Kataoka 2003, especially p. 149.

[85]This argument is repeated a number of times throughout the *Nyāyamañjarī*'s fourth chapter. See, for example, *Nyāyamañjarī* vol 1, p. 573, ll. 6-7: *tathā ca vaidikyo racanāḥ kartṛpūrvikāḥ racanātvāt laukikaracanāvat*.

[86]The notion that God was the author of the Veda became the standard Nyāya position and is found in the works of Vācaspati Miśra and Bhāsarvajña.

[87]*Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 574, ll. 13-14: *vedasyādhyayanaṃ sarvaṃ gurvadhyayanapūrvakam | vedādhyayanavācyatvād adhunādhyayanaṃ yathā*. See *Ślokavārttika Vākyādhikaraṇa* 366, p. 668.

that the same argument could be made about the *Mahābhārata*, and yet no Mīmāṃsaka accepts it to be authorless.[88] (Note that Kumārila raises the same issue in his *Ślokavārttika* as does Dharmakīrti in his auto-commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika*.)[89]

Jayanta's hypothetical opponent argues that the two cases are not equivalent. Everyone agrees that Vyāsa composed the *Mahābhārata*, whereas, in the case of the Veda, no one can remember any author at all. Some people may think that the creator god Prajāpati composed it, but they are mistaken, and their faulty impression is attributable to a misunderstanding of certain passages in the Veda that must not be taken literally.[90] (Note that here again Jayanta's opponent is simply restating positions set out by Kumārila in his *Ślokavārttika*.)[91] But Jayanta points out that this mode of argumentation is equally applicable to the *Mahābhārata* (i.e., we might just as easily postulate that any reference to Vyāsa's composition is meant figuratively) and therefore cannot be taken to prove anything unique about the Vedic corpus.[92]

The *Nyāyamañjarī* eventually goes on to argue that no one has ever encountered a "naturally existent composition of words" (*padānāṃ racanā naisargikī*). Were we to suppose that such a thing existed, what would stop us from postulating that blankets contain naturally existent collections of thread?[93] This argument is, in a certain sense, the opposite of Kumārila's claim that the exceptional character of the Veda allows us to infer that it does not have an author (Chapter 4, pp. 237-238). Rather than emphasizing what differentiates the Veda from other texts, Jayanta draws our attention to a fundamental similarity that all texts, including the Veda, share. It should therefore come as

[88] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 575, ll. 1-3.
[89] *Ślokavārttika Vākyādhikaraṇa* 367ab, p. 668 and *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* on 243, p. 124, ll. 27-28.
[90] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 575, ll. 5-10.
[91] *Ślokavārttika Vākyādhikaraṇa* 367cd-368ab, p. 668: *vede 'pi tatsmṛtir yā tu sārthavādanibandhanā*.
[92] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 575, ll. 12-17.
[93] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 580, ll. 1-2: *yadi svābhāvikī vede padānāṃ racanā bhavet | paṭe hi hanta tantūnāṃ kathaṃ naisargikī na sā*. See also Dharmakīrti's related arguments at *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* on 291, p. 155, ll. 9-19; *Pramāṇavārttika* 301, p. 160; and esp. 306-307, p. 161.

no surprise that the opponent counters with a modified version of Kumārila's arguments about the Veda's linguistically unique character: we perceive that the Veda is different from other types of texts — Kālidāsa's poems, for example — for several reasons. It uses, first of all, words, affixes, and adpositions in ways that are totally unique. Second, it contains a great deal of expository material subordinated to injunctive phrases. And third, its various parts are interdependent.[94]

Jayanta does not question the extraordinary nature of the Vedic corpus. He explains instead that Mīmāṃsā draws the wrong conclusion from it. All these characteristics should not lead us to suppose that the Veda has no author; rather, we should conclude that the Veda has an extraordinary author (here echoing a point made earlier by Sadyojyotis). Jayanta explains that all exceptional works are different from one another and from ordinary instances of language. We find in the works of Bāṇa, a seventh-century author best known for two famous prose-poems, diverse and unusual usages. Yet we should not thereby infer that his poetry really has no author.[95] Jayanta then addresses the Mīmāṃsā claim that we cannot remember an author of the Veda and hence may infer that it has no author. The details of this argument need not concern us here. What matters is that Jayanta eventually provides us with a brief summary of why God must be both the creator of the world and the author of the Veda. Only an omniscient being who knows the connection between actions and their results could create the world; for the world serves as the arena in which living creatures perform actions and suffer their consequences. That same being must also be the creator of the Veda because it makes known those connections.[96] A partial restatement of the same reasoning is given somewhat later:

[94] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 580, l. 9 to p. 581, l. 6.

[95] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 581, l. 15 to p. 582, l. 6.

[96] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 587, ll. 10-15: *ucyate tarhi sarvajñaḥ sraṣṭuṃ prabhavatīdṛśam* | *vicitraṃ prāṇibhṛtkarmaphalabogāśrayaṃ jagat* || *tatkarmaphalasambandhavidā tadupadeśinaḥ* | *tenaiva vedā racitā iti nānyasya kalpanā* || *ekenaiva ca siddhe 'rthe dvitīyaṃ kalpayema kim* | *anekakalpanābījaṃ na hi kiñcana vidyate*.

> The creator of the worlds knows the variety of ways in which diverse actions ripen and the circumstances of all beings, and he alone, the soul of the universe, composed the linguistic compositions that make up the Vedic corpus, which are comprised of his instruction — this much is proved. People place their confidence in Vedic statements only after betaking themselves to the blessed and beginningless lord, who is the sole authority [in matters of *dharma*]. For, as I have already explained, no sensible person would come to trust [Vedic statements] because of their [supposedly] uncreated character.[97]

Jayanta emphasizes here and elsewhere that only God, who created the world, could have composed the Veda (again echoing Sadyojyotis). His argument is perhaps somewhat circular, but the basic structure is clear enough. The world serves as the arena in which the results of actions are enjoyed by their performers; the Veda teaches us about the relationship between actions and their results; hence only someone with intimate knowledge of the world could have composed the Veda, and vice versa.[98] It should be noted, however, that Jayanta does not seem to hold that God created the connections between actions and their results (i.e., *dharma*, at least for Jayanta) by some sort of fiat; rather, he thinks that God perceived those connections and created a world in which they could be realized.[99] He elsewhere appears to restrict the initial perception of *dharma* to God alone, allowing for yogins to perceive it directly only after they first learn about it from a scriptural source, though this point may be little more than a pragmatic concession to a hypothetical opponent.[100]

It is not enough for Jayanta to demonstrate that God composed the Veda, he must also show

[97] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 590, ll. 8-15: *kartā ya eva jagatām akhilātmavṛttikarmaprapañcaparipākavicitratājñaḥ | viśvātmanā tadupadeśaparāḥ praṇītāḥ tenaiva vedaracanā iti yuktam etat || āptaṃ tam eva bhagavantam anādim īśam āśritya viśvasiti vedavacassu lokaḥ | teṣām akartṛkatayā na hi kaścid evaṃ visrambham eti matimān iti varṇitaṃ prāk*. Note that I am not confident about my rendering of *akhilātmavṛtti-*.

[98] See also *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 603, ll. 20-21: *kartā sarvasya sarvajñaḥ puruṣo 'stīti sādhitam | kāryeṇānuguṇaṃ kalpyaṃ nimittam iti ca sthitam*.

[99] See, for example, *Nyāyamañjarī* vol 1, p. 633, ll. 4-6: *sādhyasādhanasambandhasya svargānihotrādigatasya yathā grāhakam īśvaraprapratyakṣam evam aṣṭakādigatasya tasya grāhakaṃ manvādi pratyakṣaṃ bhaviṣyatīti*. This passage has been critically edited in Kataoka 2004: 9-10. Note, however, that this position is not fully consistent with Jayanta's views on yogic perception. See the following footnote.

[100] *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 279, l. 7 to p. 280, l. 2: *nanu nādṛṣṭapūrve 'rthe kvacid bhavati bhāvanā | āgamāt tu paricchinne dharme bhāvanayā 'pi kim || codanaiva dharme pramāṇam iti sāvadhāraṇapratijñārthaḥ prathamam āgamād avagatadharmasvarūpeṣu satsv api yogiṣu na viplavata eveti | ucyate | yogiṣv asty evāyaṃ prakāraḥ | paścād api pravartamāne dharmagrāhiṇi pratyakṣe codanaivety avadhāraṇaṃ śithilībhavaty eva | api ceśvarajñānaṃ sāṃsiddhikam eva dharmaviṣayaṃ vedasya kāraṇabhūtaṃ vakṣyāmaḥ | tasminn api sati na codanaivety avadhāraṇārthasiddhiḥ*.

that God is trustworthy. He admits that we cannot perceive the epistemological faculties and moral character of God directly, but he argues that we may determine them through inference. His explanation, which is not as clear or developed as we might like, may be divided into two parts. First, the information contained in the Veda never runs contradictory to our everyday experience, and, even when a statement appears to do so, it should be understood as either a mantra or an expository passage with a non-literal meaning. Although Jayanta does not state it explicitly, he is making the argument that Vedic statements about perceptually accessible things can be shown to be true, and hence we may infer that its statements about perceptually inaccessible things are also true (recall that this is precisely the sort of argument rejected as epistemologically useless by Mīmāṃsā). Second, supposed defects like self-contradictory and repetitive statements are found in all instances of language and therefore tell us nothing specific about the reliability of the Veda's author.[101]

The *Nyāyamañjarī* then moves on to a technical discussion concerning one of the formal requirements for inferential arguments that need not concern us here.[102] Our chief focus is rather the following section, which is the subject of a recent study and translation by Elisa Freschi and Kei Kataoka.[103] Jayanta sets out a number of different and increasingly open positions with respect to scriptural authority, and it is unclear which represents his own. He begins by dividing the category of scripture into two. On the one hand, we have texts like the Purāṇas, epics, and Dharmaśāstras, and, on the other, those of the Śaivas, Pāśupatas, Pāñcarātrikas, Buddhists, and Jains.[104]

[101]The main points are summed up in this verse *Nyāyamañjarī* vol, 1, p. 604, ll. 1-4: *pratyakṣādivisaṃvādaḥ vede parihariṣyate* | *vyāghātapaunaruktyādidoṣāś ca vacanāntare* || *vidhyarthavādamātrāṇāṃ upayogaś ca vakṣyate* | *na mātrāmātram apy asti vede kiñcid apārthakam*.

[102]Jayanta needs to show that the property of "being taught by a trustworthy authority" is invariably concomitant with "being a valid source of knowledge." See, for example, *Nyāyamañjarī* vol. 1, p. 604, l. 20: *ataḥ yatrāptavādatvaṃ tatra prāmāṇyam iti vyāptir gṛhyate*. To do so, he draws a comparison between the Veda and the Āyurveda, thereby adopting the example used, albeit somewhat differently, in the *Nyāyasūtra*. Jayanta also considers the status of the Atharvaveda.

[103]Freschi and Kataoka 2012. See also Kataoka 2004 for a critical edition of this portion of the *Nyāyamañjarī*. In what follows, I give references both to the critical edition and the translation.

[104]*Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 1, ll. 8-9: *kāni punar āgamāntarāṇi cetasi vidhāyaivaṃ va-*

The first group represents the set of scriptural sources understood to have a close relationship with the Vedic corpus. The Dharmaśāstras, also called *smṛtis*, were, as noted, taken to be derived from the Veda and enjoyed, at least from the perspective of Mīmāṃsā, what may be called dependent scripturality (Chapter 4, p. 212). Jayanta first summarizes a set of Mīmāṃsaka positions, including various ways in which Dharmaśāstric statements might be based on Vedic ones, how to resolve the problems that arise when they contradict express Vedic injunctions, and the use of socio-cultural criteria to deny authority to "external *smṛtis*" (i.e., texts not associated with the Veda).[105] He then presents a different explanation of Dharmaśāstric authority: their authors enjoyed supernormal perception and could therefore see *dharma*, which they subsequently recorded in the texts that bear their names. This position is in line with the standard Nyāya epistemology and, at least in a certain sense, better reflects the self-authorizing narratives of the texts themselves. Jayanta explains that these figures gained their exceptional capacities "by God's grace."[106]

Allowing an independent scriptural status to the *smṛti* corpus entails a problem from the perspective of Jayanta's Mīmāṃsaka opponent. The putative dependence of Dharmaśāstric statements on Vedic ones was used to place these two categories into a hierarchical relationship with one another. From the perspective of early Mīmāṃsā, the unequal status of these two textual categories meant that, in cases of contradiction, a Vedic statement should be understood to overrule a Dharmaśāstric one. Jayanta points out that we may explain these types of contradictions as presenting different but equally valid options (*vikalpa*-). Contradictions may also arise because two statements have different spheres of application. In other words, they apply to people who enjoy

tsa pṛccasi | purāṇetihāsadharmaśāstrāṇi vā śaivapāśupatapañcarātrabauddhārhataprabhṛtīni vā. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 28.

[105] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 2-9. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 28-31.

[106] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 9-11. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 31-32.

different types of socio-religious qualifications for ritual performance.[107] Jayanta is well aware that Kumārila had already sought to minimize the possibility of contradiction between Vedic and Dharmaśāstric statements through precisely the same sort of argument.[108] Yet Jayanta is prepared, as we will see shortly, to apply its conclusions far more broadly.

