Introduction
On Śaiva Tantric Death Rites in the Early Medieval Religio-historical Context

1. Preliminary remarks

In the early medieval period Śaivism was an influential religious force throughout the Indic world, even rising to constitute the principal religion of the ruling elite at that time, that is, from approximately the fifth to the thirteenth century. An instrumental factor in Śaivism's success in becoming so dominant on the Indian sub-continent and in Indianized South-East Asia was the emergence and impact of so-called Śaiva Tantrism. This was a set of doctrines and rituals accessible only to initiated practitioners and centred on propitiating mantra deities in order to attain magical supernatural powers (*siddhi*) and ultimate liberation (*mokṣa*). Despite the originally esoteric nature of tantric lore, its propagators were successful in spreading these teachings widely, as well as institutionalizing themselves and developing ways of interfacing with mainstream society. As Alexis Sanderson has shown in his monumental work *The Śaiva Age*, decisive for the success of these tantric schools was their strategy of offering expertise for ritual activities linked to key developments in South Asia during the early medieval period. This included the establishing of new dynasties, territorial expansion, and the promotion of agriculture.[1] One significant factor in this development was the tradition increasingly embracing more adherents of varying socio-religious strata into their initiated circles, including both ascetics and active householders. In particular, this engagement with wider segments of the society is reflected in the development of the Śaiva repertoire of rituals. Over time, these rituals were changed and adapted to accommodate the

[1] See Sanderson 2009, in particular pp. 252–350, for concrete examples of Śaiva followers' involvement in various social, economic and political processes.

ritual needs of a new clientele, amongst whom the most significant and visible target group was that of the brahmanical householder (*gṛhastha*).

In this process of expansion, one of the most important yet doctrinally problematic types of ritual to be included into the repertoire were those having to do with death and the post-mortem period. The ritual cycles prescribed in surviving texts on Śaiva tantric funerary rites are permeated by contradictory notions of the ontological status of a deceased person's soul: while the soul of an initiated person was considered a liberated entity that had lost its individuality and immediately realized its god-hood in the moment of death, in the funerary ritual context that same soul was also considered a spirit that had separated from the corpse and entered a state of ghosthood, where it had to be fed by the living and in due course be ritually transformed into a divine ancestor.[2] These conflicting notions were the result of long-standing brahmanical beliefs about post-mortem existence being consolidated with tantric soteriological premises, premises originally formed in esoteric circles of tantric practitioners. These premises were difficult to synthesize with the ritual needs of the brahmanical mainstream of householders.

These changes in the Śaiva ritual world happened gradually. The degree to which prescriptive texts silently accept such doctrinal and ritual inconsistencies offers us insights about the intended clientele and socio-religious setting of certain tantric schools at given times. The realm of funerary practices is particularly revealing in this respect, since rituals related to death and post-mortem ancestor worship are essentially of a communal nature and designed to help the community of mourners deal with the emotional and social ruptures resulting from someone's death. This volume will thus explore various aspects of the early history of the Śaiva tantric traditions by tracing the emergence and formation of tantric cremation and post-mortem rites in the earliest extant tantric scriptures, dating to about the fifth to the eleventh centuries, as well as the earliest extant Śaiva tantric manuals, dating from about the tenth to the twelfth centuries. These textual sources will be analysed for clues about the increasing institutionalization of Śaiva tantric communities as represented in their respective prescriptive sources, as

[2] On this, see Sanderson 1995, as well as chapter 1 of this volume.

well as about the tradition's gradual inclusion of active initiates from the brahmanical mainstream of society.

The focus of this volume will be on the scriptures and manuals of the Siddhānta school. In part, this is because the earliest material we have on Śaiva death rites emerged from this branch of the so-called Śaiva tantric schools. Further, amongst the broad range of schools that formed in the early medieval period, the orthodox Siddhānta sought to align itself more visibly with the brahmanical system. Thus, it retained brahmanical notions of pure and impure, and generally remained congruent to the norms taught in the Vedas in its prescriptions as opposed to the various streams of non-Saiddhāntika traditions, whose practices transgressed and challenged orthodox notions of purity. It was also the Siddhānta in particular that pursued an agenda of moving beyond private ritual practice and into the sphere of public religious life, finally growing into a religious tradition that offered services for public temple worship and public festivals. This was especially the case in South India from approximately the tenth century onwards. Moreover, by founding a network of monasteries, the propagators of the Siddhānta were extremely successful in institutionalizing themselves across large areas of the sub-continent. These monasteries were often sponsored by kings and also acted as points of interface between initiatory and lay communities. For these reasons, early Saiddhāntika sources offer a good case study for examining the development of tantric funerary practices in the context of the processes accompanying the establishment of an institutionalized religion in early medieval South Asia.

