Yoginī and goddess possession in early śaiva tantras

Judit Törzsök

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Although possession in general and possession by *yoginī*s in particular is a subject that has often been treated in the secondary literature, the testimony of the earliest *śaiva* sources of the *yoginī* cult have never been analyzed in detail. This is due to two main reasons: on the one hand, many of these sources are still available only in manuscript form,[1] on the other, studies dealing with these manuscripts concentrated on other issues.[2] In this paper, therefore, I intend to present some of the earliest tantric sources teaching the cult of *yoginī*s, which, at the same time, also deal with deity or *yoginī* possession. I shall thus attempt to show in what forms and contexts *yoginī* and goddess possession appears in the tantric sources and how possession comes to be integrated into the cult of *yoginī*s.

A working definition of possession

Before looking at the relevant descriptions, it may be worth attempting to find a definition of what can be considered deity possession or *yoginī* possession. As Padoux 1999 points out, there are various ways in which the *śaiva* practitioner can transform his body into Śiva or Bhairava. These ritual transformations, however, in which mantras are placed on various parts of the body, cannot be considered possession. In contrast, an important defining characteristic of possession, whether it is caused by a deity or a spirit, is that the god or spirit in question enters someone's body, and this is explicitly stated. In these cases, the verb *āviś-* and its derivatives are used in Sanskrit, which sometimes alternate with related forms such as *samāviś-* and *praviś-*.

A further detail could be added to this general definition. The texts themselves often state that possession is inferred from a number of visible signs (*cihna*s, *lakṣaṇa*s or *pratyaya*s), such as the acquisition of certain supernatural powers (seeing the past and the future, for instance) and well-known external signs: trembling, rolling on the ground, eyes rolling etc.[3] Among these, some external bodily signs such as trembling may well be recognized as indicating possession. Supernatural powers, however, are also often promised to the persevering practitioner who performs certain rituals according to prescription, without being possessed by the deity. Therefore, if supernatural powers are promised, it does not necessarily imply that they are acquired through possession.

This being said, texts often describe possession in the context of the acquisition of supernatural powers. In fact, possession is never presented under a separate heading in early *yoginī* tantras, but is mentioned in

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[1]Smith 2006, which is the latest comprehensive treatment of this subject, does not use any manuscript sources.
[2]Most importantly, see Sanderson 2009, dealing with the relation of Buddhist and *śaiva* tantrism.
[3]See *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 3.49ff, *Mālinīvijayottara* 3.53-54, *Kubjikāmata* 10.82 ff, of which the last one distinguishes between spirit possession (*bhūtāveśa*) and divine possession (*bhāvāveśa*) of various kinds. Trembling and falling on the ground may be part of both, but seeing the past and the future or knowing the *śāstra*s suddenly can only be due to divine possession. See also *Jayadrathayāmala* 3.14.72a for trembling and 3.14.75ab for seeing the past, present and future, in a passage describing the provoked possession or *svasthāveśa* of a girl (*kanyā*) by the emaciated goddess (*kṛśodarī*). Many examples can be found in the *Kriyākālaguṇottara*, whose relevants chapters mainly deal with controlled possession or with controlling possession in others.

connection with some other topic. Such related topics include, as we shall see, the list of signs a good guru must display, the results one obtains thanks to various practices of mantra propitiation and recitation (*mantrasādhana*), the power of certain mantras, or the result of particular observances (*vrata*s).

Moreover, descriptions of *yoginī* possession in tantras of the *yoginī* cult imply in most cases that the possession is desirable but not strictly controlled, and that it is the practitioner himself who intends to be and becomes possessed. It is this element that distinguishes *yoginī* tantras from *bhūta*-tantras or other tantric uses of possession. For *bhūta*-tantric prescriptions are mostly aimed at curing someone of spirit possession (as for instance when a child is possessed by a demoness); while in other cases, the practitioner produces possession, usually in young boys or girls, to use them as oracles or servants.[4]

Finally, attention must be drawn to an element of *śaiva* initiation which is often considered to imply possession. There is a solemn moment in the course of initiation when the guru transforms his hand with mantras into Śiva, which is thus called Śiva's hand (*śivahasta*), and places his hand thus transformed on the head of the disciple.[5] This act is usually said to induce intense devotion[6] in the disciple. The same rite is present in *yoginī* tantras, with the difference that the hand is usually called Śakti's hand (*śaktihasta*). The placement of the empowered hand can precede[7] or follow[8] the moment when the disciple sees the divinities of his cult on the *maṇḍala* the first time.[9] The whole procedure is often interpreted as suggesting some form of deity possession, either through the placement of the Śiva-hand itself[10] or through the vision of the *maṇḍala*, from which the deities are said to enter the disciple.[11]

It is clear that this act implies some intense infusion of Śivaness or *śakti*ness into the disciple. However, before the appearance of *kaula* cults, this moment is not said in āgamic texts to imply real possession of the disciple by the deity.[12] Rather, the Śiva hand or *śakti* hand is described as cutting or loosening the bonds of the initiand, which shall then be cut in a more radical way in the course of fire rituals.[13] By implication, the 'rite of the Śiva hand' (*śivahastavidhi*) is also said to be a purificatory rite (*saṃskāra*). Since it contributes to the cutting of the bonds, or perhaps just because it is often the last element of the ritual sequence, it is sometimes also described as the crucial or defining part of the preliminary initiation or *samaya-dīkṣā*.[14]

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[4]The aim of this paper is not to explore or categorize various kinds of possession. For a general survey concerning India, see Smith 2006. For the *bhūta*-tantric treatment of possession, see Slouber 2007a, 2007b.

[5]See e.g. *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṃgraha* 13.5ff, *Somaśambhupaddhati* III.1.108-9

[6]See e.g. *Somaśambhupaddhati* III.1.108 *śivasevogratā*, lit. 'passion to serve / honour Śiva.'

[7]As in e.g. *Somaśambhupaddhati* III.1.107 prescribing the *śivahasta*, after which the disciple casts a flower on the *maṇḍala* blindfolded and his initiation name is determined accordingly. This suggests that his hand is guided by Śiva in some way. (Let us note here that the translation given by Brunner *ad loc* suggests that the blindfold is removed before the casting of the flower. However, this is certainly not the case and the blindfold would be rather useless if removed before. The absolutive *apanīya* in verse 108d, with the blindfold, *andhakārakam*, as its object, must be understood with the next sentence. The guru makes the disciple cast the flower (*prakṣepayet*), then the blindfold is removed (*apanīya*), and the name is given (*nāma kuryād*). Numerous parallels also confirm this. The misunderstanding may come from the rather odd sequence found in the late *Uttarakāmika* and cited by Brunner *ad loc*.)