Kumārila never embarks upon a sustained consideration of the Itihāsas and Purāṇas, though he seems to consider some of their narratives to preserve a record of the actions of "good people."[109] Jayanta takes a different if equally cursory approach, first dispatching with the problem from the Nyāya perspective. He states that these texts are authoritative because they were composed by trustworthy people. He then concedes that there is little use in obsessing (*abhiniveśa-*) over the epistemological details given the general agreement that these texts are authoritative, acknowledging (at least at this point in his argument) that we might just as well accept them to be derived from the Veda.[110]

Jayanta moves on to the traditional list of fourteen "disciplines" (*vidyāsthānāni*), which he divides into two categories. On the one hand are the Vedas, Purāṇas, and *smṛtis*, which "directly teach the means to attain the goals of human life."[111] On the other are the various auxiliary disciplines

[107] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 11-12. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 32-33. See also pp. 16-17, where Freschi and Kataoka provide an overview of the problem of *vikalpa*.

[108] It seems that Jayanta makes reference to Kumārila, or the traditions that followed him. See *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 12, ll. 1-2: *na ca śrutismṛtivirodhodāharaṇaṃ kiṃcid astīti svādhyāyābhiyuktāḥ*. Compare with *Tantravārttika* 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.193; A'.111: *tena naiva śrutismṛtyor virodho 'tīva dṛśyate | śrutyor eva hy asau dṛṣṭaḥ kvacid vā naiva vidyate*. This resonance is noted in Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 33 n. 63.

[109] For example, see the so-called Sadācāraprāmāṇyanirūpana in the *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7, which discusses how a number of figures from the *Mahābhārata* break normative rules of *dharma*, including Vyāsa, Bhīṣma, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Yudhiṣṭhira, Kṛṣṇa, and Arjuna; see Harikai 2009: A.203; A'.124 to A.216; A'.139. Note, however, that the discussion is technically about the actions taken by these people rather than the text in which the actions are ostensibly recorded. Elsewhere Kumārila suggests that the Itihāsas and Purāṇas have a variety of bases depending on their content. See *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.2 in Harikai 2008: A.166; A'.79.

[110] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 12-13, esp. p. 13, ll. 2-3: *athavā kim asmākam abhiniveśena | vedamūlatvāt smṛtīnāṃ smṛtivat purāṇam api bhavatu pramāṇam | prāmāṇye tāvad avivādaḥ*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 33 for a translation and 20 n. 31 for some notes related specifically to the Purāṇas.

[111] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 13, ll. 6-7: *sarvathā tāvad vedāś catvāraḥ purāṇāni smṛtaya iti ṣaḍ imāni vidyāsthānāni sākṣātpuruṣārthasādhanopadeśīni pūrvoktanītyā pramāṇam*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 33.

(*aṅga-*), like grammar, which do not teach *dharma* directly but nevertheless subserve the six disciplines that do.[112] Here we have something like a definition of scripture, which accords, in a certain sense, with that of Mīmāṃsā. It seems probable that Jayanta is following Kumārila in considering the fourteen disciplines in this context; the *Tantravārttika* includes an alternate interpretation of *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.7 that seeks to deny the authority of Buddhist scriptures by pointing out that "cultured people" (*śiṣṭa-*) do not accept them as part of this traditional list.[113]

Unlike Kumārila, who seeks to employ the list of disciplines in order to limit what may be considered authoritative scripture, Jayanta acknowledges that many sacred texts falling outside these fourteen disciplines are nevertheless Veda congruent. He gives the Śaiva scriptures as a prototypical example, explaining that they prescribe optional regimens of practice without questioning the Veda's authority (recall that the Śaivas themselves conceive of the various scriptural corpora as applying to people with different types of entitlements).[114] Jayanta explains that Śaiva scriptures meet many of the stereotypical Mīmāṃsaka criteria for scriptural authority: their meanings are not doubtful; the information they convey is not overruled by some subsequent realization; and the cognitions they generate are not rooted in a faulty cause.[115] We know, moreover, from *smṛti* texts and through inference that God is their author (a position that a Mīmāṃsaka, at least of this period, would not normatively accept). And Jayanta specifically asserts that greed and delusion cannot serve as their basis.[116] In doing so he contradicts Kumārila, who makes no distinction between

[112]*Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 14, ll. 1-2: *vyākaraṇādīni tu ṣaḍaṅgāny aṅgatvenaiva tadupayogīni na sākṣād dharmopadeśīni*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 34.

[113]*Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.201; A'.121-122: *parimitāny eva hi caturdaśāṣṭādaśa vā vidyāsthānāni dharmapramāṇatvena śiṣṭaiḥ parigṛhītāni vedopavedāṅgopāṅgāṣṭādaśadharmasaṃhitāpurāṇaśāstraśikṣādaṇḍanītisaṃjñakāni na teṣāṃ madhye bauddhārhatādigranthāḥ smṛtā vā gṛhītā vā*.

[114]*Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 15, ll. 4-6: *yāni punar āgamāntarāṇi paridṛśyante tāny api dvividhāni | kānicit sarvātmanā vedavirodhenaiva vartante bauddhādivat | kānicit tadavirodhenaiva vaikalpikavratāntaropadeśīni śaivādivat*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 34.

[115]Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 14 draws our attention to Jayanta's use of these criteria and suggests that he likely adopted them from Mīmāṃsā.

[116]*Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 15-16. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 34-35.

Śaiva and Buddhist texts, arguing that both are "largely rooted in arguments based on perception, inference, analogy, and presumption" and composed by people "hankering after acclaim, wealth, veneration, and fame."[117]

Jayanta emphasizes that the Śaiva scriptures "cannot be said to stand in opposition to the Veda because they maintain its well-established conventions such as the system of four castes."[118] He also claims that Śaiva scriptures have the same topic as the Upaniṣadic-portion of the Veda; both touch on "the state of final beatitude" (*niḥśreyasapada-*). And Jayanta seeks to show that even the paragons of Vaidika culture, such as Vyāsa, accepted the Śaiva corpus as an authoritative source of knowledge about *dharma*.[119] The *Nyāyamañjarī*'s commentator, Cakradhara, points us to a verse found in the *Nārāyaṇīya*-portion of the Śāntiparvan, where the study of a number of doctrines, including the Pāśupata, are promoted.[120]

In some respects, Jayanta's arguments echo the Śaivas' own positions (recall that Sadyojyotis emphasizes the Śaiva acceptance of the norms of Vaidika culture). Sanderson has shown, moreover, that Śaivas also argued that their practices were authorized by the Veda and had long been accepted by figures associated with Vedic learning.[121] He gives the example of the *Mṛgendratantra*, an early Saiddhāntika text, which opens with a description of Badarī hermitage.[122] There, we are told, a group of Vedic seers, including Bharadvāja, install a Śiva-image and practice asceticism with their

[117] *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.194; A'.112. The relevant passage is discussed in Chapter 4, p. 231 and is translated in Sanderson 2015b: 160-161.

[118] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 16, ll. 1-2: *na ca vedapratipakṣatayā teṣām avasthānaṃ prasiddhacāturvarṇyādivyavahārāparityāgāt*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 35.

[119] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 16, ll. 7-8. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 35.

[120] *Nyāyamañjarīgranthibhaṅga*, p. 112: *pañcarātraṃ ca sāṅkhyaṃ ca vedāḥ pāśupataṃ tathā | jñānāny etāni rājendra viddhi nānāmatāni ca*. The quotation is parallel with *Mahābhārata Mokṣadharmaparvan* 337.59, vol. 16, p. 1974, though the critical edition reads: *sāṃkhyaṃ yogaṃ pañcarātraṃ vedāḥ pāśupataṃ tathā | jñānāny etāni rājarṣe viddhi nānāmatāni vai*. Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 35 n. 80 cites and translates the verse given by Cakradhara.

[121] Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 9-12. See also Sanderson 2015b: 172-175.

[122] This part of the *Mṛgendratantra* is summarized and discussed in Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 9 and Sanderson 2015b: 172-173.

minds wholly fixed upon it. Indra appears, disguised as an ascetic, and questions their decision not to perform Vedic sacrifices. Bharadvāja and his entourage explain that the worship of Śiva is prescribed by the Veda, drawing Indra's attention Vedic mantras dedicated to Rudra.[123] After a brief back and forth, Indra eventually reveals himself and teaches the *Mṛgendratantra* to the seers.[124] Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇakaṇṭha II, the text's tenth-century commentator, goes so far as to give examples of Rudra worship from each of the four Vedas.[125]

Sanderson draws our attention to an even closer parallel to Jayanta's argument that appears in Rāmakaṇṭha's commentary on Sadyojyotis' *Mokṣakārikā*. Here Rāmakaṇṭha adduces textual evidence that demonstrates, in his view, that "people well versed in the Veda" (*vedavid-*) accepted Śaiva teachings, citing specific examples from the *Mahābhārata*, Purāṇas, and Dharmaśāstras.[126] In one important respect, however, Jayanta's framework deviates from its Śaiva counterparts: he makes no suggestion that the Veda is in any way hierarchically subordinated to the Śaiva scriptures, and, unlike the Śaivas, who see their own texts as the only route to true liberation, he asserts that the Vedic and Śaiva scriptural corpora are ultimately concerned with the same fundamental goal.[127]

After concluding that the Śaiva scriptural corpus is authoritative, Jayanta mentions the Pāñcarātrika scriptures in passing, noting that they too were composed by God and should be taken as an authority.[128] He then moves on to discuss scriptures that are "entirely in contradiction with the Veda." Jayanta acknowledges that some people might try to redeploy his arguments in order

[123] *Mṛgendratantra Vidyāpāda* 1.1-6, pp. 4-15.

[124] *Mṛgendratantra Vidyāpāda* 1.7-19, pp. 17- 40.

[125] *Mṛgendratantraṭīkā Vidyāpāda* on 1.6, p. 15-16. It should be noted that the examples for the Yajur- and Sāmavedas are taken from texts seen as ancillary to those Vedas, at least by modern scholars, namely the *Sūtrapariśiṣṭa* of the Kāṭhaka recension of the Yajurveda and the *Sāmavidhāna*. The latter of these two was seen to be a *brāhmaṇa*-text by the tradition.

[126] *Mokṣakārikāvṛtti* on 146ab, p. 275. This passage is edited and translated in Sanderson 2012, Handout 6: 10-12 and translated in Sanderson 2015b: 173-174.

[127] Sanderson 2015b: 187-188 discusses the difference between Jayanta's views and the standard Śaiva defense of their own system in more detail.

[128] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 16, l. 9 to 17, l. 11. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 35-36.

to show that the Buddha's teachings are reliable. In response, he introduces a new socio-cultural criterion for determining whether a text was composed by a reliable authority: acceptance by the *mahājana*.[129] This term has a long history. It originally denoted "the majority of people," and it appears as a general determinant of *dharma* in the *Mahābhārata*.[130] Jayanta, together with his rough contemporary Vācaspati Miśra, adapt the notion of *mahājana* into an inferential grounds for establishing that certain texts were composed by trustworthy figures, partially modifying its meaning in the process.[131]

Jayanta introduces the notion of "currency (*prasiddhi-*) among the *mahājana*" as a means to categorize the Veda, its closely associated texts (i.e., Dharmaśāstras, Purāṇas, and so on), and scriptures that do not run contrary to it (i.e., Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika) into a single group.[132] All of these texts, he explains, are accepted by *mahājanas* as authoritative. These are to be differentiated from the scriptures that stand in contradiction with the Veda, notably those of the Buddhists, which *mahājanas* reject.[133] But who or what exactly does *mahājana* denote? Jayanta explains that it refers to the community of people comprising the four castes and stages of life accepted throughout the land of the Āryas, a definition that echoes, albeit with a wider social scope, the notion of the *śiṣṭa* as a geographically defined cultural elite.[134]

[129] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 17-19. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 26-37. For an overview of the term *mahājana* and its use in Nyāya contexts, see Chemparathy 1987.

[130] The relevant passage has been judged an interpolation by the editors of the BORI edition. It appears after 3.297.61, cited in Appendix I, 32, pp. 1089, ll. 65-68: *tarko 'pratiṣṭhaḥ śrutayo vibhinnā naiko munir yasya mataṃ pramāṇam | dharmasya tattvaṃ nihitaṃ guhāyāṃ mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*. Kataoka 2012: 305 n. 323 provides a useful overview of this term's history and its meaning in Kumārila's works. He cites the above-mentioned verse as *Mahābhārata Vanaparvan* 313.117, which reflects its place in the vulgate recension commented upon by Nīlakaṇṭha.

[131] For Vācaspati Miśra's use of this term, see his *Tātparyaṭīkā* on 2.1.68, pp. 566, l. 15 and l. 25; p. 568, ll. 19 and 21-22.

[132] I have adopted my translation of "*prasiddhi*" from an unpublished paper by Whitney Cox.

[133] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 19, ll. 5-8: *mahājanaprasiddhyanugrahe hi sati suvacam āptoktatvaṃ bhavati nānyathā | mahājanaś ca vedānāṃ vedānugāminām ca purāṇadharmaśāstrāṇāṃ vedāvirodhinām ca keṣāṃcid āgamānāṃ prāmāṇyam anumanyate na vedaviruddhānāṃ bauddhādyāgamānām*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 37.