2. Śaiva communities in the early medieval period

In early Śaiva religious history, we find that Śaiva communities can be broadly divided into those that practiced Śiva devotion but belonged to the general mainstream of society, and those that focused on specific Śaiva cults only accessible through initiation. This division can also be described as that between lay and initiatory communities, with the latter including the tantric groups. These two groups often intersect and they clearly affected each other's development, especially when initiatory traditions tried to reach a wider audience. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that they

are separate categories, each with their own complex subdivisions, and were not necessarily intrinsically connected to each other at all points of their development. Notwithstanding how central the tantric groups were to become, it is important to remain aware of this dichotomy to keep from adopting the simplistic approach of seeing the initiatory communities as chiefly responsible for choreographing the rise of Śaivism and downplaying independent aspects related to the sphere of lay devotionalism, especially in the early phases of Śaiva dominance. This awareness puts the synergy between the two sides in focus, as well as specific points of interface that contributed towards establishing Śaivism as an institutionalized religion with great appeal to royalty. However, especially for the early stages of Śaivism's rise, our material gives us little insight into the precise nature of the relationship between lay and initiatory communities. In part, this is due to two factors. First, the normative texts that explicitly speak of the practices and structures of a lay Śaiva community, i.e. the Śivadharma literature (see 2.1. below), were only produced in the sixth century, that is, about two to three centuries after art-historical and epigraphical material show signs that Śaiva devotion had become popular in the mainstream. Since brahmanical literature contemporaneous with this early evidence offers almost no insight into the practices of early Śaiva lay communities, we are left with no tangible textual sources for this early phase. Secondly, the early prescriptive texts of the initiatory traditions, which may go back to the second/third century, focus more on the spiritual and ritual path of the individual being initiated into the tradition, stressing their exclusivity with a tendency to conceal matters of interaction with the mundane sphere. Such features only come through, if anywhere, in epigraphical material or occasional scriptural passages on royal rituals. This leaves open, for instance, basic questions such as whether Śaiva officiants in the early phases of lay Śaiva devotionalism were members of existing initiatory groups (i.e. initiated Śaiva *ācārya*s) or were rather part of the existing brahmanical structures (i.e. Brahmin priests with Śaiva leanings, but not initiated into a cult). Another question is whether the body of scriptures belonging to certain initiatory traditions represented the religion of a few amongst many, or the other way around. Further complicating the picture is the fact that amongst the initiatory groups we find a broad range of schools – from those that

were orthodox to those that were non-conformist, each with their own scriptural corpus. The Śaiva scholastic circles represented by these schools were clearly demarcated from each other, yet we have little insight into the extent these boundaries were a historical reality and actively experienced by the practitioners,[3] or only theoretically imposed for polemical purposes. And to all of this we must add that beyond a few surviving inscriptions, we have little that enables us to introduce a geographical dimension into our historical reconstructions.

Notwithstanding these limitations, major advances in the field of Śaiva studies in the last decades have already produced a quite differentiated picture of early Śaiva history. This will serve as the starting point for the following investigation into early tantric death rituals and their role in this historical development. What follows is thus not intended as a comprehensive treatment of all the complex topics alluded to above, of which each merits its own study, but rather as a brief outline of the basic historical parameters that have been established in recent scholarship and within which the sources presented in this book are to be understood. In outlining these parameters, I maintain the dichotomy between lay communities (2.1.) and initiatory traditions (2.2.). A topic that is highly relevant in the study of early Śaiva religious history but not addressed here is the inter-religious dynamics between Śaiva and non-brahmanical religious traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism. This has been explored extensively by a number of scholars, including Alexis Sanderson, Ronald Davidson and Vincent Eltschinger.[4] But since the question of the evolution of tantric funerary rites

[3] For instance, several contributions in the volume *Tantric Communities in Context* (Mirnig, Rastelli & Eltschinger [forthcoming]) show that the social reality of different tantric orders was negotiated through various means, many based on institutions and guru lineages.