[8]As in *Tantrāloka* 15.450ff, in which Abhinavagupta follows the sequence and variant given in the *Svacchandatantra* (451-452ab on how the disciples see the *maṇḍala* after the removal of the blindfold, and then *śivahasta* in 456cd-459cd).

[9]It is not possible to analyze the variants of this rite, which differ sometimes considerably. For a few examples, see Brunner 1977:xxxi ff. in *Somaśambhupaddhati* III.

[10]See e.g. Brunner 1977:xxxiv in *Somaśambhupaddhati* III, who tentatively suggests this interpretation.

[11]This is the interpretation given by Abhinavagupta in *Tantrāloka* 15.452 ff, summarized in Sanderson 1986:169.

[12]See also Sanderson 1986:169 note 2, saying that the possession noted by Abhinavagupta is nominal in non-*kaula* contexts.

[13]See e.g. the citation of the *Rurusaṃhitā* by Nārāyaṇa *ad Mṛgendra Kriyāpāda* 7.14 *pāśacchedakaraḥ kṣemī śivahasta iti smṛtaḥ* (the edition retains *kṣaumī* for *kṣemī*). The same line is cited by Kṣemarāja *ad Svacchandatantra* 4.59cd without pointing out the source.

[14]E.g. *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṃgraha* 13.11cd: *śivahastam anuprāptaḥ samayy eva -m- ihocyate*. In the earliest text of the Siddhānta, the *Niśvāsa Mūlasūtra*, it is mentioned in the last section of the so-called *vidyādīkṣā*.

The absence of deity possession in the core rituals of several early tantras

Just as *śaiva* initiation is devoid of any deity possession in pre-*kaula* texts, most early tantras do not mention deity possession at all in their core rituals. Neither the *Niśvāsa* nor the *Vīṇāśikhatantra* does speak of deity possession as a result of intiation or mantra propitiation. This is perhaps not very surprising in the case of the *Niśvāsa*, which later becomes regarded as a tantra of the Siddhānta. The *Niśvāsa*, nevertheless, does know and describe possession, but always as a supernatural power (*siddhi*) of making another person,[15] especially a young boy,[16] possessed. The procedure is later termed *svasthāveśa*, or 'possession of a healthy person' or 'healthy possession,' to distinguish it from possession that is considered an illness. The *Niśvāsa Guhyasūtra* prescribes the use of water, probably to transfer the deity or spirit to the body of the boy, but it does not specify what deity or spirit is involved and invoked. This is perhaps because in such *siddhi* it does not matter which deity causes possession: the aim is to obtain prognostication or some other superhuman power of seeing, through the young boy as a medium. The practitioner may, therefore, choose whichever deity he prefers. The chosen deity may possibly differ for different aims. In any case, this *siddhi* is mentioned in a cursory way as one of many in the latest part of the *Niśvāsa* and it does not seem to be of particular concern in the rest of the text.

The lack of deity possession is perhaps more surprising in the case of the *Vīṇāśikhatantra*. Since the *Vīṇāśikhatantra* does teach the cult of female powers as goddesses, worshipped as emanations of Śiva's power (*śakti*), one would expect the four goddesses or their combined *śakti* to cause possession, as is the case in several *yoginī* tantras that teach possession by Rudra's Power (*rudraśakti*). The absence of deity possession in the *Vīṇāśikhatantra* may be significant and point to the fact that possession was not a core part of tantric ritual and doctrine in the formative period. One could argue, of course, that the *Vīṇāśikha* is a short text that may not contain all elements of doctrine and practice. What is much more surprising is the marginal place of possession in a long and detailed text of the *yoginī* cult: the *Brahmayāmala*.

The *Brahmayāmala*, which is probably the earliest text of the *yoginī* cult,[17] also mentions possession in lists of supernatural powers:[18] in between, for instance, attracting people and causing hatred among them. Possession in this sense most probably denotes *svasthāveśa*, as in the *Niśvāsa*, performed in another person. There are also a few general mentions of deity possession as an aim of the practitioner. Two occurrences are to be found in what is the latest part of this text, in chapters 88 and 98. In both cases, possession is promised as one of the results of a particular practice. Thus, the very powerful Bhairava *mudrā*, which does not require any mantra recitation or visualisation, is said to cause possession in the practitioner (we are not told by whom);[19] and the practice of *kulayoga*, which is very briefly described, is also claimed to induce the signs of possession in the practitioner, who quickly becomes one with the deity.[20] Let us note that the latter sentence is strongly reminiscent of a recurrent formula, which can be found in an identical form in later *yoginī* tantras, in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*,[21] the *Tantrasadbhāva*,[22] and

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[15] *Niśvāsa Mūlasūtra* 7.14c, *Guhyasūtra* 3.101a.

[16] A *kṣatriya* or *brāhmaṇa, Guhyasūtra* 10.116-117 cited by Sanderson 2009:137ff.

[17] See Sanderson 1988:672 ff and Hatley 2007:211 ff, the latter arguing for a date between the sixth and eighth centuries.

[18] See e.g. 22.64, 88.46.

[19] 88.128ab: *karoti sādhakāveśaṃ japadhyānavivarjitā.*

[20] 98.14cd : *kṣipraṃ tanmayatām eti svadehāveśalakṣitaṃ.*

[21] 2.41.ef: *sadyas tanmukhatām eti svadehāveśalakṣaṇam.*

[22] 3.165cd in the same form as cited above.

the *Parātriṃśikā*.[23] These two isolated occurrences in the chronologically latest part of the text do not amount to a remarkable presence of deity possession in the *Brahmayāmala*. Indeed, what is rather striking is the absence of any deity possession, in particular of *yoginī* possession, in the core rituals of the text.

Although the core rituals do not require or imply deity possession, there are a few exceptions to the general neglect of possession in the *Brahmayāmala*: possession by Bhairava, or by Bhairava and his circle of goddesses, is promised as a result of the so-called Great Observance (*mahāvrata*) as well as the result of some *siddhi*-oriented rites whose preliminaries include the practice of the Great Observance. But in these cases, I shall argue, possession does not seem to be part of the *Brahmayāmala*'s own ritual and doctrinal system, but is borrowed from the Skull-bearing Kāpālikas.