[134] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 20, ll. 3-4: *cāturvarṇyaṃ cāturāśramyaṃ ca yad etad āryadeśaprasiddhaṃ sa mahājana ucyate*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 38.

As Sanderson emphasizes, Jayanta's argument has important implications for our understanding of religious developments during this period because it suggests that the broader community accepted not only the Veda and its closely associated texts as authoritative but also Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika scriptures.[135] In taking this position, Jayanta breaks with the long-standing convention that denied these corpora all but the most cursory mention in discussions concerning scriptural authority. It should be noted that Jayanta is largely uninterested in the specific problem of how exactly the categories of Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika scripture should be constructed. He does not feel it necessary, for example, to address the issue of scriptural canons in general or the canonical form of texts in particular. In other words, he does not explicitly consider who might be authorized to determine such matters or how they might be determined, thereby ignoring, at least in this context, the problems of textual production and modification.

Jayanta nevertheless implies that some Śaiva scriptures were not accepted by the broader community (note however that he does not call them "Śaiva"). He briefly discusses improper types of religious practice, notably those involving impure substances and sexual relationships with close family members or other socially inappropriate women.[136] These practices suggest the antinomian rituals of the non-Saiddhāntika portions of the Śaiva corpus, especially those prescribed in Vidyāpīṭha and Kaula texts. Jayanta describes this type of transgressive ritual performance with the technical term *nirvikalpa* ("unhesitating [with respect to impure substances]" or "free from discrimination [between pure and impure]"), a term that, as Sanderson notes, "is a hallmark of the Śākta-leaning non-Saiddhāntika and Kaula literature."[137]

Jayanta subsequently complicates the preceding argument by introducing two similar and ex-

[135] Sanderson 2015b: 188-189.

[136] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 20, l. 11 to p. 21, l. 1: *ye 'py anye kecid aśucibhakṣaṇāgamyāgamanādi nirvikalpadīkṣāprakāram akāryam anutiṣṭhanti*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 38.

[137] Sanderson 2015b: 190-192.

tremely tolerant positions, both of which assert that the texts held to underpin nearly all forms of established religious practice are valid, including those of the Buddhists and Jains.[138] Scholars disagree about the nature of this section. Does it approximate something like Jayanta's final view, or is it little more than a theoretical justification for the pragmatic approach to religious diversity adopted by many Indian rulers, including Śaṅkaravarman of Kashmir (recall that Jayanta served as one of his ministers)?[139]

Rather than speculating about Jayanta's personal views, which are in any event ultimately inaccessible, I want to examine the arguments he adduces in support of the idea that all established scriptures are authoritative. He first addresses the problem of mutual contradiction. If all (or almost all) scriptures are authoritative, how can we resolve the seeming conflict between the different modes of practice they endorse? His answer is to minimize the significance of contradiction in several ways. First, all scriptures are "on the same footing" (*tulyakaṣya-*) because they were all composed by trustworthy figures; hence, they cannot overrule one another. In other words, the contradiction between scriptures is to be viewed in the same way as the contradiction between two Vedic injunctions.[140] Second, Jayanta claims that "there are scarcely any contradictions between various scriptural corpora because they all agree on the principal goal of mankind."[141] The wording here recalls Kumārila's argument that "we scarcely find any contradictions between *śruti* and *smṛti*," though Jayanta massively expands the claim and provides a new justification for it.[142] He

[138] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 24-31. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 39-43.

[139] Compare, for example, the positions of Wezler 1976, Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 25-27, and Picasia 2019: 178-179. Sanderson 2015b does not discuss this part of Jayanta's argument.

[140] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 24, ll. 10-11: *tatrocyate | āptapraṇītatvena tulyakakṣyatvād anyatamadaurbalyanimittānupalambhāc ca na kaś cid āgamaḥ kaṃcid bādhate*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 40.

[141] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 25, ll. 4-5: *kiṃ ca āgamānāṃ virodho 'pi nātīva vidyate pradhāne puruṣārthe sarveṣām avivādāt*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 40.

[142] See *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.4 in Harikai 2008: A.193; A'.111: *tena naiva śrutismṛtyor virodho atīva dṛśyate*. The translation here follows Pollock 2011: 55: "Therefore, we scarcely ever find contradiction between *smṛti* and *śruti*."

explains that various scriptures simply teach different methods for attaining the "greatest good," falling together into a common goal like rivers into the ocean. They all agree, that is, on liberation as the final goal and on knowledge of the self as the ultimate means to reach that goal.[143]

Jayanta then considers the problematic issue of "ritual practices that strike fear in our hearts" (*hṛdayakrośanahetukarman-*).[144] He explains that reluctance to eat, for example, from a human skull is not rooted in a natural disposition; rather, it arises through repeated avoidance of such practices in one's daily life. It is therefore similar to the hesitancy that compassionate people feel towards Vedic animal sacrifice (i.e., they avoid killing and eating animals in their day-to-day lives, so they feel negatively disposed towards Veda-prescribed killing too). Yet their hesitancy does not mean that the Veda has no authority, and we may infer that the same is true of scriptures that prescribe eating from a skull. Jayanta goes so far as to suggest that morality should be viewed as entirely text-dependent. Even if Kaula practitioners perform rituals forbidden by the Veda, they will not go to hell because the prescriptions of their own scriptures are constitutive of an independent moral system.[145]

Jayanta betrays his discomfort with absolute moral relativity by subsequently setting out a significant qualification. Performing these types of practices may damn one to hell, but the texts that prescribe them are still authoritative in terms of the results they produce. They are simply meant for people who seek sinful things. Jayanta here draws upon a well-established Mīmāṃsā approach to the Vedic Śyena sacrifice, which was the subject of some controversy due to its violent purposes (it is used to harm one's enemies). Śabara argues that the entitlement to perform the Śyena is limited

[143] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 26, ll. 1-5. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 40.

[144] Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 18-19 provides some intellectual-historical background connected with this term.

[145] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2012: 28-30, esp. p. 29, ll. 9-11: *yat tv āgamāntarebhyaḥ kaulādibhyaḥ khecarādyarthasiddhāv api niṣiddhācaraṇakṛtaḥ kālāntare pratyavāyo 'vaśyaṃ bhavatīty uktaṃ tad api na yuktaṃ tasyārthasya tadāgamaniṣiddhatvābhāvāt*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 41-42.

to people who seek to do violence.[146] As Jayanta explains, its injunction applies only to people who have already violated a prohibitive injunction (*laṅghitaniṣedha-*) that will lead them to hell.[147]

Jayanta seems similarly uncomfortable with the socio-cultural implications that follow from allowing authority to the Buddhist scriptural corpus; he draws on another Mīmāṃsaka principle to suggest that the Buddhist rejection of caste is not to be taken literally; rather, it serves only "to praise compassion so abundant that it tends towards the favor of all beings."[148] Yet he nevertheless sums up this section by concluding that "all scriptures are authoritative because they have been composed by trustworthy figures like Kapila, the Buddha, and the Jina."[149]

The *Nyāyamañjarī* proceeds to introduce a slightly different explanation of why all scriptures ought to be considered authoritative. The fundamental idea is that God, having seen various paths to liberation and having recognized the varying dispositions of living beings, takes on different names and bodies in order to teach scriptures containing a variety of methods (note the similarity here with the position of Jayaratha mentioned above).[150] Yet there is a problem. If all scriptures were composed by God, who therefore must have composed the Veda, why are they not accepted by the *mahājanas*? Jayanta implicitly appeals to the notion of distinct entitlements and explains that God has taught some paths for the benefit of only a few people, whereas the Vaidika path is

[146] Śābarabhāṣya on 1.1.2 in Frauwallner 1968: 20, ll. 13-19.

[147] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 30-31 esp. ll. 5-7: *śyenenābhicaran yajeta ity atra abhicaran iti śatrā laṅghitaniṣedham adhikāriṇam ācaṣṭe*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 43, who also provide the relevant reference to the *Śābarabhāṣya* on 1.1.2.

[148] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 31, ll. 4-5: *yad api bauddhāgame jātivādanirākaraṇaṃ tad api sarvānugrahapravaṇakaruṇātiśayapraśaṃsāparaṃ na yathāśrutam avagantavyam*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 43. See also pp. 7 and 27, where Freschi and Kataoka discuss the "instrumental" reading of Buddhist teachings.

[149] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 31, ll. 6-7: *tasmāt sarveṣām āgamānām āptaiḥ kapilasugatā-rhatprabhṛtibhiḥ praṇītānāṃ prāmāṇyam iti yuktam*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 43.

[150] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 31, l. 12 to p. 32, l. 4: *apare manyante sarvāgamānām īśvara eva bhagavān praṇeteti | sa hi sakalaprāṇināṃ karmavipākam anekaprakāram avalokayan karuṇayā tān anugrahītum apavargapraptimārgaṃ bahuvidham utpaśyann āśayānusāreṇa keṣāṃcit kvacit karmaṇi yogyatām avagamya taṃ tam upāyam upadiśati | svavibhūtimahimnā ca nānāśarīraparigrahāt sa eva saṃjñābhedānupagacchati*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 43-44.

meant for the benefit of the majority; as a consequence, there is general regard for the Veda and only limited regard for other scriptures.[151]

The notion that God took on various forms to teach different scriptural corpora is not unique to Jayanta. We find it in Śaiva scriptures, like the *Svacchandatantra*, where Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pañcarātra, and the Veda are all attributed to Śiva (note, however, that the Buddhist and Jain scriptures do not appear here).[152] Kṣemarāja's commentary explains that during this process Śiva assumed various forms in producing different scriptural corpora.[153] We find a similar idea in Ratnākara's *Haravijaya*, a lengthy poem mentioned above in Chapter 3. Its 47th chapter, as noted, contains a section dedicated to the Goddess Caṇḍī, who is said to be the true source of all scriptural knowledge, including Buddhist and Jain texts.[154]

Jayanta next introduces the possibility that all sacred texts are authoritative because they are derived from the Veda.[155] Although this position is presented as the view of "some people" (*apare*), it seems to be no more than an attempt to demonstrate the absurd implications that follow from Mīmāṃsā's approach to *smṛti* texts. Kumārila had rejected the positive utility of the old Mīmāṃsā "identity of performers" argument, claiming instead that it was simply a matter of logical economy to assume that *smṛti* rules have a Vedic basis. He then redeployed acceptance by the Vaidika community as a negative criterion for rejecting the possibility that other types of texts, notably those of the Buddhists, were rooted in the Veda (Chapter 4, pp. 228-229). Jayanta points out the problem

[151] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 33, ll. 1-6: *nanu vedasamānakartṛkeṣv āgamāntareṣu kathaṃ tādṛśo mahājanasaṃpratyayo nāsti | evaṃ nāsti | tena vartmanā bhagavatā katipaye prāṇino 'nugṛhītā yeṣāṃ tādṛśa āśayo lakṣitaḥ | vaidikena tu vartmanā niḥsaṃkhyākāḥ prāṇino 'nugṛhītā iti tatra mahān ādara āgamāntareṣu kṛśa iti*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 44.

[152] *Svacchandatantra* 5.43cd-45, vol. 3, pp. 38-39: *na ninded bhairavaṃ devaṃ śāstraṃ vānyasamudbhavam | sāṃkhyaṃ yogaṃ pañcarātraṃ vedāṃś caiva na nindayet || yataḥ śivodbhavāḥ sarve hy apavargaphalapradāḥ | smārttaṃ dharmaṃ na nindet tu ācārapathadarśakam*. The Smṛtis seem to be afforded a somewhat subsidiary status here.

[153] *Svacchandatantroddyota* on 5.45ab: *nānārūpāc chivāt sarvaśāstrāṇām utpannatvena tadabhinnavyāptikatvāt*.

[154] *Haravijaya* 47.44ff.

[155] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 33, ll. 12: *apare punar vedamūlatvena sarvāgamaprāmāṇyam abhyupāgaman*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 44.

with this approach. Mīmāṃsā holds that the Veda has an unknowably large scope and that its rituals are prescribed for people with different sorts of entitlements. Given that we can never know the true extent of the Veda, how could we ever determine whether a practice really lacks a Vedic basis?[156]

Jayanta concludes his discussion by raising a hypothetical objection: were we to establish, in the manner just argued, all scriptures as authoritative, then even something I've just now written could be taken as an authority after a couple of days.[157] He points out that some scoundrel could write something in an old manuscript and claim "Here is a momentous scripture," and we would be forced to assume that it was composed by a trustworthy figure.[158] Jayanta proposes a mixture of conditions that are supposed to protect against this type of scenario:

> It's not the case [that just anything will be taken as authoritative]. I accept here as authoritative only scriptures that (1) are well known without being subject to disagreement, (2) have been accepted by large numbers of educated people, (3) currently circulate but do not appear to be newly invented, (4) do not have greed or other base motives at their root, (5) and do no engender abhorrence. Whatever doctrine might be held by a brothel madame isn't taken to be an authority [with respect to *dharma*].[159]

These conditions are in some ways surprising because many aspects stand in contradiction with Jayanta's earlier arguments. For example, Buddhist and Jain texts undoubtedly enjoyed a degree of currency, but Jayanta makes particular mention of the fact that they were rejected by the *mahājanas*,

[156] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 34-36, esp. p. 35, ll. 8-9: *kim idaṃ vedasarvasvaṃ yāvad asmanmukhe sthitam | śākhāntarād vā saṃvādo na labhyeteti kā pramā*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 45-46. Note also that Jayanta draws attention to passages in the Veda that could be construed as supporting "non-Vedic" practices, drawing on Mīmāṃsā's notion of *liṅga*.