[4] See e.g. Sanderson 2009, Davidson 2002 and Eltschinger 2014 on aspects of the historical dynamics between Śaiva and Buddhist traditions, Goodall & Isaacson 2016 on the shared ritual matrix of early Śaiva and Buddhist tantric traditions, and Sanderson's handout on "The Jaina Appropriation and Adaptation of Śaiva Ritual: The Case of Pādliptasūri's Nirvāṇakalikā" (SOAS, 19 March 2015, available on his oxford.academia.edu page) on textual relationships between Śaiva and Jaina tantric literature.

relates directly to Śaivism's interaction with the brahmanical tradition, this remains the context under examination here.[5]

2.1. Śaiva mainstream devotion

The early centuries of the first millennium saw a shift away from Vedic ritualism – and the elitist socio-religious structures it entailed – to devotional cults (*bhakti*). These focused on religious practices for merit making that had the potential for cutting across socio-religious boundaries. Devotion to Viṣṇu is strongly represented in the religious iconography of the ruling elite of these first centuries, as well as in the existing story literature. Notably, this includes the great epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*; in both the god Viṣṇu holds a dominant position. This is also the case in the famous work *Bhagavadgīta*, in many ways the epitome of early Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* literature. But towards the end of the Gupta period (ca. fourth–fifth cent. CE) Śaiva devotion becomes increasingly visible, also in the new rising kingdoms.[6] A growing tendency can be seen amongst the mainstream to favour modes of worship and merit production that centred on the worship of Śiva, classically in the form of *liṅga* worship,[7] over that of other deities or the Vedic ritual system. While epigraphic and art-historical evidence bears witness to this trend already as early as the third century,[8] it is

[5] There are also a few surviving textual passages on early Buddhist tantric funerary rites. These have been collected and edited by Tanemura (2004, 2007, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b and [forthcoming]). They share some features with Śaiva tantric cremation rites; indeed, Sanderson (2009, pp. 126–127) has argued that the Buddhist rites were clearly influenced by the Śaiva tantric model. A closer analytical comparison between the two will be a task for the future.

[6] This development has been systematically analysed by Bakker 2014. For signs of Śiva devotion towards the end of the Gupta period, see also Bisschop 2010.

[7] See Bakker 2001 and Mirnig's study on early *liṅga* worship in the ŚDh (Mirnig [forthcoming c]).

[8] For the most current treatment of the earliest evidence of Śaiva devotion, see Sanderson 2013. In terms of material evidence, there are many early *śivaliṅga*s, in particular in Mathura (Kreisel 1968 and Bakker 2001), going back to the 3rd century CE. Epigraphic evidence in the form of donative inscriptions and records of Śaiva officiants in the sphere of public worship start to appear in the 4th century CE, such as the Valkha plates of Bagh (Ramesh and Tewari 1990), as well as those of several newly emerging dynasties that declared themselves Śiva worshippers. By the 5th century, we find inscribed *śivaliṅga* pedestals in the Kathmandu Valley that bear witness to Śaiva devotional activities of a broad

only in the sixth and seventh centuries that we see the sudden appearance of literature being produced exclusively for a Śaiva laity. The trend towards Śiva devotion was finally channelled into various canonizing texts appearing around this time – the *Skandapurāṇa*, *Śivadharmaśāstra* (ŚDh) and *Śivadharmottara* (ŚDhU). Of these, the *Skandapurāṇa* is the first work to systematize Śiva mythology, with the myth cycles arranged as events finally leading to the birth of Śiva's son Skanda.[9] While many myth cycles already existed for Viṣṇu devotees at the time, the *Skandapurāṇa* was the first work to give weight to the Śaiva mythological world, with Śiva as the supreme deity, venerated even by Viṣṇu and prominent brahmanical deities such as Brahmā. On the other hand, the ŚDh and ŚDhU are more focused on socio-religious aspects of the Śaiva community, including political matters. They promote and systematize the theology, rites and social structures for an entire Śaiva social order, and contain road maps, as it were, for creating strong links to the ruling elite.

The ŚDh and ŚDhU are currently being edited,[10] so for now, only preliminary observations can be made about their genesis. Having been composed around the sixth or seventh century, these works were clearly produced at a time when Śaivism was already widespread, a circumstance confirmed by epigraphical and art-historical material.[11] One of the motivations for writing these texts may have been to give an authoritative voice to practices not formally acknowledged by the established religious elite at the time, whose literature makes hardly any reference to this sphere of prac-

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range of social levels – Brahmins, the ruling elite, as well as the merchant class (Mirnig 2016).

[9] For critical editions of parts of this text, see Adriaensen et al. 1998; Bakker et al. 2004; Bakker et al. 2014; Bisschop 2006; and Yokochi 2013.