Deity possession related to the Skull-bearers' observance

a. Possession in connection with the *mahāvrata*, according to the *Brahmayāmala*

The first description of possession in the *Brahmayāmala* can be found in a chapter[24] that enumerates various observances, *vrata*s. These particular observances called *vidyāvrata*s are to be practised after initiation and before embarking on a major *siddhi*-ritual, and, as is often the case with *vrata*s, especially with *vidyāvrata*s in other early tantric texts,[25] they show the strong influence of pre-tantric ascetic currents (*atimārga*), such as the Pāśupatas, Lākulas and, possibly, the Kāpālikas. In fact, many *vidyāvrata*s are clearly and explicitly borrowings. Some unambiguous cases include the *unmatta(ka)vrata*, in which the practitioner feigns madness in the manner of the well-known Pāśupata observance, but which seems to be borrowed from the Lākulas;[26] or the *kapālavrata*, which may be related to Lākulas or Kāpālikas.[27]

In the chapter on *vrata*s, the *Brahmayāmala* describes a set of nine and then another set of five observances.[28] The very last one has a special status, for it is said to encompass the whole set of five (*samudāyena*). Its name is alternatively Bhairavavrata or *mahāvrata*,[29] which shows what it is: the practitioner assimilates himself to the skull-bearing Bhairava, as is commonly done in the Great Observance of the Lākulas and the Kāpālikas. At the end of this observance, the skull-bearing (*kapālī*) god appears in front of the *sādhaka* and offers him a boon. The practitioner says: If you are satisfied with me, enter my body. Bhairava then asks him to open his mouth and enters him. Bhairava himself will be situated in the practitioner's heart, while the various female manifestations of his Power in various parts of the body: the Guhyakās in his throat, the Mothers (*mātṛ*) in his limbs, the *yoginī*s in his joints, Śākinīs, Pūtanās and others in his pores. The practitioner will be fully assimilated to Śiva: he will be all-

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[23]11cd. The line has the same form as cited above in the edition containing Abhinavagupta's longer commentary, the *Vivaraṇa*, but it reads slightly differently in the edition of the shorter *Laghuvṛtti*: *sadyaḥ saṃmukhatām eti svadehāveśalakṣaṇam*.

[24]I am grateful to Dr Csaba Kiss, with whom I studied this chapter (21) of the *Brahmayāmala*, and who kindly provided his latest edition of the text for me.

[25]See for instance ch. 10 of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*; and the *Niśvāsa Guhyasūtra* 3.30-34b, the latter cited in Sanderson 2006: 209.

[26]See Sanderson 2006: 209, citing Abhinavagupta *ad Nāṭyaśāstra* 12.85, who associates the *unmattavrata* (without the suffix -*ka*) with the Lākulas. For the *Brahmayāmala*'s version called *unmattakavrata*, see *Brahmayāmala* 21.18cd-27.

[27]For this *vrata* in *Niśvāsa Guhyasūtra* 3.31cd-32ab, see Sanderson 2006: 209. For the *Brahmayāmala*, see 21.28-30.

[28]Prof. Sanderson has suggested (in an oral communication, as attested by Csaba Kiss's notes on this chapter) that all the nine of the first set are obligatory, as opposed to the subsequent five.

[29]21.102-123ab. Csaba Kiss separates two parts of the description in his working edition and seems to understand that first an all-encompassing *vrata* and then the Bhairavavrata is taught. But the three expressions, *vratam samudāyena*, *mahāvrata* and *bhairavavrata*, most probably denote the same thing, for only one observance and its effects are given.

pervasive and a boon-giver. He will be able to go anywhere at will and will look like the Skull-bearing god himself (*dṛśyate sarvato devi yathā devo kapāladhṛk*).[30]

This passage was presented in Sanderson 2009:133 to show the general presence of deity possession in some early *śaiva* tantras. Indeed, this *mahāvrata*, which culminates in deity possession, stands at a prominent place in the chapter; but there are thirteen other observances mentioned in the same context, and, as pointed out above, they mostly show the influence of the *atimārga*. In the case of the *mahāvrata*, the resulting possession by the Skull-bearing Bhairava could betray that this is in fact an adaptation of the *somasiddhāntin* Kāpālikas' practice.[31] For it was the Kāpālikas who were famous for aiming at such divine possession. More precisely, their doctrine was said to be that liberation was attained by being possessed (*āveśa*), as opposed to by a transfer, production or manifestation of Śiva's qualities.[32] The Kāpālika practice is adopted in the context of *vrata*s, for it is here that such practices could be easily assimilated. However, this adaptation of a Kāpālika practice in the *vrata* chapter does not imply that possession was a core part of ritual in this *yoginī* tantra.

The borrowing is perhaps also shown by the fact that it is not Female Powers, but Bhairava himself who enters the practitioner, as is the case in the practice of the Kāpālikas. By contrast, later *śākta* tantric literature usually speaks of one or several *śakti*s that possess the practitioner. There is nevertheless an attempt to integrate possession by Bhairava into the *Brahmayāmala*'s sytem more fully, for various types of female Powers are also said to be present in the practitioner's body after Bhairava takes possession of it in the heart.[33]

Now if we turn to another detailed description of possession in this text,[34] it agrees with the first one in a number of details. Both require the practitioner to practise the *mahāvrata*, although in the second description, the *mahāvrata* is mentioned as a preliminary and is not a direct cause of possession.[35] Both passages present possession by Bhairava in a very similar way, which involves a conversation between the adept and Bhairava. Each time, Bhairava asks the practitioner to open his mouth wide (using the same causative *prasārayati*), and enters him to possess him. Near the end of the passage cited below, it is also stated that the practitioner will thus possess all the qualities (*dharma*) that Bhairava has.[36] In this way, it very explicitly relates possession to the doctrinal question of how one attains śivahood and Śiva's qualities.

> [Practitioner:] 'Oh god, bearer of the trident, if you are satisfied with me, give me a boon. Accept me as your son, oh god, and may my sacrificial pavilion succeed.'
> [Bhairava:] 'Well-done, great man, master of *sādhaka*s, great ascetic. Who other than you would merit to be my son, oh Lord of men? Open your mouth, my child, I shall

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[30]For a full translation of the passage see Sanderson 2009:133-4.

[31]I use the term Kāpālika here in the more restricted sense, denoting the early *śaiva* movement also called the *somasiddhānta*.

[32]The latter three representing the (*guṇa*)*saṃkrāntivāda* of the Pāśupatas, the *utpattivāda* of the Lākulas and the *abhivyaktivāda* of the āgamic *śaiva*s. For some of the relevant passages that present this categorization, see Sanderson 2006 : 180 and the entry *guṇasaṃkrānti* by Goodall in *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* II. Sanderson also points out that this fourfold classification goes back to the earliest exegesis by Sadyojyotis in the late seventh or early eighth century.

[33]Unless this feature was already present in the Kāpālika version. Since no Kāpālika scriptures have survived, this cannot be ascertained.

[34]I am grateful to Csaba Kiss, who was the first to point out this passage for me.

[35]At the beginning of the chapter, the *sādhaka* is required to transform his body according to the *mahāvrata*: *mahāvratatanusthitaḥ*.

[36]47.48cd: *ye dharmā bhairave deve tair dharmaiḥ sa samanvitaḥ* (as edited by Csaba Kiss, who emends the manuscript's reading *bhairavo* to *bhairave*).

enter (the cavity of) your heart.[37] Thanks to this, you shall quickly become as strong and powerful as me.'