[157] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 38, ll. 7-10: *sarvāgamapramāṇatve nanv evam upapādite | aham apy adya yat kiṃcid āgamaṃ racayāmi cet || tasyāpi hi pramāṇatvaṃ dinaiḥ katipayair bhavet | tasminn api na pūrvokto nyāyo bhavati durvacaḥ*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 47. Note also that, prior to reaching this summary, Jayanta rejects Lokāyata and Saṃsāramocaka texts as invalid even from the standpoint of a maximally pluralist account of scriptural authority.

[158] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 38, l. 11 to p. 39, l. 2: *jaratpustakalikhitaṃ yad api tad api kiṃcid ānīya kenacit kila dhūrtena prakhyāpyate mahān ayam āgama iti tatrāpy āpta eva praṇetā kalpyatām*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 47.

[159] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 39, ll. 3-5: *naitad asty avigītāṃ ye prasiddhiṃ prāpur āgamāḥ | kṛtaś ca bahubhir yeṣāṃ śiṣṭair iha parigrahaḥ || adya pravartamānāś ca nāpūrvā iva bhānti ye | yeṣāṃ na mūlaṃ lobhādi yebhyo nodvijate janaḥ || teṣām eva pramāṇatvam āgamānām iheṣyate | na mṛṣyate tu yat kiṃcit pramāṇaṃ kuṭṭinīmatam*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 47-48. See also pp. 21-24 for Freschi and Kataoka's analysis of these reasons and a discussion of a similar set found in the *Āgamaḍambara*.

which surely qualifies as a form of disagreement. He also notes elsewhere that cultured people keep their distance from Buddhists.[160] Yet the broader context in which this set of five conditions appears makes clear that they are supposed to be expansive enough to include both Buddhist and Jain scriptures. How can we understand this seeming discrepancy?

One rhetorical strategy that Jayanta frequently adopts is to demonstrate that his opponent's arguments may be used to support the very position that they oppose. I have already discussed several examples, including the expansion of Kumārila's arguments about *smṛti*.[161] I suspect Jayanta is making a similar move here by implicitly referring to the subjective character of arguments that depend upon notions like "disagreement" (*vigāna-*), "acceptance" (*parigraha-*), and "currency" (*prasiddhi-*).[162] Particularly noticeable is the idea that scriptures falling outside the Vaidika sphere might be accepted by cultured people (*śiṣṭa-*), especially given that Kumārila appealed to the habits of this same group in his efforts to deny authority to the scriptures of Buddhists and others judged to fall "outside the Veda."[163] We can get a better idea of what Jayanta means by looking at the *Āgamaḍambara*, where Bhaṭṭa Sāhaṭa notes that "accomplished people" (*kṛtin-*) accept the Pāñcarātrika scriptures and that non-Vaidika scriptures more generally are accepted by "competent people" (*kuśaladhī-*).[164] The point seems to be that a somewhat more expansive definition of *śiṣṭa* (or at least something similar) leads to the inevitable conclusion that nearly all scriptural corpora are authoritative.

[160] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 21, ll. 8-9: *saṃsāramocakaṃ spṛṣṭvā śiṣṭāḥ snānti savāsasaḥ | bauddhair api sahaiteṣāṃ vyavahāro na kaścana*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 38.

[161] See also Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 23 and Picascia 2019: 182-183 and 204.

[162] The notion of *vigāna* appears in Mīmāṃsā works; see, for example *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.1 in Harikai 2008: A.160; A'.71: *na ca sarveṣāṃ smṛtipraṇayinām avigānaṃ yena pauruṣeyāgamabalād upalabdhapūrvaśrutimūlatvaṃ syāt*.

[163] For example, see *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.7 in Harikai 2009: A.201; A'.121-122: *parimitāny eva hi caturdaśāṣṭādaśa vā vidyāsthānāni dharmapramāṇatveṇa śiṣṭaiḥ parigṛhītāni vedopavedāṅgopāṅgāṣṭādaśadharmasaṃhitāpurāṇaśāstraśikṣādaṇḍanītisaṃjñakāni na ca teṣāṃ madhye bauddhārhatādigranthāḥ smṛtā vā gṛhītā vā*.

[164] *Āgamaḍambara*, Act 4, p. 240, l. 8 and 244, l. 4. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

Some important aspects of the *Āgamaḍambara* seem to be at odds with Jayanta's philosophical magnum opus.[165] I am mainly interested in two discrepancies, both of which have already been pointed out by Freschi and Kataoka, that appear when we compare the prelude to Act 4 in the *Āgamaḍambara* with the corresponding sections of the *Nyāyamañjarī*. The first and less consequential of these two is prompted by a Vedic officiant (*ṛtvij-*) character in the *Āgamaḍambara*, who notes in passing that "the Śaivas do not fall within the *varṇa*-system. Setting aside the life-stages enjoined by *śruti* and *smṛti*, they betake themselves to a different course through their acceptance of another set of teachings."[166] This assessment seems to stand in contradiction with the *Nyāyamañjarī*, which, as mentioned above, states that Śaiva scriptures do not abandon the *varṇa*-system.[167] It is worth noting, however, that the *Āgamaḍambara* appears to use the word Śaiva in a restricted sense that applies only to ascetics.[168] Perhaps "Śaiva" householders were so well integrated into broader society that Jayanta did not consider them to form part of a separate community?

A far more consequential discrepancy may be detected in Jayanta's treatment of the Pañcarātra. The *Nyāyamañjarī* mentions Pāñcarātrika scriptures only in passing, explaining that they are Veda-congruent and authoritative in the eyes of the broader community. The *Āgamaḍambara*, per contra, depicts the Pañcarātra as the subject of significant dispute, and the final act of the play concerns a public assembly called "to pass judgment on the scriptures of the Bhāgavatas" (i.e., Pāñcarātrikas,

[165] See especially Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 6-7.

[166] *Āgamaḍambara*, Prelude to Act 4, p. 194, ll. 11-13: *śaivādayas tu na cāturvarṇyamadhyapatitāḥ śrutismṛtivihitam āśramam avajahataḥ śāsanāntaraparigrahenānyathā vartante*. Note that I have normalized the orthography of all passages cited from the *Āgamaḍambara*, which is published in the specific Clay Sanskrit Library format. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

[167] *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 16, ll. 1-2: *na ca vedapratipakṣatayā teṣām avasthānaṃ prasiddhacāturvarṇyādivyavahārāparityāgāt*. See Freschi and Kataoka 2012: 35 n. 74, where this discrepancy is noted.

[168] A similar type of usage is attested in the *Jātiviveka* (15th century), which states that "Śaivas and Pāśupatas are devoted to the *dharma* of asceticism," suggesting both terms refer specifically to ascetics. See *Jātiviveka* cited and edited in Kiss 2019: 85: *śaivāḥ pāśupatāś caiva tapodharmaparāyaṇāḥ*. We also find common reference to the following fourfold list: Śaivas, Pāśupatas, Kālamukhas, and Mahāvratins. For example, see *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 92, ll. 1-2. Sanderson 2007: 392 takes Śaiva here to refer to the Mantramārga, which presumably includes householders.

at least in Jayanta's usage).[169] In the prelude to this scene, a Vedic officiant outlines a complaint against the Pāñcarātrikas, whom he accuses of falsely claiming to be Brahmins. They mimic Vedic accents when reciting their scriptures, and they imitate the Vaidika system of life-stages.[170] A Vedic preceptor (*upādhyāya-*) seeks to assuage the officiant's concerns, assuring him that people well-versed in the Veda (*śrotriya-*) avoid the Pāñcarātrikas. They are ineligible to study the Veda, the *smṛtis*, and Mīmāṃsā; they cannot officiate over Vedic rites; and they cannot marry Brahmin women, at least not without transgressing socially condoned matrimonial norms.[171]

The implication of this dialogue seems to be that certain Brahmins, especially those involved in teaching the Veda and performing Vedic sacrifices, continued to maintain exclusionary views about scripture, especially when theistic groups were perceived to impinge upon the traditional rights of their class. One gets the sense, however, that Jayanta is poking fun at a group of stubborn holdouts rather than describing a large and influential group of people. But whatever the historical situation may have been, the stereotyped views held by the officiant remained influential in the sphere of theoretical discourse, as is amply attested by Jayanta's lengthy engagement with Mīmāṃsā objections throughout the *Nyāyamañjarī*. Later on, the *Āgamaḍambara* perhaps alludes to a certain disconnect between discursive conventions and lived realities with respect to engagement with different types of scripture.[172] Prior to the assembly, the Mīmāṃsaka Saṅkarṣaṇa equivocates:

> When people observe the doctrine of the Blessed Nārāyaṇa, whose mind is consumed by playfully effecting the cycle of the universe through the states of maintenance, creation, and resorption, how can I, with this tongue here, claim that their view is wrong? Yet, [without doing so], how can I stand before accomplished scholars whose thoughts are filled with the triple Veda?[173]

[169] *Āgamaḍambara*, p. 196: *adya khalu bhāgavatāgamavicāram eva kartuṃ śrīsaṅkarṣaṇo vaiṣṇavāyatanaṃ bhāgavataśatasahasrasambādhaṃ gataḥ | brāhmaṇāś ca brahmadvīpe vidvāṃsaḥ sahasrasaṅkhyāḥ saṅgaṭitāḥ | tatra mahatyā goṣṭhyā bhavitavyam*. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

[170] *Āgamaḍambara*, Prelude to Act 4, p. 194, ll. 6-16. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

[171] *Āgamaḍambara*, Prelude to Act 4, p. 194 and 196. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

[172] Sanderson 2015b: 189 makes a somewhat similar suggestion in his discussion of the *Nyāyamañjarī*.

[173] *Āgamaḍambara*, Act 4, p. 202, ll. 4-11: *ye viśvasthitisargasaṃhṛtidaśāparyāyasampādanakrīḍāsaktamater ma-*

The crux of Saṅkarṣaṇa's dilemma becomes clear when he reveals himself to be personally devoted to Viṣṇu. Although he is presumably not a Pāñcarātrika, he nevertheless appears to accept views about God and the creation of the universe that are not reconcilable with Kumārila's Mīmāṃsā, perhaps even including the notion that God composed the Pāñcarātrika scriptures (Saṅkarṣaṇa seems to take the Pāñcarātrika teachings as originating in Nārāyaṇa, i.e., God). His characterization therefore provides a potential glimpse into the complexities of religious identity often obscured by the normative nature of intellectual discourse and suggests that the positions adopted by people working within one or another of the standard philosophical disciplines were not always reflective of their personal views.

Jayanta ends the *Āgamaḍambara* on a somewhat unexpected note. After the conclusion of Sāhaṭa's speech, Saṅkarṣaṇa promulgates a new and unexpected guideline for all in attendance at the assembly: the various religious paths (*tīrthāni*) are independent of one another and must not be mixed together.[174] The members of the audience specially note that certain doctrines, such as nonviolence, are common to all, but they otherwise confirm their intention to prevent the intermixture of various ritualistic systems.[175] This commitment is surprising in light of what we know, for example, about Śaiva Siddhānta developments, where initiates were bound by both Śaiva and Vaidika injunctions. It also fails to reflect that some Pāñcarātrikas practiced mixed observances, following both the prescriptions specific to their own scriptural corpus and the broader Vaidika ritual program.

taṃ bhagavato nārāyaṇasyāśritāḥ | taddṛṣṭeḥ katham anyathātvam anayā brūmo vayaṃ jihvayā śakṣyāmaḥ kṛtināṃ trayīmayadhiyāṃ sthātuṃ kathaṃ vāgrataḥ. See the adjacent page for Dezső's translation, which I follow in supplying an implied negative in the second sentence.

[174] *Āgamaḍambara*, Act 4, p. 250, ll. 2-4:: *etāni kila parasparam asaṃkīrṇāṇi pṛthakprasthānāni yathāvasthāni tīrthāni | tad eṣām itaretarasaṃkaraparihāre satatam avahitair bhavitavyam āryaiḥ*. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

[175] *Āgamaḍambara*, Act 4, p. 250, ll. 5-9: *ārya yāvan iha sve sve śāsane samāmnātaḥ kaścid ahiṃsādiḥ sādhāraṇo mānavo dharmas tatra kim ucyate | tadatiriktaṃ tu niyatopadiṣṭaviśiṣṭakriyākāṇḍasaṃkaraṃ svaśāstrakathitapratyavāyabhayāt pariharāma ity ekaṃ tāvat sthitam*. See the adjacent pages for Dezső's translation.