[10] These texts are currently being studied by an international group of scholars. Hazra (1952–3 and 1956) published an overview of the chapter contents and Naraharinātha (1998) a kind of edition, some of it hand-written. There are a large number of manuscripts in Nepal (see De Simini 2016a), South India and Kashmir (see Sanderson [forthcoming c]). For a critical edition of ŚDh 6, see Bisschop 2018. Critical editions of other parts of the text are currently being prepared by Mirnig (ŚDh 1–5 and 9); Kafle and Mirnig (ŚDh 7–8); Kafle (ŚDh 10); Bisschop, Kafle and Lubin (ŚDh 11); and De Simini (ŚDh 12). Chapter two of the ŚDhU has been edited and analysed in the context of De Simini's study on the cult of the book (De Simini 2016b), and critical editions of other parts of the ŚDhU are in preparation by De Simini, Goodall and Yokochi.

[11] See Sanderson 2013, pp. 220–223. For a recent disccusion regarding the dating of the ŚDh and ŚDhU, see Bisschop 2018, pp. 9ff.

tices.[12] With regard to the initiatory traditions, the time of composition of the ŚDh and ŚDhU postdates by at least two centuries the first epigraphical and textual evidence for initiatory Śaivism in the form of ascetic cults (i.e. the Atimārga, see pp. 13ff.), but coincides with the production of the first tantric scriptural works. The only trace of Śaiva initiatory traditions having concretely influenced the ŚDh and ŚDhU are sparse references to practices characteristic of the Pāśupata religion.[13] While this has led to some speculation that Pāśupata propagators were responsible for the composition of these texts,[14] Sanderson was the first to draw attention to the fact that in their doctrinal outlook, the Śivadharma literature continues to represent the lay practices and mythical world as found in the *purāṇa*s, overlapping that of the initiatory traditions remarkably little.[15]

In their choice of topics and their style, the ŚDh and ŚDhU look like a socio-religious counter-model to the Vaiṣṇava devotionalism that was widespread amongst the brahmanical mainstream and in the royal courts of the Gupta period.[16] But the works represent more than the simple replacement of Viṣṇu by Śiva as the highest deity. More substantially, they challenged some of the existing norms and values that had been institutionalised by the brahmanical religious elite. In contrast, the early Vaiṣṇava works continued to adhere closely to the brahmanical socio-religious mod-

[12] See, for instance, Bakker 2001, pp. 402–403, who points to the discrepancy between the material evidences for *liṅga* worship as early as the 4th century and the very sparse references to these practices throughout the epics.

[13] For instance, the ŚDh mentions at several points the Pāśupata-specific offerings to Śiva collectively referred to as *upahāra*s, including laughing, singing, dancing, making the *huḍuk* sound, prostration and muttering mantras (see *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8.). These are prominent in ŚDh 5.8–9 and 5.158. The ŚDh also mentions the "mouth music" characteristic for Pāśupatas (ŚDh 5.8. and 5.129); for the meaning of *mukhavādya,* see Bisschop & Griffiths 2007, p. 34, fn. 155. See Mirnig (forthcoming b) for connections between the ŚDh and the initiatory traditions.

[14] Cf. Hazra 1956, p. 44. While he is silent about the affiliation of the ŚDh itself, he classifies the later ŚDhU as a Pāśupata text, probably based on these references to Pāśupata practices, but does not substantiate this claim further.

[15] Sanderson forthcoming b, pp. 87–88 and forthcoming c, p. 157.

[16] The following Vaiṣṇava works can be seen as roughly contemporaneous: the *Viṣṇudharma* (Grünendahl 1983, 1984, 1989) and two works known as the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra*, one a Kashmirian text on general topics on Dharma (Olivelle 2009), the other classified as part of the southern recension of the *Mahābhārata* recorded as the appendix to 14.96.15, but surviving in a single early Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript, as has been identified by Grünendahl (1984, pp. 52–54).