Then, the mantra-knowing practitioner must perform circumambulation clockwise and open his mouth. [The god] shall enter him, there is no doubt about that, and when he entered, [the *sādhaka*] will become Bhairava. The great practitioner shall fly up, together with his sacrificial pavilion, as the Lord, himself [or? together] with his fellow *sādhaka*s, and will be god Maheśvara. He shall take up any form at will, he shall be a supreme being, [luminous] as myriads of suns. He shall be Bhairava [with his] *maṇḍapa* [and] the goddess Bhairavī.[38] He will see with his own eyes whatever exists from [the level of] Śiva down to the Avīci-hell. He shall be worshipped as Śiva.[39]

As for the rest of the context of this passage, the bulk of the chapter deals with the construction of a sacrificial pavilion made of corpses in the cremation ground. The construction is called *siddhimaṇḍapikā*: pavilion for supernatural powers. The whole procedure is alternatively labeled as *mahāmakha*, 'great sacrifice' and *mahāsādhana* 'great practice' - appellations reminiscent of the *mahāvrata*.

Finally, there is a third passage that also describes possession, although not in such a detailed manner. It is found in the context of a ritual called *mahāmanthāna* or Great Churning (yet another *mahā*- rite). The churning is performed in the cremation ground, and the practitioner is again required to transform his body according to the *mahāvrata* (*mahāvratatanusthitaḥ*) as a preliminary. He must use materials obtained from corpses: the churning stick is a large bone such as the tibia, and the rope is made of human hair obtained from corpses. The rite mainly consists in acting out the cosmic churning of gods and demons. Accordingly, it produces various miraculous objects (such as the Kaustubha gem), beings and powers. The *sādhaka* prepares his own Soma of impure substances in a vessel called *sthālī*, which he identifies with the fightening goddess, Aghorī, while the churning stick is to be identified with Bhairava. Near the end of this rite, the following happens (46.105cd-106ab):

> [The practitioner] must fill a skull with Picu,[40] empower it with the *vidyāṅga* mantras (of protection), and give it as an *argha* offering to the goddesses and Bhairava. When he has given it, they will be made efficient [for him] and they shall enter the practitioner.[41]

Here, although goddesses also enter the practitioner, Bhairava is again the only deity named that enters the *sādhaka*. The goddesses that accompany him remain unspecified. It is also pointed out later that mantras can similarly enter the practitioner's heart: at the end of the churning, he must drink the

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[37] Lit. *guhyam* means 'secret', so one could translate it 'secretly' or if it is understood as an adjective to *hṛdi*, which could be an Aiśa extended stem accusative, then 'your secret heart.' On its own, it could also denote the 'private parts.' But what is meant is probably an unusual separation of the common compound *hṛdguhā*, the 'cave of the heart,' in which even the element 'cave' can denote 'heart' by itself.

[38] This line has a problematic syntax and seems somewhat elliptic. My understanding is tentative here.

[39] 47.39cd-46. My edition, based on a collation by Csaba Kiss, who in turn, also used the first full transcription prepared by Shaman Hatley: *sādhakovāca // yadi tuṣṭo 'si māṃ deva varaṃ dadasi sūlina // putraṃ māṃ gṛhṇa vai deva maṇḍapaṃ māṃ prasidhyatu / sādhu sādhu mahāsattva sādhakendra mahātapaḥ // muktvā tvaṃ puruṣeśāna ko 'nyo putratvam arhati / vaktraṃ prasāryatām vatsa guhyaṃ hṛdi viśāmy ahaṃ // bhavase yena vai śīghraṃ mama tulyabalavīryavān / pradakṣiṇaṃ tataḥ kṛtvā vaktraṃ prasārya mantravit // praviśen nātra saṃdeho praviṣṭe bhairavo bhavet / utpateta mahāvīro maṇḍapyā sahito prabhuḥ // sa vai (sa vai em. : śavai MSS) sakhāya-sahito bhave' devo maheśvaraḥ / kāmarūpo mahāsattvaḥ sūryakoṭisamaprabhaḥ // maṇḍapo bhairavī devī ātmanena sa bhairavaḥ / śivādyāvīciparyante yāvato kiñci' vartate // pratyakṣaṃ vartate tasya śivavat pūjyate tu saḥ /*

[40] Probably the mingled sexual fluids (for a full discussion of various possible identifications of this substance, see Hatley 2007:243 ff), perhaps diluted to produce enough liquid.

[41] I understand the genitive *sādhakasya* to be Aiśa for the locative: *kapālaṃ picunā pūrṇaṃ vidyāṅgābhiḥ sumantritam // tenārghaṃ tu pradātavyaṃ devīnāṃ bhairavasya tu / datte 'rghe tu prasidhyanti sādhakasya viśanti ca //*

nectar he produces (after he has drunk milk from the goddess's breasts); thereby not only does he become Bhairava the omniscient, Lord of the Guhyakās, but seventy million mantras shall also enter him.[42]

To summarize the situation in the *Brahmayāmala*, on the basis of the evidence and the context of the Bhairavavrata, *yoginī* possession does not form part of its core ritual system. Possession in general, *āveśa*, is sporadically mentioned as a supernatural power in various parts of the text, while deity possession is alluded to in the chronologically latest part of the text without any details, in what can be considered rather formulaic statements.

All passages that describe deity possession in a detailed way, in chapters 21, 46 and 47, also prescribe the *mahāvrata* either as a preliminary or as a direct cause of possession. More importantly, it is Bhairava who possesses the *sādhaka*, although he may be accompanied by goddesses. The practitioner is then said to be transformed into Bhairava in such a way that he has all his qualities (*dharma*), a statement which may have doctrinal implications. All these elements suggest that the doctrine and practice of possession have been borrowed from the *somasiddhāntin* Kāpālikas, for it was this early *śaiva* sect that practised the *mahāvrata* while maintaining that one attains śivahood through possession. The Kāpālikas' practice and doctrine have been adapted here without a full integration into the doctrine and practice of the cult taught by the *Brahmayāmala*: for possession figures in a series of borrowed observances and in two optional cremation ground practices,[43] but is not prescribed in the core rituals.

Therefore, *yoginī* possession is still a marginal element here. In fact, the *Brahmayāmala* seems to make the first step toward integrating deity possession into the *yoginī* cult, by the adoption of the Kāpālika's possession by Bhairava in some optional rites.

b. The *mahāvrata* in the *Yoginīsamcāra*

Another *vrata* resulting in possession, which I consider to be essentially the same as the *mahāvrata* or Bhairavavrata of the *Brahmayāmala*, figures in the *Yoginīsamcāraprakaraṇa* of the *Jayadrathayāmala*.