5.5 Hidden Pluralism

The *Āgamaḍambara* reveals that Pāñcarātrika scriptures were the subject of some controversy. As noted, the principal issue was apparently social in nature: certain Pāñcarātrikas claimed to be Brahmins even though, in the eyes of at least some Vedic priests, they were not. Jayanta does not dwell on the stakes of this claim; he concludes his play with a largely theoretical lecture on the authoritative character of all scriptures, rejecting only the socially far more disruptive followers of the orgiastic "Black-Blanket Observance" (*nilāmbaravrata-*) and leaving the practical problem of Pāñcarātrika caste status unaddressed.[176] Yet there is evidence to suggest that the stakes of this argument were felt urgently among at least some of the followers of the Pañcarātra. Their concerns are reflected in the writings of a South Indian Pāñcarātrika named Yāmunācārya (11th c. CE), the grandson of Nāthamuni and grand-teacher of the Viśiṣṭādvaitin Rāmānuja (circa 12th c. CE).[177]

Among Yāmuna's several extant works is a text called the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* ("On the Authoritative Character of [the Pāñcarātrika] Scriptures"), which sets out to prove the authority of the Pañcarātra's scriptural collection. Yāmuna's fundamental position is that God created these texts as a sort of condensed version of the Vedic corpus; as a consequence, he holds that the Pañcarātra should be seen as fully Vedic in nature.[178] In taking this position, Yāmuna distinguishes his mode of authorization from that of the Śaivas, who sought to demonstrate that their own scriptural corpora were superior to the Veda.

[176]The adherents of this presumably Kaula practice are introduced in Act 2, and the story of their suppression is related in the prelude to Act 3. See *Āgamaḍambara*, Act 2, pp. 114-124 and Prelude to Act 3, 130-133. Sanderson 2015b: 166-167 n. 27 cites several other references to this group outside Jayanta's works. See also the supression of the Black-Blanket Observance mentioned at the end of the *Nyāyamañjarī Āgamaprāmāṇya* in Kataoka 2004: 39, ll. 7-10.

[177]See the introduction to Narasimhachary's edition, pp. 1-3. See also Pratap Kumar 2018. Note that Nāthamuni is traditionally believed to be the compiler of the Tamil-language liturgical anthology called the *Divyaprabandham* or, informally, the "Tamil Veda."

[178]*Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 91, ll. 1-6 and p. 102, ll. 7-10. The second of these passages is cited and translated in Leach 2012: 116.

The *Āgamaprāmāṇya* betrays an anxiety about the status of the Pāñcarātrika corpus that seems to be largely rooted in socio-cultural concerns. Although Yāmuna deals at great length with many philosophically sophisticated arguments and contributes to a number of long-standing debates, he is particularly sensitive to the accusation that Pāñcarātrika scriptures are invalid because they are accepted by people outside the pale of caste society. This specific concern is unsurprising in light of the parallel issues raised in the *Āgamaḍambara*, where the "Pāñcarātrika Bhāgavatas" enjoyed a contested status that seemingly warranted state adjudication.[179] Though the issue is not made entirely explicit, the real concern seems to have been that the members of this group claimed Brahmanical status through their membership in the Pāñcarātrika community and association with Pāñcarātrika scriptures rather than a traditional Vedic *śākhā*.

The *Āgamaprāmāṇya* draws our attention to these same socio-cultural issues towards the beginning of the text. They first appear in the context of a hypothetical objection to the validity of the Pāñcarātrika scriptures. As discussed in Chapter 3, these scriptures generally begin with a self-authorizing narrative that depicts their initial propagation by some number of Vedic seers. Yāmuna suggests that the identity of these propagators ensures their Vedic character.[180] His position is met with a stereotyped Mīmāṃsaka objection. We may infer that texts like the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* have a Vedic basis because their prescriptions are put into practice by learned members of the three upper castes. Yet the same cannot be said of the "tantric" (*tāntrika-*) practices enjoined by Pāñcarātrika scriptures; in fact, people well versed in the Veda despise anyone who performs them.[181] Given their degraded status, how could they possibly be derived from the Veda?

Although it is not made explicit, the Mīmāṃsaka's argument carries the important corollary

[179] *Āgamaḍambara*, p. 194. See the adjacent page for Dezső's translation.

[180] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 9, ll. 7-10: *vedasaṃyogipuruṣasmaraṇānupapattitaḥ | kalpyate cet śrutis tatra tato 'nyatrāpi kalpyatām || yato nāradaśāṇḍilyapramukhāḥ paramarṣayaḥ | smaryante pañcarātre 'pi sampradāyapravartakaḥ.*

[181] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 10, l. 2 to p. 11, l. 8.

that the traditional attributions found at the beginning of Pāñcarātrika scriptures are untrue, and it suggests that we may infer as much from the fact that the people who perform Pāñcarātrika rituals are at least ostensibly different from the people who perform Vaidika ones. Yāmuna objects to this sociological argument by claiming that the Pāñcarātrika scriptures are accepted by the "Bhāgavata Brahmins," a group whose Brahmanical status is proven through their maintenance of the various physical marks of Brahminhood, such as the topknot and sacred thread. The Mīmāṃsaka disagrees. These Bhāgavatas are not members of caste society at all, much less Brahmins. Certain external markings, though enjoined for Brahmins, cannot serve as a reliable indicator that someone is actually a Brahmin; even Śūdras have been known to adopt topknots and sacred threads.[182]

The Mīmāṃsaka then points out various words that putatively refer to the followers of the Pañcarātra, including "Sātvata," all of which are supposed to denote people of degraded caste status. He then examines the problem of practices considered theoretically unsuitable for Brahmins, noting that Sātvatas are traditionally said to worship at the command of the king, earn a living through the performance of *pūjā*, clean up devotional offerings, and maintain temple icons.[183] Their involvement in these types of activities is apparently an inherited status that disqualifies them from Vedic study and the performance of sacrifices.[184] The Sātvatas eat leftover foodstuffs presented to the gods and undergo a non-Vedic form of initiation. They perform a different set of lifecycle rituals from those practiced in the Vaidika community, and twice-born people are said to avoid them in matrimonial relations.[185] All these types of activities demonstrate, it is argued, that Pāñcarātrikas

[182] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 11ff. Note that the various words Yāmuna's objector takes to refer to Pāñcarātrikas, including "*bhāgavata*," are in many other contexts differentiated from one another. See Leach 2012: 67-68.

[183] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 14, ll. 3-7: *tathā brāhme purāṇe viṣṇor āyatanāni saḥ pūjayed ājñayā rājñām iti tathānyatra sāttvatānāṃ ca devāyatanaśodhanaṃ naivedyaśodhanaṃ pratimāsaṃrakṣaṇam iti*.

[184] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 15, ll. 1-2: *yeṣāṃ vaṃśakramād eva devārcā vṛttito bhavet | teṣām adhyayane yajñe yājane nāsti yogyatā*.

[185] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 14, ll. 11-15: *api cācāratas teṣām abrāhmaṇyaṃ pratīyate | vṛttito devatāpūjā dīkṣā naivedyabhakṣaṇam || garbhādhānādidāhāntasaṃskārāntarasevanam | śrautakriyānanuṣṭhānaṃ dvijais sambandhavarjanam*.

are "temple attendants" (*devalaka-*), professional priests despised by traditional Brahmins.[186]

As will become clear when we consider Yāmuna's counterarguments, the hypothetical Mīmāṃsaka opponent seems to be conflating several socially distinct groups into a single community of practice based on their common acceptance of the Pāñcarātrika scriptures, perhaps reflecting the nature of criticisms actually leveled by Yāmuna's contemporaries.[187] By depicting these groups as unified, the objector may then claim, first of all, that Pāñcarātrika scriptures are invalid because they are accepted by people of degraded caste status, and, second, that anyone who accepts them shares in the lowly status of the most debased members of this theoretically constructed community. This method of argumentation represents a reversal of the traditional Mīmāṃsā reasoning about *smṛti*, which takes communal unity as the justification for extending the Veda's authority to other texts and practices. In the case of the Pañcarātra, conversely, the status of professional priests is depicted as a sort of social contagion that infects anyone who accepts the Pāñcarātrika scriptures.

Yāmuna does not seek fully to subvert the Mīmāṃsaka's postulation of a single Pāñcarātrika community, nor does he challenge the notion of social contagion. As Robert Leach notes, he too is committed to presenting the Pañcarātra as a "homogeneous ritualistic tradition."[188] Yāmuna excludes only professional temple attendants engaged in non-specific practices (i.e., cleaning the temple and looking after the icons) from categorization as "Bhāgavata Brahmins."[189] Only those who perform the "set of observances ordained for the five times" (*pāñcakālika-*) may be properly so called. Yāmuna thereby makes a distinction between people who follow a particular regimen

[186]The discussion of *devalakas* spans from p. 15, l. 12 to p. 17, l. 2. For a discussion of temple priests, see Bronkhorst 2016: 132-139.

[187]Leach 2012: 65-69 and 76-78 notes that Yāmuna depicts these groups as united, at least in certain respects. In explaining this fact, Leach provides an analysis that differs in some respects from mine.

[188]Leach 2012: 66.

[189]*Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 150, l. 13 to p. 151, l. 7. Leach 2012: 63-69 discusses the passages dealing with temple attendants and certain divisions between Pāñcarātrikas based on whether they perform rituals for payment or not.

specifically associated with Pāñcarātrika scripture and those who are simply connected with (presumably) Vaiṣṇava temples. Yet he subsequently acknowledges that some legitimate Pāñcarātrikas do perform rituals as a means of livelihood, distinguishing between those who worship "for themselves" (*svārtham*) and those who do so "for payment" (*vṛttikāraṇāt*).[190]

Yāmuna seeks to show that Pāñcarātrika priests are no different from Vedic ones in earning a livelihood from their ritual services. Both are required by scriptural injunction to accept payment at the end of a ritual, otherwise the ritual will not be effective.[191] The chief point of contention, however, is the nature of the ritual services provided, and the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* reveals that some Pāñcarātrikas do provide temple-based services. But Yāmuna seeks to show that the pejorative term "temple attendant" is only properly applied to professional priests who worship other gods or lack initiation into the Pañcarātra; it should not be used to describe initiated Pāñcarātrikas.[192]

As Leach notes, it is only at the very end of the *Āgamaprāmāṇya* that Yāmuna mentions another seemingly important division among the adherents of the Pañcarātra.[193] In response to the objector's contention that Pāñcarātrikas observe life-cycle rituals that are entirely different from those practiced in the Vaidika community, Yāmuna points out that some Pāñcarātrikas do in fact follow Vaidika norms. This group is said to "study the Vājasaneya recension of the White Yajurveda as per their family tradition and to perform *saṃskāras*, such as the impregnation ceremony, in accordance with the ritual handbooks taught by figures like Kātyāyana."[194] It is a separate group that practices different types of social ritual. Yāmuna describes them as "having given up the observances of the

[190] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 154, l. 13 to p. 158, l. 3.
[191] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 155, l. 3 to p. 156, l. 5.
[192] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 156, l. 7 to p. 158, l. 3.
[193] Leach 2012: 66.
[194] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 169, ll. 4-7: *yad apy uktam garbhādhānādidāhāntasaṃskārāntarasevanāt bhāgavatānām abrāhmaṇyam iti tatrāpy ajñānam evāparādhyati na punar āyuṣmato doṣaḥ | yad ete vaṃśaparamparayā vājasaneyaśākhām adhīyānāḥ kātyāyanādigṛhyoktamārgeṇa garbhādhānādisaṃskārān kurvate*. See above for a discussion of the objection.

Triple Veda, such as the recitation of the Sāvitrī *mantra*, and performing the 40 *saṃskāras* enjoined by the Ekāyanaśruti."[195]

The *Āgamaprāmāṇya* never tells us whether the Ekāyanaśruti is extant or merely inferable, though it seems probable that it represents an entirely notional corpus (Chapter 3, p. 151).[196] Whatever the case may be, Yāmuna is at pains to depict this second group of Pāñcarātrikas as following an authoritative recension of the Veda. He admits, however, that the practices it supposedly enjoins are totally distinct from those associated with the "Triple Veda." He argues that Brahmins conventionally perform whatever rites are prescribed by their own *śākhā* and do not lose their status by failing to perform the rituals found in another. There is a problem, however, because, as Mīmāṃsaka thinkers often note, the rituals prescribed in the various recensions of the three Vedas are largely integrated (the Atharvaveda presents a separate set of issues). How then can the so-called Ekāyana *śākhā* really be considered part of the Veda? Yāmuna resolves this issue by pointing out that the rituals prescribed in the Veda are meant for people with different "entitlements" (*adhikāra-*), and he explains that the Ekāyanaśruti ought to be understood, like the Upaniṣads, as applying only to those Brahmins who seek liberation.[197]

It is clear that the nature of the Ekāyāna *śākhā* was nevertheless subject to doubt; Yāmuna tells us that another work, the *Kāśmirāgamaprāmāṇya* ("The Authoritative Character of the Kashmiri Scriptural Tradition") was written to establish that, like the rest of the Veda, it had no author.[198]

[195] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 169, ll. 9-12: *ye punaḥ sāvitryanuvacanaprabhṛtitrayīdharmatyāgenaikāyanaśrutivihitān eva catvāriṃśat saṃskārān kurvate te 'pi svaśākhāgṛhyoktam arthaṃ yathāvad anutiṣṭhamānā na śākhāntarīyakarmānanuṣṭhānāt brāhmaṇyāt pracyavante*. This passage is discussed and cited, though not translated, in Leach 2012: 77.