el, namely the *varṇāśramadharma*, which imposes spiritual hierarchies and behaviour according to life-stages and inherited caste status, with the Brahmin male at the top. The ŚDh, on the other hand, explicitly claims to transcend this brahmanical order and the importance it gives to spiritual hierarchies. It proposes a spiritual life that derives its power from Śiva devotion alone and that is far superior, being theoretically even independent of caste status, a principle most provocatively expressed in the statement that even a dog-eater (*śvapaca*) devoted to Śiva (*śivabhakti*) is superior to a Brahmin who knows the four Vedas.[17] While the notion of emphasising *bhakti* at all costs would become a hallmark in South Asian devotional traditions, at that time such explicit anti-establishment statements were exceptional.[18] However, the implementation of this ideal is not consistent and other teachings in the ŚDh and ŚDhU are less radical. For instance, in the ŚDh we find the spiritually elevated position of Brahmins also retained in some contexts, such as Śaiva Brahmins being promoted as holy receptacles for ritual offerings.[19] Yet in other parts of the work, the exceptional position of the Brahmin is challenged; the ŚDh even declares the Śaiva ascetic to be equal or even superior to a Brahmin.[20]

Why this lengthy digression on the Śivadharma literature at this point? The reason is that the socio-religious milieu for which these texts were intended potentially represents a sphere of lay devotees that formed part of the initiatory orders' environment and therefore constituted a significant realm for interaction. This may be of importance when determining the possible clients for tantric funerary priests or the community of mourners involved when an initiate died. Of course, we do not know the historical reality, nor the extent the social order as formulated in the ŚDh and ŚDhU

[17] ŚDh 1.28–29: *bhaktir aṣṭavidhā hy eṣā yasmin mlecche 'pi vartate | sa viprendro muniḥ śrīmān sa yatiḥ sa ca paṇḍitaḥ || na me priyaś caturvedo madbhaktaḥ śvapaco 'pi yaḥ | tasmai deyaṃ tato grāhyaṃ sa ca pūjyo yathā hy aham ||*. Critical edition and translation in preparation by Mirnig (forthcoming c).

[18] See Mirnig (forthcoming b).

[19] Timothy Lubin sees this development as having contributed to establishing a Brahmin ritual identity at the time. This was the topic of his paper "On Feeding *śivabhakta*s and other rules of *śivāśrama-dharma*," presented at the annual American Oriental Society meeting in Los Angeles, 18 March 2017. I am very grateful to him for having shared a draft of his paper with me prior to its publication.

[20] See Mirnig (forthcoming b).

was actually implemented in different places. But we do know that these two works were successful. This can be inferred from the number of manuscripts that have survived, their strong reception history, and inscriptions indicating that these texts spread to many regions in South Asia and even beyond.[21]

At the same time, especially when analysing the evolution of the tantric ritual repertoire in relation to a wider society, one must distinguish between the socio-religious sphere as represented by the Śivadharma literature and Śaiva devotion within the brahmanical mainstream. After all, the brahmanical tradition, with the ritual and social systems it provided, kept a strong hold on Indian society, a fact also reflected in the Śaiva tantric scriptures and commentaries. They often go to great lengths to acknowledge the authority of the Vedic scriptures and brahmanical social structures (often generically referred to as *laukika*, "worldly"), with the orthodox brahmanical system recognized as the source of the Śaiva traditions. The initiatory cults are then described as constituting a higher domain of religious practice, one that has been added to the Vedic.[22] In fact, an explicit injunction in most Śaiva tantric scriptures is that, contrary to what is found in the ŚDh, initiates are to follow the authority of the Vedic scriptures within their own domain, namely, the duties incumbent on persons as members of castes and

[21] For an extensive account of the prevalence and impact of the Śivadharma corpus, see Sanderson (forthcoming c), pp. 82–85; for the popularity of Śivadharma literature, particularly in Nepal, see De Simini 2016a.

[22] The Śaivas were of course not exceptional in this respect; also Vaiṣṇava traditions and non-brahmanical religious groups such as the Buddhists and Jainas offered soteriologies and forms of worship that were described as superior to the Vedic. However, unlike the Śaivas, the Buddhists and Jainas turned against Brahmanism entirely and developed separate religious traditions that did not need a brahmanical environment for their development and spread. The Śaiva community, in contrast, was dependent on the Vedic religious background. This manifested itself, for example, in rules such as the Śaiva offices of *ācārya* or *sādhaka* only being held by initiates who entered the religion from brahmanical society as unmarried students (*brahmacārin*) or married householders (*gṛhastha*). Others, such as the Buddhists, Jains and also brahmanical ascetics, followed different theologies concerning liberation. While they were still able to enter the Śaiva religion and attain liberation through it, they were not allowed to receive consecration (*abhiṣeka*) or hold a Śaiva office (*ācārya* or *sādhaka*). See, for instance, the *Sarvajñānottara* on this topic as edited and translated in Sanderson (forthcoming b), pp. 5–10.