Although the *Jayadrathayāmala* as we know it is from a relatively later period than the *Brahmayāmala*, it is likely that the *Yoginīsamcāra* section is independent and earlier.[44] In this section, the prescription of two *vidyāvrata*s is found,[45] the same type of preliminary observances as in the *Brahmayāmala*. One of

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[42]I am grateful to Shaman Hatley for pointing out this passage to me. 46.120-121, edition by Csaba Kiss: *evaṃ kṛtvāpi vai devi - m- amṛtaṃ sādhakottamaḥ / savyāsavyaṃ tato pītvā sarvajño bhavate kṣaṇām // bhairavo 'tha svayaṃ sākṣa' guhyakānāṃ prabhur bhavet / saptakoṭyas tu mantrāṇāṃ viṃśati tasya vai hṛdi // Viśanti* is an unmetrical emendation proposed by Shaman Hatley, but the metre is even more severely violated in the original. Indeed, one must read or understand *viśanti*; for the number twenty (*viṃśati*) makes no sense in the context, while seven *koṭi* is a common number for mantras, see e.g. *Niśvāsa Uttarasūtra* 2.2. *Brahmayāmala* 39.17 and 21, *Jayadrathayāmala* 1.11.16, 4.67.179-180 and Kṣemarāja *ad Svacchandatantra* 12.124 speaking of seven *koṭi*s of *vidyā*s.

[43]It is remarkable that there is a cluster of chapters, 46, 47 and 48, which all prescribe the *mahāvrata* as a preliminary and have many features in common. These shared and rather unique features may indicate that they have been taken from elsewhere or composed by others than the rest of the text, although this is a mere hypothesis. All these chapters teach independent cremation ground practices: the building of the sacrificial pavilion with corpses (*siddhimaṇḍapikā*), the 'great churning' of impure substances (*mahāmanthāna*), and the 'worship of the pit' (*garttāyāga*). All of them involve at least one dialogue: with the gods, with Bhairava or Aghorī/Ambikā etc; and the wording of the dialogues is very similar. To this cluster of three, one could add chapter 49 on the preparation of a *yantra*, in which there is also a short dialogue with Śākinīs. In 46-47, the practitioner becomes Bhairava and is adopted as the goddess's son (*putra*), while in 48-49 he is said to become the 'eighth' (*aṣṭamako / aṣṭamas*) in addition to the seven clans of Mothers, as their brother (*bhrātā*).

[44]Sanderson 2009: 187 note 451 argues that it may be closely related to the lost *Yoginījālaśaṃvara*.

[45]3.31.36-46. Sanderson 2009:134 writes that the practitioner must 'adopt one of three forms of ascetic observances.' Although the passage is slightly ambiguous, it seems that there are only two observances (the first of which is the *cāmuṇḍāvrata* involving

them is alternatively called the Kāpāla-type *vrata*, which already shows that we most probably deal with yet another borrowing of the Kāpālikas' practice. Indeed, the passage prescribes that the practitioner should dress up and behave as the Skull-bearing Bhairava. And similarly to the *Brahmayāmala*, possession is promised at the end. This time, however, not Bhairava but Mother goddesses (*mātṛ*) are said to possess the practitioner's body and bestow supernatural powers onto him.[46]

In this case too, I would argue that the inclusion of the Kāpālika practice in the *vidyāvrata*s shows that this observance is borrowed from an outside source and is then integrated into the cult of *yoginī*s. There is an important difference from the *Brahmayāmala*, nevertheless, namely that the *Yoginīsaṃcāra* promises Mother-goddess possession and not possession by Bhairava. Moreover, it also associates this *vrata* with *yoginī* or mother-goddess clans, by giving it an alternative name: the observance of the sixty-three [goddess] clans (*triṣaṣṭikulavrata*).[47] Through these changes, the *Yoginīsaṃcāra* integrates possession better into the cult of *yoginī*s and takes a further step away from the Kāpālikas.

Although possession is not mentioned as a result of the first *vrata*, the Cāmuṇḍā-*vrata*, it may be implied. This *vrata* is in fact a female version of the *mahāvrata*,[48] for the difference is that the practitioner imitates and dresses up as Cāmuṇḍā instead of assimilating himself to Bhairava. In this respect too, the *Yoginīsaṃcāra* goes further in the *śākta* transformation of the *mahāvrata* itself.[49]

Possession by Rudra's Power (*rudraśakti*) in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*

As far as surviving early *yoginī* tantras are concerned, the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is most probably the first such tantra that fully accomodates *yoginī* possession. The *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is a tantra of the Trika

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an assimilation to the terrifying goddess, Cāmuṇḍā, and the second is the *bhairavavrata* also called *triṣaṣṭikulavrata* or *kāpālavrata*, implying assimilation to Bhairava). Both of them seem to be prescribed at the beginning of the passage (*triṣaṣṭikulasaṃbhavam / bhairavaṃ vā mahābhāge cāmuṇḍāvratam eva ca //* - *vā* indicates the alternative name). However, since the result of both is the same, they may have been regarded as alternatives.

[46] 3.31.45: *vratānte tu varārohe śarīre mātaro dhruvam / viśante devadeveśi dadante siddhim uttamān.* For a full citation and translation of the passage, see Sanderson 2009: 134.

[47] This number seems odd, for the usual number of clans is eight or eight times eight. The passage prescribes that the observance should last sixty-three days, but this still does not explain the real reason for choosing this number. The *Yoginīsaṃcāra* may envisage a procedure similar to that of the *Brahmayāmala*, and count the practitioner himself as forming the last of the sixty-four clans. The *Brahmayāmala* presents a similar idea in chapters 48 and 49, in which the practitioner becomes the 'eighth' after the seven Mother-goddess clans. In this respect too, the *Brahmayāmala*'s version seems to represent a more archaic system.

[48] This is indicated also by the fact that it is called or associated with the *mahāvrata* in 3.31.40b. (The formulation is not explicit enough to see if it is identified or just associated with it; for the citation, see below.)