[196] Yāmuna makes however the incidental claim that this group has its own *gṛhya*-text. See above note.

[197] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 170, ll. 1-7: *yady api sarvaśākhāpratyayam ekaṃ karma tathāpi na parasparavilakṣaṇādhikārisambaddhāḥ dharmāḥ kvacit samuccīyante | vilakṣaṇāś ca trayīvihitasvargaputrādiviṣayopabhogasādhanaindrāgneyādikarmādhikāribhyo dvijebhyaḥ trayyantaikāyanaśrutivihitavijñānābhigamanopādānejyāprabhṛtibhagavatprāptyekopāyakarmādhikāriṇo mumukṣavo brāhmaṇā iti nobhayeṣām apy anyonyaśākhāvihitakarmānanuṣṭhānam abrāhmaṇyam āpādayati*. It is not clear whether Yāmuna sees the Ekāyanaśruti and Ekāyana *śākhā* as entirely the same; it is also unclear whether he thinks of the Ekāyana as an Upaniṣad or if he simply thinks it is like an Upaniṣad.

[198] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 170, ll. 7-9: *yathā ca ekāyanaśākhāyā apauruṣeyatvaṃ tathā kāśmīrāgamaprāmāṇya eva*

From the name of this work, we might speculate that the notion of the Ekāyana *śākhā*, at least as a means to claim Brahmanical status, originated in Kashmir. Whatever the case may be, Yāmuna holds that the difference between alliance to the Vājasaneyaka and Ekāyana *śākhās* should not be taken as significant.

Yāmuna's overarching concern with the social status of the various adherents of the Pañcarātra makes sense in a culture where the authority of a corpus of texts or body of practices was explicitly determined by sociological factors. It is also worth considering whether the anxiety Yāmuna experienced over the status of Pāñcarātrika Brahmins was less reflective of his immediate environment and more a product of his extensive engagement with an intellectual tradition that was increasingly at odds with the realities of the socio-religious world. Whatever the case may be, he adopted the conventions of Mīmāṃsā discourse in his treatment of other scriptural traditions. Unlike Śaiva intellectuals, who worked out a pluralistic hierarchy of soteriologies that made space for the Pañcarātra, Yāmuna rejected a number of Śaiva groups as non-Vedic.

Yāmuna's criticism of Śaiva ascetics who adopt mortuary ornaments and undertake antinomian practices (i.e., the Kāpālikas and Kālamukhas) is relatively brief.[199] He does little more than list the ways in which they defy the norms of Vaidika society. He does however acknowledge that "the Śaivas and Pāśupatas" follow a combination of Vaidika and non-Vaidika practices, which prompts him to consider these two groups in more detail.[200] The Pāśupatas here correspond with the adherents

prapañcitam iti neha prastūyate. There is some doubt over the authorship of this text, Many scholars have claimed that it was written by Yāmuna, but Leach 2012: 77 has questioned this attribution. Note that Yāmuna refers to another work, the *Puruṣanirṇaya*, in a similar manner. In this case, at least, Yāmuna's authorship is clear thanks to Veṅkaṭanātha's *Gītārthasaṃgraharakṣā*, p. 460.

[199]See *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 91, l. 8 to 94, l. 10. Part of Yāmuna's concern here seems to stem from the fact that both Pāñcarātrika and Śaiva scriptures may be called *tantras*. For instance, see p. 101, ll. 1-2: *evaṃ śrutiviruddhasya sphuṭamūlāntarasya yat | pañcarātreṇa sādharmyaṃ tantratvenābhidhitsitam*.

[200]*Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 94, ll. 12-13: *yad api pāśupataśāivābhyāṃ viruddhāviruddhasaṃmugdhaṃ kiñcid abhihitaṃ tad api śrutibahiṣkṛtam eva*. Leach 2012: 163 very briefly mentions Yāmuna's rejection of Śaiva scriptures.

of the *Pañcārthasūtra* and its commentary by Kauṇḍinya, whereas the specific meaning of "Śaiva" is less clear. It seems, on the one hand, that it should denote the followers of the Mantramārga, but, on the other, Yāmuna specifically indicates that "the Śaivas and the rest invent life-stages that are outside the castes and life-stages established in the Veda." What exactly this means is complicated by his citation of a Śaiva verse that states "a man immediately becomes a Brahmin through nothing more than initiation; he becomes an ascetic through attendance to the skull-observance."[201]

Whoever Yāmuna means by "Śaiva" (and it seems at least plausible that he is here emphasizing the aspects of Mantramārgic doctrine that are most problematic), his point remains the same: they are non-Vedic and their texts are totally invalid. One might object by saying that these scriptures were composed by Rudra (i.e., Śiva), who is at least ostensibly a reliable authority. But Yāmuna argues that the actual identity of this "Rudra" is uncertain because the works ascribed to him contradict the Veda. It is therefore likely that we are incorrect in supposing that the "Rudra" who composed these texts is identical to Śiva.[202] In other words, Yāmuna suggests that we may be incorrectly assuming two different figures to be identical because they share the same name. Although Yāmuna's intention here is to cast doubt upon Śaiva scriptures, his mode of argumentation says something important about his own presuppositions. The broader community's collective memory regarding the authorship of these texts must be taken seriously, and these texts must have been composed by someone called "Śiva" or "Rudra." The confusion is only over the actual identity

[201] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 96, l. 13 to p. 97, l. 3: *kiñca śaivādayo vedasiddhavarṇāśramād bahiḥ | kalpayanty āśramādīni tato 'pi śrutibāhyatā || yadāhuḥ | dīkṣāpraveśamātreṇa brāhmaṇo bhavati kṣaṇāt | kāpālaṃ vratam āsthāya yatir bhavati mānavaḥ || iti*.

[202] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 97, ll. 5-9: *na ca vācyam apramāṇabhūtam iyantaṃ grantharāśiṃ kathaṃ pratyayitataro rudraḥ praṇayatīti | na ca samānanāmanirmātṛsmaraṇanibandhanam iti yuktam atiprasaṃgād iti | yataḥ | nāmaikatvakṛtabhrāntikalpanāpyupapadyate | vedabādhāt na cānyatra tāvatātiprasajyate*. I should note that I am not confident in my interpretation of the second prose sentence. If I have understood it incorrectly, my analysis will need to be reconsidered. The issue of *atiprasaṅga* seems connected, as the editor suggests, with the *pūrvapakṣin*'s argument on p. 52, where it is suggested that some avaricious person might have adopted the name Vāsudeva in composing the Pāñcarātrika scriptures. In the cited section, Yāmuna appears to suggest that the over-extension of this argument to authentic scriptures is not a danger because we may limit its application to material that contradicts the Veda.

of that figure.

While I do not wish to make too much of a comment made in passing, it seems that Yāmuna here reveals the critical role played by the adherents of Mīmāṃsā, in spite of their intentions, in justifying a cultural orientation towards scripture that ensured the category would never be regulated by anything more than community consensus. Despite the fact that Śaiva scriptures often contradict the Veda, it was, for Yāmuna, apparently inconceivable to question the communal "memory" that identified their author as someone called Rudra, so he ends up postulating confusion over who exactly is indicated by that name. Tradition remains, at least in a certain sense, unassailable and can only be questioned indirectly.

Yāmuna subsequently entertains the possibility that the Śaiva scriptures were in fact authored by the god Śiva. But he points out that a number of Purāṇas claim that Śiva produced a body of texts for the express purpose of deluding mankind and specifically for people who have "fallen from the Vedic path" (*vedamārgāpabhraṣṭa-*).[203] How seriously these types of statements were taken and in what contexts is a complicated problem that I cannot begin to answer here, but Yāmuna sees them as important enough to mention. It should be noted, however, that the Purāṇas are so varied as to offer abundant textual evidence in favor of almost any position, though it should come as no surprise that Yāmuna draws our attention to a single narrative that supports his argument.[204]

5.6 Summary and Conclusions

The intellectual-historical reception of the scriptures that emerged over the course of the first millennium was varied. Some thinkers sought to provide the theoretical grounds for rejecting this

[203] *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, p. 97, l. 11 to p. 98, l. 12.

[204] As Rocher 1986: 21 tells us "Conversely, even the aggressively sectarian statements, such as those collected by Wilson, may, within the same purāṇa, be directed at different deities."

flood of new texts, while others developed pluralistic frameworks that could accommodate, albeit in different ways, some or all of this new material together with the old. Kumārila, along with the Mīmāṃsā tradition of Vedic hermeneutics more broadly, set out the dominant criticism of scriptural pluralism and insisted on the absolute primacy of the Veda. He nevertheless allowed for other texts to claim dependent scripturality provided that they were held to be derived from the Veda. The dominant position of the Veda and its Mīmāṃsaka defenders was ultimately the one with which all others had to contend.

The Śaivas were unique in their response to this intellectual challenge; they neither denied the Veda's authority nor totally submitted themselves to it. Instead, they developed a hierarchical approach to scriptural authority that associated a diverse set of soteriological systems with successively ranked points in the Śaiva cosmography. This mode of thinking was sometimes accompanied by the notion that all scriptures were composed by God, albeit for beings with differing capacities, and hence all enjoyed a qualified type of validity. Acknowledging a relative degree of authority for other scriptural corpora did not, however, stop Śaiva thinkers from attacking their intellectual rivals, nor did it keep them from asserting that their own teachings were far superior to other religious paths.

The universalizing nature of the Śaivas' hierarchical framework obscures the fact that their greatest practical concern was the relationship between their own scriptures and the Vedic corpus, broadly defined. The nuances of this relationship, or, perhaps more accurately, its theoretical justifications, varied in accordance with shifting ontological and metaphysical presuppositions, but the basic structure was consistent. Śaiva scriptures assumed the authority of the Veda in its own sphere and depicted themselves as transcending that authority from within. As Sanderson explains, "The

religion of the Śaivas, then, was not Śaivism alone but rather Śaivism and Brahmanism."[205]

Certain aspects of this hierarchical Śaiva pluralism are adopted by Bhaṭṭa Jayanta, who was one of the first intellectuals working within a traditional intellectual discipline to acknowledge the broader community's acceptance of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava scriptures. Yet he rejects (or, perhaps more accurately, ignores) the hierarchizing tendencies of the Śaivas, theorizing instead a pluralistic approach based on the notion that different scriptures were appropriate for different types of people. He also considers the possibility that all scriptural traditions are authoritative, provided, of course, that their practices do not threaten the established social order. In both his broader and narrower frameworks, social acceptance remains critical, though Jayanta appears cognizant of the fact that any sociological argument remains ultimately subjective.

A somewhat different approach was adopted by Yāmuna, who, in terms of his self-representation, rejects the idea of pluralism and argues that the Pāñcarātrika scriptures were simply part of the broader world of Vaidika texts. Much of his *Āgamaprāmāṇya* is devoted to defending the Brahmanical status of the Pañcarātra's most socially contested adherents, and his mode of thinking bears the imprint of Kumārila's exclusionist tendencies. It should therefore come as no surprise that Yāmuna ultimately rejects the Śaiva texts and tries to show that their followers lived beyond the pale of Vaidika society, ignoring, perhaps willfully, the substantial portion of the Śaiva community that had accommodated itself to Vaidika norms.[206]

It is not without irony that Kumārila, who sought to curtail the rapid proliferation of scriptural texts, in fact provided his future opponents with a powerful intellectual tool that greatly facilitated the authorization of the very scriptures he tried to reject. The self-destructive seeds of his own argu-

[205] Sanderson 2009: 302.
[206] I adopt the notion of "accommodation" from Sanderson 2015b: 183.

mentation may be found in his reversal of the traditional Mīmāṃsā account of the validity of *smṛti*, which he redeployed as a socio-cultural criteria for denying the authority of non-Vaidika scriptures, principally but not exclusively those of the Buddhists. He was apparently blind to the critically fragile nature of an argument that roots itself in community consensus; for, as Jayanta attests, the nature of that consensus changed rapidly, opening up a pathway for texts rejected by Kumārila to enjoy full authorization through their acceptance by the broader community. His blindness to this danger was undoubtedly conditioned by a worldview that doggedly rejected the very possibility of historical development and was unable to see that the "current state of things" was diachronically unstable. In this way, at least, Mīmāṃsā's denial of history became a great facilitator of religious change over time.

Conclusions

The "Age of Scripture" began during a time of great change for Indian culture. Writing transformed the ways in which people engaged with the words of both gods and men. Literature emerged as a self-conscious practice. Written *kāvya* ("poetry"), that great monument of Indian civilization, was a symptom of this technological revolution. Sanskrit, the old sacerdotally circumscribed language of Vedas, became a tool for aesthetic, political, and intellectual expression. Philosophical works were written down and the very discipline of philosophy was changed in the process. Intellectuals came increasingly to have access to the writings of their opponents, allowing for nuanced and sophisticated engagement with the ideas of outsiders — something more or less unimaginable in an entirely oral culture. And the great gods and goddesses that would come to define the religious world of traditional South Asia rose to dominance for the first time.

Over this same period, a shared textual culture came to govern the production and transmission of diverse bodies of scripture. It begins, or at least first comes clearly into view, with new and sometimes extensive doctrinal teachings that were attributed to the Buddha despite being composed at least several centuries after his death. These texts, which would eventually come to be called Mahāyāna *sūtras*, are not a monolith, and we must remain sensitive to their internal diversity and the nuances of their intertextual relationships, both with each other and with other types of Buddhist scripture. But it is nonetheless striking that many go far beyond merely elaborating upon the common stock of teachings and narratives found in the traditional Āgamic *sūtras*, adopting doctrines that were, at least at times, perceived to stand in contrast with what had come before.

Close examination of these new Mahāyāna texts provides insight into how certain Buddhists went about bringing the Buddha's words into definite textual form. They incorporate underlying sources with diverse concerns, and some authorize personal inspiration and visionary experiences as channels through which one could receive new teachings from a buddha. Yet other aspects of Mahāyāna *sūtras* are highly traditional; for example, they abound in formulaic language, which hints at the ever present influence of memorized material drawn from oral traditions that remain out of reach.[207] Extended passages were at times adapted from one *sūtra* into another, though it is often uncertain whether this phenomenon is the product of oral or written influences.[208] Many Mahāyāna texts, perhaps even most, were subjected to significant expansion and modification over time, with linguistic transposition and changes in the prolixity of expression especially frequent.

It is difficult to know whether the authors of Mahāyāna *sūtras* saw themselves as participating in a process somehow different from the elaboration and transmission of Āgamic materials, especially during the earliest period of their production. But at least some of these new *sūtras* called themselves or were categorized as **vedulla* or, in more Sanskritized registers, *vaitulya*, which suggests that they were consciously differentiated from the Āgamas even at an early date. And some Mahāyāna *sūtras* directly acknowledge that their status was different from and more contested than that of their traditional predecessors; the *Lotus Sūtra*, for example, expresses significant anxiety over its own reception, making explicit reference, albeit in a prophetic register, to its possible rejection as a poetic invention, a concern that is common to a number of the emergent **vedulla* texts.[209]

However the early authors of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* may have understood their own activities, they

[207]The relationship between oral and written traditions, and the influence of the former on the latter in the context of Mahāyāna *sūtra* composition, is discussed in Nattier 2003: 57-59.

[208]For the analysis of one such example, see Apple 2015.

[209]It should be noted that Silk 2019: 274 has expressed significant reservations about the "historicity behind the rhetoric" in this particular context.

opened up a new and exceptionally productive category of textuality that placed significant doctrinal advances in the mouth of the Buddha and helped shape a powerful model for the production and continual elaboration of scripture. By studying the self-representational narratives of these texts, we can begin to see, if faintly, the relationship between the Buddha's words and the human beings who gave them a definite textual shape. We find many references to *dharmabhāṇakas*, preachers and textual specialists entrusted with the transmission of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. These figures were often depicted as future buddhas, a claim that undoubtedly served as an authorizing function for the texts they transmitted.

Although Mahāyāna *sūtras* do not directly describe the textual practices that resulted in their composition, remaining committed to largely idealized depictions of their own textual histories, we may infer something about how they were composed through close attention to their textual fabric and to the nature of their transmission. Their authors made use of traditional narrative forms in making new types of claims, and were, it seems, deeply versed in the older body of scriptures. When we compare chronologically and geographically distinct versions of a single Mahāyāna *sūtra*, we find that they were substantially modified in the course of transmission; small changes in wording are ubiquitous, but major additions and structural changes are also common. These modifications are integral to Mahāyāna scripturality (though certainly not unique to it), and they should be seen as part of the same scale of textual practices that accounts for the composition of this class of texts.[210] This flexibility was eventually reflected in the world of theory, with some Buddhist intellectuals coming to claim that any true statement could be considered "the words of the Buddha."

The proliferation of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* allows us to recover an important cultural consensus

[210]See especially Silk 2021: 153-154, who I here quote a second time: "The question of how to understand the *growth* of Mahāyāna scripture is, in this view, identical with the question of how to understand the *nature* of their initial composition."

about scripture: more or less fluid oral traditions could be transformed into definite texts and placed into the mouths of divine or divinized figures. The only way to explain the enormity of the textual record, the dynamism of its components, and the fluid shape of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* is to postulate that many Buddhist monks saw the production (though they probably did not see it as production in the same way that we do) and modification of *buddhavacana* as legitimate activities. I have hypothesized that the boundary between what was and was not acceptable probably varied depending on time, place, and community, with a scale of related textual practices accounting for the initial composition, if we may really call it compositon, and continual recomposition of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

The notion of *buddhavacana* finds an expectedly close parallel in the the Jaina context, where scriptures are, just as in the case of the Buddhist Āgamas, associated with the teachings of a historical (or historicized) figure.[211] Perhaps more surprisingly, a similar self-authorizing framework appears in scriptural texts produced by the devotees of Śiva and Viṣṇu. The Śaiva texts are the first to appear in the textual record, though we cannot say much about the initial conceptualization of the oldest among them, the *Pañcārthasūtra* (2nd c. CE).[212] Yet it is certain that this text was later held to be scripture because a number of text-external narratives attribute its composition to an earthly embodiment of Śiva.

The next group of initiatory Śaiva scriptures, the Pramāṇas, are rather different in terms of their form and self-representational idiom, at least insofar as we can tell. Although they are almost entirely lost, the fragment that has been preserved suggests that, much like Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the

[211] Though it should be noted that the Jains (as well as the Buddhists) see their leaders as having recovered an eternal teaching. Access to that teaching, at least for ordinary people, requires the figure of the Jina, or, in the case of Buddhism, Buddha.

[212] It should be noted that texts venerating Viṣṇu and the figures who came to be seen as his embodiments were common, but their form and content are quite different from the subsequent Vaiṣṇava scriptures.

Pramāṇas took the form of a dialogue, though we are left to wonder whether it involved Śiva and the Goddess or other figures. They also appear to have been composed in *anuṣṭubh* verse, bringing them closer in line with the textual form that had come to dominate the *smṛti* genre.

Later Śaiva scriptures, both for initiates and non-initiates, provide a clearer conceptualization of the relationship between Śiva's divine words and the definite textual forms that they took in the world. His teachings are depicted as undergoing a continual process of condensation and reformulation, with new and revised texts produced to suit the needs and capacities of their audiences. Party to this process of continual recomposition were various gods and seers, and, according to some scriptures, human beings, whose editorial activities were not understood to alter fundamentally the identity or character of Śiva's teachings.

I have suggested that we might usefully think of these narratives of textual condensation and recomposition as mythologized accounts of the ongoing processes whereby Śaiva scriptures were actually produced. Examining different versions of the same text reveals that many underwent a seemingly continual process of expansion and contraction, and passages from preexisting scriptures were often used as the fundamental building blocks for the production of new ones. A conceptual foundation for these types of textual practices is felt in the bivalency of the term *jñāna* ("knowledge"), which denotes both Śiva's teachings in general and their appearance in definite scriptural forms. Although the issue is never discussed directly, we may presume that this co-referentiality is symptomatic of a textual culture that saw fluid traditional knowledge and its realization in definite texts as two poles on a dynamic spectrum rather than as sharply distinct categories.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that there is a largely unaddressed tension between the textual practices that account for the continual production of new Śaiva scriptures and the self-representational idiom that those scriptures adopt. These texts do not discuss the actual mechanics

of their own production, modification, or redaction; they sometimes describe themselves as the direct speech of Śiva or, as Shaman Hatley notes in the context of the *Brahmayāmala*, a "foundational, originary scripture" (though the intended force of these types of claims is often obscured by contradictory ones made within the same text).[213] We must also confront the discrepancy between the approach adopted by the exegetical tradition, which regularly seeks to provide extremely granular analysis of scriptural verbiage, and the fluidity with which those who produced and modified scriptures treated their language and content, at least at times.[214]

Although I cannot offer a definitive solution to these problems, I would nevertheless suggest that a significant degree of dissonance should be expected; there was no centralized or institutional source of authority beyond the tradition itself, and its principle stewards, Śaiva gurus, were often endowed with an almost apotheosized status. Though we have no direct evidence to speak of, it seems fair to speculate that this type of context would foster approaches to scripture that varied over time and place as well as between communities. The divergence between compositional and exegetical contexts may also point to a sort of disciplinary distinction more than anything else. In other words, the type of activity (i.e., engaging directly in the transmission of a scripture or seeking only to explain it) determined how one approached a scripture and what textual practices were considered suitable when engaging with it. The exegetes were certainly aware of textual variation, and some saw no inconsistency in acknowledging both the possibility of textual corruptions and the existence of solecisms that were derived from God (*aiśa-*).

The early history of the Vaiṣṇava scriptural corpus is more obscure, especially if we limit our discussion of "scripture" to texts that explicitly identify themselves as religiously oriented teachings

[213]Hatley 2016: 167.
[214]A similar sort of problem is equally present in the Buddhist context.

that find their ultimate origins in God or some other divine being.[215] This problem is especially acute in the case of the Pañcarātra, a community that would come to produce one of the most important independent bodies of Vaiṣṇava scripture. External testimony indicates that the Pāñcarātrikas had some sort of scriptural (or, perhaps more conservatively, textual) corpus by at least the fourth or fifth century CE, but we can do little more than speculate with respect to the nature of those works, none of which is extant. A handful of fragments preserved in a much later commentarial work suggests that some may have mimicked the style of the prose Upaniṣads while simultaneously attributing their ultimate origins to Viṣṇu.

The oldest extant Pāñcarātrika scriptures were produced in the eighth or ninth century CE, and it is all but certain that they represent a significant departure from whatever came before them; their style and content bears the obvious influence of the burgeoning corpus of the Śaiva Mantramārga.[216] Many of these scriptures contain self-authorizing narratives that depict their descent from Viṣṇu into definite textual form, and it is clear that their authors and transmitters employed the same types of textual practices as those who produced and modified Śaiva texts. It is therefore evident that the adherents of the Pañcarātra conceptualized their scriptures in the same way as the Śaivas, and they employed, at least insofar as we can tell, the same types of textual practices in composing and continually recomposing them.

Many Pāñcarātrika scriptures present themselves as the product of an extended editorial process that begins with Viṣṇu himself and continues down through a number of Vedic seers. But we also find, at least in a few instances, a framework that places Pāñcarātrika scriptures into a hierarchical relationship with one another on the basis of speaker attributions that are largely at odds with the

[215] Although the cultural tendency to attribute all forms of systematic knowledge to these types of figures makes the boundary between scripture and non-scripture somewhat fuzzy, at least parts of the tradition thematize the issue in terms of content.

[216] Sanderson 2009: 58-69.

self-representative narratives found within the texts themselves. How much may be inferred from the appearance of this model is difficult to say, but it suggests that the conceptualization of scriptures vis-à-vis their putative speakers was not always closely connected with the self-authorizing narratives that appear in their opening sections.[217]

Coming to Terms with the Age of Scripture

Intellectuals responded to the "Age of Scripture" in different ways. One of the more historically consequential attempts to control, at least theoretically, the seemingly unchecked proliferation of scriptural texts was set out by the practitioners of Vedic hermeneutics, who sought to adapt their longstanding disciplinary positions to this new purpose. Mīmāṃsā had by an early period offered something like a definition of scripture, which they limited to texts concerned with *dharma*. They further circumscribed the category through an epistemological argument: *dharma* cannot be perceived directly, so no text with an author could ever be considered scripture because no author could ever have personal knowledge of *dharma*. This position meant that the Veda, which, according to Mīmāṃsā, was the only eternal and unauthored text, was also the only independent scripture. In other words, it was the only reliable means to learn about *dharma*. Yet other texts (and untextualized practices) could enjoy a form of dependent scripturality if they could be shown to be based on the Veda through a sort of sociological argument: if the prescriptions of a particular text are put into practice by the same people who perform Vedic rituals, we may then conclude that they are based on the Veda even in the absence of any explicit textual evidence. Dependent scriptures were called *smṛti* ("memory") because, like memories, they were believed to be based on a previous cognitive event (i.e., the initial "hearing" of the underlying Vedic passage from which the *smṛti* was

[217] As noted in Chapter 3, Leach 2012: 82 makes this point about the *Jayākhyasaṃhitā* in particular.

supposedly derived).

Mīmāṃsā's theorization of dependent scripturality was initially an inclusive exercise meant primarily to authorize texts and practices that were not found within the Vedic corpus but were nevertheless commonly accepted by the Vaidika community. Yet, in coming to terms with the text-historical changes that embodied the Age of Scripture, the Mīmāṃsaka Kumārila Bhaṭṭa transformed the theory of dependent scripturality into an exclusionary framework that he used to deny the authoritative character of all texts falling outside the Veda (*vedabāhya-*). He reversed the notion of "sameness of agents," arguing that cultured people do not accept texts attributed to the Buddha, Jina, and other similar figures as scriptures, which proves, in his view, that they are unauthoritative.

Kumārila's positions are multifaceted and theoretically nuanced; he devotes particular energy to denying the possibility of omniscience, which underpins the notion that a figure like the Buddha, who is supposed by his followers to have supernormal faculties of perception, might serve as a source of information about normally unknowable things. He thematizes the problem of language, arguing that the Veda's exceptional linguistic character proves that it can have neither a human nor divine author. And, at one point, he even attempts to limit the production of dependent scriptures to figures mentioned in the Veda. Yet sociological issues remain a constant, if at times theoretically deemphasized, touchstone for his exclusionary framework.