[49] See *Jayadrathayāmala* 3.31.37cd-3.31.42ab (no correction or standardization has been made to the text as transcribed by Olga Serbaeva, to whom I am grateful for making her transcription available): *kṛṣṇāmbaradharo nityaṃ kṛṣṇagandhānulepanam // kṛṣṇamālāvalambī ca karṇālaṅkārabhūṣitaḥ / valayābharaṇopetaṃ nūpuradhvanibhūṣitam // raktāmbaro raktapādo divyastrīrūpadhāriṇaḥ / pracchanne nirjane deśe maunī vidyāvrataṃ caret // māsam ekaṃ caren mantrī dvādaśāṃ vā mahāvratām / māsena tu mahāyogī yoginyāḥ paśyatecchayā // tair vṛtas tu caruṃ kṛtvā trailokye vicaret kṣaṇāt / sarvajñaḥ sarvakartā ca sṛṣṭisaṃhārakārakaḥ // yoginīnāṃ pade devi hartā kartā ca jāyate.* '[The practitioner] must always wear black garments and cover himself with black sandalwood paste. He ought to have a black garland and be decorated with earrings, bracelets, jewels and jingling anklets. He wears a red dress and has red feet, having the form of a divine woman. [Thus] he must perform his *vidyāvrata* in silence, in a hidden and abandoned place. The master of mantras must do this for a month or for twelve months [if he does this as] the *mahāvrata*. After a month, the great yogi shall see the *yoginī*s if he wishes. Surrounded by them, if he prepares the *caru* [of impure substances], he will be able to traverse the three worlds in a second. He shall be omniscient and omnipotent, performing both creation and destruction.' Note the hesitation between assimilation to the unattractive, black Cāmuṇḍā and to an attractive woman decorated with lac and clothed in red.

school, which teaches the cult of three main mantra goddesses. It is perhaps the second earliest *yoginī* tantra we know, and is certainly the earliest one of its own school.[50]

The *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* associates deity possession with the (female) power of Rudra, *rudraśakti*, which is said to be the source of all energies and powers. The text often uses the compound 'possession by Rudra's Power' *rudraśaktisamāveśa*, which provides a useful odd *pāda* several times.[51] It may be of some significance that the vedic name and identity of Śiva, Rudra, is used here: one could speculate that it betrays earlier, atimārgic influence too.

The text of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* starts with a question by the goddess: Why do mantras not function in spite of the perseverence of practitioners?[52] In his reply, Bhairava states that if an initiate wishes to obtain success, i.e. supernatural powers, he should know and recognize the signs of possession by Rudra's Power in the guru and obtain the right mantra or mantras from him.[53] Otherwise, the power (*vīrya*) of mantras remains protected and they will not function, no matter what practitioners do.[54]

This shows that possession by Rudra's Power is at the centre of this system, for it is presented here as being of utmost importance for the functioning of mantras and as the *raison d'être* of the text itself. It is also clear that possession is not required during initiation: it is the guru who must display the signs of possession and transmit the mantras infused with the (female) Power, *śakti*, which is inside him.

The subsequent chapter then appropriately starts with a list of the signs of possession one is to recognize in the guru. First, it is stated that the guru shall have a power (*śakti*) or ability that proves his divine nature immediately.[55] The signs include ordinary as well as more special abilities: firm devotion to Rudra (again Rudra, not Bhairava, is mentioned), success with mantras, the ability to subjugate all beings to one's will, being able to finish what one has started, poetic talent and finally, to disable another person's power of speech.[56] In the closing lines of this passage the text again insists that a true guru must have these signs[57] and that thanks to his being possessed by the power of Rudra, he will be able to fulfill the wishes of devotees and empower the mantras.[58]

Possession by Rudra's power is also mentioned when other female powers, *śakti*s, are discussed. The three kinds of *śakti*s who act or play in this world (called *aghorāḥ* or Non-Terrifying, *ghorāḥ* or Terrifying, and *ghoraghoratarāḥ* More-Terrifying-Than-Terrifying) can enter into various beings.[59] Possession by these three powers is said to be always auspicious, that is why they also bear three names of the Auspicious deity, Śiva.[60] Moreover, they are established in Rudra's power, *rudraśakti*.[61] The text continues by saying that all *yoginī*s are empowered by *rudraśakti*, who is the source or matrix (*yoni*) of all

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[50]For more details on the dating, see Sanderson 1988:672 ff. Törzsök 1999:vi ff and Törzsök forthcoming. I would tentatively place it in the seventh or eighth century.

[51]E.g. 1.17c, 2.4a, 2.5a, 2.10c, 2.11a.

[52]1.7: *japatām api yatnena puruṣāṇāṃ suniścayaḥ / kim ete na prasidhyanti tvatproktā mantranāyakāḥ.*

[53]1.15: *tadgrahaṃ yo 'pi jānāti tathā cātmaparigraham / guruṃ gurutaraṃ caiva tasya siddhir na dūrataḥ.* 1.17: *tasmāt siddhiṃ samanvicchec chivasaṃskāradīkṣitaḥ / rudraśaktisamāveśaṃ jñātvā tadgraham ācaret.* 2.4: *rudraśaktisamāveśād divyācaraṇalakṣaṇam / ācārye lakṣayet tatra tato mantragrahaḥ smṛtaḥ.*

[54]1.14: *guptavīryā mahādevi vidhināpi prayojitāḥ / tena te na prasidhyanti japtvā koṭiśatair api //*

[55]2.5 *rudraśaktisamāveśād ācāryasya mahātmanaḥ / śaktir utpadyate kṣiptaṃ sadyaḥpratyayakāriṇī //*

[56]2.6-8: *prathamaṃ lakṣaṇaṃ proktaṃ rudre bhaktiḥ suniścalā / dvitīyaṃ mantrasiddhis tu sadyaḥpratyayakārikā // tṛtīyaṃ sarvasattvānāṃ kiṃkurvāṇavidheyatā / prārabdhakāryaniṣpattiḥ caturthaṃ lakṣaṇaṃ smṛtam // kavitvaṃ pañcamaṃ proktaṃ sālaṅkāraṃ manoharam / paravākśaktistambhaṃ ca lakṣaṇaṃ pañcamaṃ smṛtam //*

[57]2.11 *rudraśaktisamāveśo yatrāyaṃ lakṣyate priye / sa gurur matsamaḥ prokto mantravīryaprakāśakaḥ //*

[58]2.10cd: *rudraśaktisamāveśād bhaktānāṃ vāñchitapradaḥ.*

[59]See e.g. 2.27a: *āviṣṭāḥ śaktibhiḥ tābhiḥ.*

[60]2.30cd-31ab: *śaktitrayasamāveśo yasmāt sarvatra śaṃkaraḥ / ghoraghoratarāghorāghorās tāḥ parikīrtitāḥ //*

[61]2.31d: *evaṃ bhuvanaṃ pāleyū rudraśaktivyavasthitāḥ.*

female Powers.[62] She is also known as a Mother-goddess and a *yoginī* (*yogeśvarī*).[63] The three female mantra deities and the alphabet goddess Mālinī are her mantric manifestations.[64] Each of these goddesses is said to make present the bodily signs of being possessed.[65]

Among the various *śakti*s, one is particularly closely associated with possession: it is the highest mantra goddess, the mild and auspicious Parā. She is said to be so powerful that the *uccāra* of her mantra makes all signs of possession present in the practitioner,[66] such as trembling[67] and flying or jumping up in the sky.[68] Her *uccāra* can produce possession within a few seconds.[69] If, in addition, one remembers the doctrine of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, one shall be acquainted with the real nature of supreme knowledge[70] and one will be able to tell things of the past and the future if asked.[71]

Possession by Parā in the above mentioned contexts stands out quite remarkably. Parā is of course a manifestation of Rudra's power, and in a general sense it could be argued that the text still speaks about possession by *rudraśakti*. In a few other passages, however, one finds that it is again Parā who possesses the practitioner and produces a number of typical signs of possession, which confirms the special role of Parā in this matter.