Kumārila's exclusionism undoubtedly achieved a dominant place in the intellectual discourse. Subsequent thinkers, whatever their position, largely took his work as their starting point when discussing the problem of scriptural authority. But a far more consequential set of frameworks for thinking about scripture, at least when measured against later developments in India's social and religious history, emerged among the devotees of Śiva and Viṣṇu. The Śaivas were especially concerned with providing a nuanced account of the relationship between their own scriptural corpus

and the Veda. They took Vedic prescriptions for granted, accepting them as authoritative within their own sphere, while positioning Śaiva scriptures above them as a more specialized body of knowledge suitable for an initiated elite.

In some contexts, the Śaivas went even further with their hierarchical approach to pluralistic scriptural authority. They postulated that each of the major soteriological systems, including even Buddhism and Jainism, could lead its adherents to different points in the Śaiva cosmography. Each enjoyed a pragmatic sort of authority based on its ability to produce a degree of spiritual success. This framework should not be confused with an entirely tolerant approach to scripture. Śaiva thinkers still attacked their intellectual rivals, sometimes vehemently, and asserted their own absolute superiority as the only system capable of producing true liberation. But their admission of relative authority to other teachings is categorically different from Kumārila's exclusionism, which rejects non-Vaidika (and here I use the term in its broad sense) textual corpora out of hand.[218] But, in spite of the universalizing idiom of the Śaiva's pluralistic framework, it is nonetheless clear that the most critical issue was the relationship between the Śaiva and Vaidika corpora. To again quote Sanderson, "The religion of the Śaivas, then, was not Śaivism alone but rather Śaivism and Brahmanism, a fact borne out not only by their literature but also by biographical data and the epigraphic record of the activities of Śaiva kings."[219]

During this period, many Vaidika intellectuals simply ignored the flood of new scriptures attributed to Śiva and Viṣṇu, at least in the context of their more formal philosophical writings. But

[218]Kumārila admits from time to time that the Buddhists have incorporated aspects of the Vedic corpus into their own texts, but this sort of plagiarism does not provide them with any sort of pragmatic or limited authority. The only exception to this overarching orientation appears in his *Tantravārttika* where he entertains, on one occasion, the idea that certain Buddhist teachings are based on the Upaniṣads and enjoy authority insofar as they help to destroy excessive attachment. See *Tantravārttika* on 1.3.2 in Harikai 2008: A.168; A'.81. But note also that this section is unlikely to represent Kumārila's final view.

[219]Sanderson 2009: 302.

a few exceptional thinkers attempted to come to terms with the realities of the Age of Scripture. Bhaṭṭa Jayanta, a Kashmiri Naiyāyika who served as a government minister during the late ninth century, sketches out several possible approaches, and it is difficult to determine which one is really his. At one point, he argues that the broader community accepts both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava texts, which demonstrates that they must be authoritative (note here the reversal of Kumārila's argument). He likewise entertains the possibility that all major scriptural traditions are authoritative so long as they do not pose a threat to the broader social world. Jayanta bases this argument on sociological factors as well: he points out that all well-established bodies of scripture are accepted by at least some intelligent people, so there are no good grounds to doubt that they were composed by competent authorities (or else by God).

Yāmunācārya, an eleventh century adherent of the Pañcarātra, adopts a different approach. He tries to show that the Pāñcarātrika scriptures were fully Vedic in character, claiming, for instance, that God composed them by drawing on disparate parts of the Veda, a notion that notably contradicts the self-representational narratives found at the beginning of many of these texts. Yāmuna also argues for the fundamental unity of the Pāñcarātrika ritual community, defending the socially contested Brahmanical status of some of its members. Yet he denies the authority of the Śaiva scriptures and adopts the idiom of Mīmāṃsā in declaring them to be outside the pale of the Veda, rejecting, at least in terms of his own self-understanding, a pluralistic approach to scriptural authority.

Future Directions

I have tried to chart the outlines of a historically critical set of developments in the history of South Asia's religious world, though there remain a number of significant opportunities to enrich

my account of the Age of Scripture. The transition from orality to literacy in the context of the early Buddhist traditions is as of yet poorly understood, and a philologically sensitive study of this process promises to shed additional light on the early history of the Mahāyāna. It also bears repeating that the very notion of *buddhavacana* was complex. I have emphasized the emergent Mahāyāna *sūtras* at the expense of other forms of Buddhist scripture, but we often glimpse close intertextual relationships between Mahāyāna texts and other genres, such as the narratives preserved in Avadānas and Pūrvayogas. Deeper insight into these less studied genres, though it may remain elusive, would likely provide further information about the emergence of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and would certainly help us construct a better account of how Buddhist communities in classical South Asia understood the broader category of *buddhavacana*.

Another significant gap in my research concerns the scriptural corpora of the Jain community. Their writings explicitly thematize a number of issues that are directly relevant to this dissertation: the problem of scriptural loss, the relationship between oral and written traditions, and the complexities of canonicity. A close study of these types of issues, together with a consideration of the Jain scriptures themselves, would undoubtedly serve to broaden further our understanding of scripture in India and might illuminate, albeit indirectly, attitudes towards and conceptualizations of textual practices that are not discussed as explicitly by other groups.[220]

Another crucial set of data is presented by the Purāṇic corpus, which I have dealt with only in passing. These texts often embody a form of scripturality that is similar to that of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava corpora: their ultimate origins are generally attributed to God, while their definite forms are depicted as the product of a long process of condensation at the hands of various divine and

[220]For example, the Jain narratives concerning Devarddhigaṇi, who is believed to have overseen the process whereby the Jaina canon was committed to writing.

sagely figures.[221] Yet their widespread acceptance and putatively close connection with the Veda meant that they played a somewhat different socio-religious role from the one played by Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava scriptures. The Purāṇas served, first of all, as a textual vehicle for spreading cultural norms among communities traditionally excluded from Vaidika society, and, second, as an authorizing medium for contested practices adapted from Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ritual contexts.

Close study of Purāṇic manuscript traditions also offers a promising avenue for further research into how people thought about creating and modifying divine texts. Although the early textual history of the Purāṇas remains poorly understood, scholars have come to focus more attention on the complex processes whereby they were produced and modified during the course of their transmission. Hans Bakker in particular has argued that they underwent a sort of composition-in-transmission, and a close study of the change in particular Purāṇas (or the relationship between notional Purāṇas and the various manuscript traditions that claimed filiation with them) over time would yield concrete data concerning the actual process whereby diverse traditions were worked into scriptural forms. Comparison of different Purāṇas might similarly help to isolate some of those underlying traditions and allow us to glimpse at something like their pre-textual sources.[222]

The Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika corpora, which I have discussed in some detail, offer a number of additional and exceptionally promising avenues of further inquiry. Case studies focused on specific examples of textual reuse and recomposition, which would require attention to various manuscript recensions and their interrelationships, might provide an opportunity to think through the notion of scripture in new ways. Equally interesting is a phenomenon seen especially in South India:

[221] See Williams 2017: 38-46 for an introduction to the self-representational narratives found in many Purāṇas. Williams also notes, on p. 36, that "the early Śaiva tantras mirror the Purāṇic model of revelation, but, as we will see, with some very significant departures in their intended audience, fundamental theology, and sense of scriptural identity."

[222] Bakker 2019a: 175-184.

the composition of new (or seemingly new) scriptures under the name of older, well-established texts. Scholars have also made significant advances in understanding the non-standard register of language seen in especially early Śaiva and Pāñcarātrika manuscript traditions, and they have discussed how that language was often standardized in subsequent periods. The evidence may be sparse, but an attempt should be made to understand the conceptual side of these phenomena, both the use of non-standard Sanskrit and its subsequent "correction."

Finally, I have not addressed the close intertextual relationship between certain Śaiva and Buddhist scriptures. This problem has been studied in some detail by Alexis Sanderson, who revealed that a number of Buddhist tantras adopted passages from Śaiva ones. Yet there remain significant gaps in our understanding, some of which may not be answerable. These passages appear at times decontextualized within Buddhist scriptures, and it is unclear how the authors of these texts understood their activities. Were these passages meant to authorize specific practices, and, if so, how could they do so given their seeming unintelligibility? Were they adapted by people who had already assumed for them some type of esoteric meaning not directly expressed by their words? How should we understand the fact that the commentators often offer widely divergent interpretations of the practices they are meant to prescribe? Although these issues may remain opaque, a systematic study of the phenomenon of cross-community textual incorporation might serve to provide some further insight into how some Buddhists thought about scriptural texts.[223]

[223] See the related discussion in Szántó 2012, vol. 1: 13-14, though he is not speaking of passages adopted from Śaiva sources.

The End of an Age?

The cultural orientations that emerged during the Age of Scripture were long lasting, though the urgency and dynamism with which the intellectual tradition addressed itself to the theoretical problem of scriptural authority seems to have become weaker over time. Yet other types of concerns with scripture surfaced with varying degrees of intensity. For instance, the authors of the *dharmanibandhas* ("Compendia on *Dharma*"), a new type of anthological work that first appears in the eleventh or twelfth century, engage in text-specific discussions that are largely foreign to or deemphasized in the earlier discourse.[224] Florinda de Simini draws our attention to Ballālasena, the twelfth century author of the *Dānasāgara*, who explains why he accepts certain parts of specific Purāṇas to be authoritative while judging other parts of the same text to be unauthoritative.[225] And elsewhere he acknowledges the independent circulation of individual "chapters" claiming filiation with the *Skandapurāṇa*, rejecting them as forgeries. This type of practical concern with specific texts, rather than overarching genres or theoretical problems, is new and somewhat foreign to the debates that characterized the Age of Scripture.[226]

The concern with textual corruption had of course already been thematized by the Mīmāṃsakas, though Kumārila broke with the earlier tradition in attempting to undermine the theoretical grounds for adopting a critical approach to the *smṛti* genre. Yet there is limited evidence to suggest that Mīmāṃsā's theoretical approach to *smṛti* was applied as a pragmatic text critical principle, though Dharmaśāstric commentators sometimes felt compelled to explain away specific examples

[224]Brick 2015: 19 suggests that the authors of these new texts may have been "experiencing something of a crisis of scriptural authority."

[225]*Dānasāgara Dānanāmāni*, esp. vv. 59 and 62-64. There are however continuties — note Ballālasena's use of content as the principal means to determine whether something is authoritative or not. This passage is quoted and translated in de Simini 2014: 616-619. See also Brick 2015: 19.

[226]Though this tendency may be the accident of a limited textual record rather than a true indicator of the breadth of intellectual concerns during the earlier period.

of contradiction between *śruti* and *smṛti*. At least insofar as the explicit thematization of authority was concerned, intellectuals like Śabara and Kumārila show almost no interest in the problem of specific texts; they are concerned with theoretical issues concerning broad textual categories.[227] Neither the Mīmāṃsakas nor the Dharmaśāstric commentators thematize the text-wide implications of corrupt passages (for example, does one corruption force us to change our assessment of an entire text?).

Perhaps the twelfth or thirteenth century witnesses not so much an end to the Age of *Scripture* but its continuation in another form: the Age of *Scriptures*. People continued to produce scriptures, to modify them in transmission, and to recompose them under the same names, presumably employing the same types of textual practices as before. But, by this point, the foundational scriptural categories were more or less established and theistic movements had long since become an integral part of the broader Vaidika culture.[228] It is true that the traditionalism of Sanskrit intellectual discourse drove the continual production of commentarial works and other independent treatises that dutifully repeated the views of Kumārila and others, but more creative works began to deal with different types of issues, such as Ballālasena's concern with the textual makeup of specific Purāṇas. And sectarian groups in South India, both Vaiṣṇava or Śaiva, began to attack one another in new ways, sometimes over text-critical issues related to one another's scriptures (though there is continuity here too; recall, for example, Yāmunācārya's rejection of the Śaiva corpus).

How much these developments reflect real change is difficult to say; our textual records are far richer for this later period, and it may be that the availability of a wide variety of manuscripts simply provides greater access to a more diverse set of perspectives. For example, do the sectarian debates

[227]Note that Kumārila does list the authors of the authoritative Smṛti. Yet he is certainly not inclined to entertain the possibility that texts might falsely circulate under these names. See Chapter 4, pp. 232-234.

[228]Though see Aparāditya's late attempts at denying the authority of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava scriptures.

of sixteenth and seventeenth century South India really embody new forms of argumentation and debate, or is the record of these types of disagreements simply lost for earlier periods?[229] I doubt this question can be answered definitively; our response will always come down to whether we want to emphasize change or continuity. What is clear, however, is that we must also seek to understand how and to what degree other contemporaneous shifts in the historical landscape affected the production, modification, and conceptualziation of scriptural materials, including the rise of the Delhi sultanate and spread of Islamic political power throughout much of South Asia, the emergence of vernacular written cultures, the increasing spread and availability of manuscript materials, and the decline of Buddhism in South Asia outside of Sri Lanka and Nepal.

[229] Some of these issues are discussed in Fisher 2017: 99ff.

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