In one of the ritual prescriptions concerning Parā,[72] she is said to possess the practitioner in the form of the goddess of wealth, Śrī. The main topic discussed here concerns the ways in which one can obtain the transfer of Parā's power and become eloquent, a knower of learned treatises as well as poetry. But in the last section, which prescribes an alternative practice, it is claimed that after two months of practice, Parā enters the practitioner's body in the form of Śrī, the goddess of wealth, good fortune and glory.[73] Quite appropriately, additional results are related to royalty: one is promised to enjoy and rule the whole earth, eliminate all enemies in the kingdom, command everybody etc.[74]

In another ritual passage about Parā, her propitiation is said to produce various signs of success: *siddhiliṅgāni*.[75] Although these are not said to be signs of possession here, they include many that are commonly enumerated among them: the trembling of the body,[76] various odd ways of walking such as walking on the chest, on the back or by frog-leaps,[77] having the eyes rolling upwards and closing them sometimes etc.[78]

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[62]2.32-33ab: *parāparavibhāgena sarvayogeśvarīgaṇaḥ / tayaivodbalitāḥ sarvās tāḥ sidhyanti balotkaṭāḥ // sā yonir sarvaśaktīnāṃ sā ca tantreṣu gīyate /*

[63]2.35cd: *yogeśvarīvat sarvāsāṃ sā māteva prakīrtitā.*

[64]2.33-37. See e.g. 2.33cd: *trimśadvarṇās tathāṣṭau ca vidyāmūrtir iṣyate.*

[65]2.41: *uccāre tu kṛte tasyā mantramudrāgaṇo mahān / vidyāgaṇaś ca sakalaḥ sarvakāmaphalapradaḥ / sadyas tanmukhatāṃ eti svadehāveśalakṣaṇam.* The mantra-goddess referred to is not named, but probably all mentioned goddesses are intended with a collective singular.

[66]3.48cd: *tatkṣaṇoccāraṇād vāpi pratyayaś caiva jāyate.*

[67]3.49a: *kampate dehapiṇḍas tu.*

[68]3.49b: *drutaṃ cotpatate tathā.*

[69]Lit. after 100 *mātrās*, 3.50ab: *mātrāśatena cāveśaṃ śarīre tasya jāyate.* I am grateful to Olga Serbaeva for pointing out my initial misunderstanding of the line in an email message.

[70]3.52ab: *udgrāhayati cāvaśyaṃ śāstrasadbhāvam uttamam.*

[71]3.52cd: *atītānāgatān arthān pṛṣṭo 'sau kathayiṣyati.*

[72]Chapter 12.

[73]12.20cd: *śrīrūpeṇa tadāgatya praviśet sādhakena ca.* The instrumental stands for the locative.

[74]12.21-22: *tadā pṛthvīm asau bhuktvā saptāmbhonidhimekhalām / manasā cintitaṃ sthānaṃ tataḥ prabhṛti gacchati // ājñāvidhāyinas tasya ye yasmin dvīpam āśritāḥ / kurvanti tanniyuktāś ca rājyaṃ vigatavidviṣam //*

[75]17.29-34.

[76]17.29d: *dehakampādiṣu -s- tathā.*

[77]17.30: *urasā darduraplutyā udareṇa gatis tathā / pādāṅguṣṭhe gatiś caiva pṛṣṭhataś cāpasarpaṇam //*

[78]17.31cd: *kvacin nimīlitākṣasya uccadṛṣṭigatasya ca.*

To summarize the relevant passages from the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*: possession by Rudra's Power is said to be crucial in the acquisition of supernatural powers through tantric mantras. This female Power, *śakti*, is identified as the source of all powers, and is also said to be a Mother-goddess and a *yoginī*. In addition, possession by the highest mantra goddess, Parā, who is the highest manifestation of *rudraśakti*, is also considered auspicious and necessary for certain *siddhi*s. The signs of possession are mentioned as trembling, levitation, rolling on the ground etc. in several passages. The person can also be used as an oracle, although this is not the purpose of the procedure. A guru must and a practitioner is often supposed to show signs of goddess possession. The reason for this is that only through possession can the mantras gain efficiency, they need a direct infusion of power from a manifestation of *rudraśakti*. The ultimate purpose is, therefore, to gain supernatural powers though mantras empowered directly through goddess possession.

Thus, the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* integrates both the idea of goddess possession and its visible signs in its tantric doctrine and practice, which focuses on *siddhi*. It includes possession in its rituals concerning the main mantra-goddesses (in particular of Parā) and in its doctrine on the efficaciousness of mantras. It declares *śakti*-possession to be necessary for all gurus and most practitioners. In this, it goes further in prescribing and integrating possession than the *Brahmayāmala* and the *Yoginīsaṃcāra*, in which possession appears in optional observances and rites that do not focus on the core pantheon of goddesses. The *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* keeps, nevertheless, the procedure of initiation free of possession. Initiation requires the initiand to be possessed and to show visible signs of deity possession only in those texts of the Trika that are influenced by *kaula* doctrine.

Kaula possession in the Trika and some examples from elsewhere

The other two Trika scriptures that survive, the *Tantrasadbhāva* and the *Mālinīvijayottara*, both include *kaula* doctrine in their teachings. Consequently, a disciple is expected to be possessed and show visible signs of possession during initiation, unlike in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*. But both texts also claim to derive from the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*. The influence of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* is clearly discernible, for several, relatively long, passages were borrowed from the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* in both texts. Some of these passages concern possession: the *Mālinīvijayottara*, for instance, borrows the list of the signs of possession one must identify in a guru (2.2-8), with some minor changes.

A longer and perhaps more significant description of possession is to be found in the *Tantrasadbhāva*, which is relevant to the understanding of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* and which also shows the relation of the two texts. In the passage in question (3.158-167), the *Tantrasadbhāva* gathers together various references to Parā and possession by Parā taken from the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* and presents them in a single sequence.[79] The *Tantrasadbhāva* in fact inserts the passage concerning the 'signs of success' (*siddhiliṅgāni*) in the middle of the passage about possession by Parā and also includes a line from chapter 2 of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* about possession. In this way, the *Tantrasadbhāva* places the *siddhiliṅga* passage clearly in the context of possession and gives further support to regarding those *siddhiliṅga*s as signs of possession rather than just 'signs of success'.

It is not possible to examine *kaula* possession in detail within the limits of this paper. A few remarks may nevertheless be useful to make here. In the Trika, the *Mālinīvijayottara* knows of a threefold and a fivefold typology of possession. The threefold one consists of the *āṇava* ('related to the individual soul')*, śākta* ('related to *śakti* or Śiva's Power') and *śāmbhava* ('related to Śiva') possessions, in an ascending

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[79]The verses are to be found scattered in three different places in *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* 2.41ef, 3.47-52 and 17.29-34.

hierarchical order.[80] The fivefold system[81] distinguishes between five main signs of possession: *ānanda* ('joy'), *udbhava* ('rising,' probably the same as *utpatana*, flying or leaping up), *kampa* ('trembling') *nidrā* ('sleep,' perhaps denoting loss of consciousness) and *ghūrṇi* ('moving to and fro, rolling'). The tripartite system is also referred to in the Trivandrum *Mahānayaprakāśa* (7.131cd) and in the *Kularatnoddyota* (8.104ff), while the five signs are also listed in the *Ciñciṇīmatasārasamuccaya* (9.42ab). Both systems appear in the *Ūrmikaulārṇava* (2.231ff).

Thus, both the three and fivefold categorisations of the *Mālinīvijayottara* occur in various other *kaula* texts. This may show that there evolved two commonly accepted systems within the *kaula* branch, although the details of how this happened exactly would need to be studied more carefully. The absence of these classifications in the *Tantrasadbhāva* indicates, once again, that this text is closer to the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*'s early *yoginī* cult, in spite of the large number of *kaula* elements it contains.

*Yoginī*s, Mother-goddesses and *grahī*s

Turning back to the initial question of how possession appears in the early texts of the *yoginī* cult, it seems that deity possession was adapted gradually, possibly and partly under the influence of Kāpālika practices. This is somewhat surprising. For, as it has often been suggested, the *yoginī* cult and its development were probably not unrelated to the cult of various mother goddesses and demonesses. And one of the defining characteristics of mother goddesses is that they can possess children: they can act as caring mothers as well as possessing demons or *grahī*s. This double nature of the *mātṛ*s is reflected in their description in the *Mahābhārata* and other early sources, and some of their representations also suggest such characteristics.[82] Therefore, one would expect the *yoginī* cult to involve goddess possession as a central feature in the earliest scriptures.

The fact that goddess or *yoginī* possession is adapted gradually and that it comes to be crucial for initiation only in *kaula* texts does not necessarily imply that one needs to reject the influence of mother goddess cults. Firstly, the investigation presented here is based on the few surviving early texts we have access to today, therefore its scope is limited. Secondly, the gradual adaptation of possession may show rather that possession had to be kept at a distance because of its questionable status in a brahmanical context. This is of course a mere hypothesis. But it may not be accidental that the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* presents its most benign and brahmanical goddess, the *yoginī* version of Sarasvatī, the goddess Parā, as its possessing goddess. Perhaps this was a deliberate choice. Perhaps the author(s) of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* wanted to avoid any source of confusion between their cult of the supreme *śakti* and an exorcist's manual. Indeed, common *yoginī*s who are not part of the core pantheon of mantra goddesses do not normally possess the practitioner. It is only the main mantra goddesses and the more abstract Power of Rudra that are said to do so.

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[80] 2.20ff. This classification, which is based on what is well-known in Kashmirian *śaiva* exegesis as the three *upāya*s, was probably not created to classify types of possession, but was applied to it nevertheless as an all-encompassing principle of classification. The threefold classicification of Śiva, Śakti and Aṇu / Ātman concerning the nature of the universe appears already in some āgamic sources: see *Kiraṇatantra* ch. 7. As a basis of classification concerning knowledge (*jñāna*), it often figures in *kaula* scriptures, e.g. *Śrīmatottara* ch. 7, or in connection with initiation, in *Kularatnoddyota* 8.100 ff. With reference to mantras, which can also have this triple nature, see e.g. *Netratantra* 21.77-80. See also Brunner's article on *āṇavapakṣa* in *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* vol. I.

[81] 11.35-36. The names suggest that this typology was indeed devised to classify different kinds of possession, on the basis of its manifestations.

[82] For two, relatively recent, important works that involve a study of the early development of *mātṛ* cults, see Hatley 2007 and Yokochi 2005.

Conclusion

To summarize the results of our investigation: it appears that possession was not a core feature of the *yoginī* cult from its beginning. The *Brahmayāmala* and the *Yoginīsaṃcāra* include deity possession in their version of the *mahāvrata*, which is one of their *vidyāvrata*s. They also adapt other observances of pre-tantric *śaiva* currents (Atimārga) among these *vrata*s. The *Brahmayāmala* describes deity possession as a result of some cremation ground rituals, which are preceded by the practice of the *mahāvrata*. In all these cases, one can suspect that possession is borrowed from a *somasiddhāntin* Kāpālika source: the *vrata* itself is also called the Kāpālika observance or it involves Kāpālika type assimilation to the skull-bearing Bhairava; and possession is described as a means to attain Śiva's qualities (*dharma*), in accordance with Kāpālika doctrine. Accordingly, the *Brahmayāmala* mainly presents possession by Bhairava, and not by goddesses, although groups of unnamed goddesses do appear in the context as Bhairava's retinue. The *Yoginīsaṃcāra* goes further in the assimilation of possession into the *yoginī* cult, for its version of the *mahāvrata* results in Mother-goddess possession.

The *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, which is perhaps slightly later than the *Brahmayāmala*, integrates possession in its core doctrine to a much greater extent: it emphasizes that the guru and, in certain contexts, the *sādhaka* must be possessed by the female Power of Rudra, *rudraśakti*, in order to gain full command over mantras and to make them efficacious. In addition, possession by the benign *yoginī*-goddess Parā is also described in various contexts.

Other, later, texts of the *yoginī* cult, whether of the Trika school or not, all show *kaula* influence. Accordingly, they require the disciple to be possessed at the moment of initiation and show the signs of possession. Possession becomes in this way much more central, for it is also necessary for those who aspire for final liberation. In other words, *kaula* doctrine requires that all categories of initiates should be possessed. The typology of possession according to the signs of intensity, which is almost ubiquitous, shows that these texts may share a common doctrinal basis concerning possession.

Finally, the fact that possession seems to enter gradually into the cult of *yoginī*s does not necessarily imply that one must reject the influence of the cult of mothers who possess children. This influence, however, appears less direct than is usually assumed, at least in the context of ritual possession.

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Abbreviations

GRETIL = Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages. E-texts available online at <http://fiindolo.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil.html> (accessed 10 February 2012)

IFI / IFP = Institut Français de Pondichéry

KSTS = Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies

MIRI = Muktabodha Indological Research Institute. E-texts available online at <http://muktalib5.org/digital_library.html> (accessed 10 February 2012)

NAK = National Archives, Kathmandu

NGMPP = Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project

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