adherents of the brahmanical disciplines.[23] In the tantric world, the scriptures revealed by Śiva were considered the only means for attaining ultimate liberation as well as the most effective means of achieving other benefits, both spiritual and material, that is, in addition to the spiritual life within the brahmanical sphere.[24] As we will see, the theoretical problems regarding Śaiva tantric death rites are, in fact, a result of the attempt to integrate brahmanical ritual life into the Śaiva ritual matrix. The spiritual and ritual premises implied by the final brahmanical *saṃskāra*, including cremation and the following post-mortem rituals, had to be synthesized with the Śaiva soteriological path as taught in the Śaiva scriptures.

It thus appears that when examining the rise of Śaiva initiatory traditions and their connection to the wider society,[25] we must consider two groups in particular: on the one hand, the orthodox brahmanical mainstream and, on the other, communities following the Śivadharma model. Although these likely intersected and even overlapped at various times and places,[26] we must bear in mind that these two groups, at least theoretically, represented different socio-religious spheres to whom tantric officiants catered. Within the extant tantric texts themselves, we find signs that the two groups were considered distinct religious spheres also by some Śaiva ritual specialists and theoreticians. For instance, the eleventh-century Kashmirian Saiddhāntika commentator Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha makes such a distinction in his commentary on the Śaiva scripture *Kiraṇa*, a pre-ninth-century text

[23] See Sanderson 2005, pp. 231ff. That the religion of normal society found a legitimate place in the Śaivism of the Mantramārga is confirmed by the fact that their authoritative scriptures recognize ways to attain heavenly rewards or liberation as taught in brahmanical literature. Cf. also *Niśvāsa* in Sanderson 2006a, p. 156. For an in-depth account of the brahmanical Āśrama system, see Olivelle 1993.

[24] The Vedic scriptures are comprised of primary revelation (*śruti*), the corpus of scriptures collectively referred to as the Vedas, and secondary revelation (*smṛti*), which includes the literature of the epics, Purāṇas, and Dharmaśāstra. Sanderson's article "Śaivism and Brahmanism" (forthcoming) examines the relationship between the Śaiva and brahmanical order, identifying scriptural and exegetical passages in the Śaiva literary corpus that explicitly address the topic of the validity of Śaiva and Vedic scriptures. See also Ratié 2013 on scriptural authority in the Śaiva Pratyabhijñā system.

[25] The intersections between tantric communities and the wider society is the topic of the volume *Tantric Communities in Context*, Mirnig, Rastelli & Eltschinger (forthcoming).

[26] We have seen that even the ŚDh itself holds a somewhat ambivalent stance on how much it distances itself from the brahmanical structures, both maintaining and transcending this brahmanical order.

already representative of a more institutionalized Śaiva tantric order. When discussing those special initiates who received the full spiritual benefit of the initiation ritual but are freed of the obligation to perform post-initiatory rituals (*samaya*) – such as the king – he specifies that in their place, they must support the Śaiva religion and worship Śiva, either according to the brahmanical or the Śivadharma mode of worship:

> Then what [kind of rituals] do those [who have been freed of the obligation to perform tantric post-initiatory practices] have to carry out regularly? [They] only [have to do things] such as attending to the God, the guru and devotees, either in person or by sending [in his place] a son or servant or others, [and using] either the ordinary (i.e. brahmanical) form [of worship] or [the form of worship] that has been taught in the *Śivadharma*.[27]

Another place in which we see the brahmanical mainstream and more specific Śaiva lay devotees as two separate groups being addressed by tantric ritual specialists is in the sphere of post-mortem offerings (*śrāddha*). The first example of this is found in the same scripture commented on by Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha, namely the *Kiraṇa* (see below, chapter 5). Here we find injunctions showing that Śaiva *ācārya*s not only offered their services to Śaiva initiates, but also to uninitiated Śaiva lay devotees – a group that might be considered to follow the *Śivadharma* corpus – and members of the brahmanical mainstream (*loka*).[28]

2.2. Śaiva initiatory traditions: From the cremation ground to the public sphere

The earliest signs of initiatory Śaivism were in the form of esoteric ascetic circles living outside society, religious traditions that were collectively

[27] *Kiraṇavṛtti ad* 6.11d–12: *tarhi kiṃ tair nityam anuṣṭheyam*? *laukikena vā rūpeṇa śivadharmoditena vā yathāśakti devagurutadbhaktaparicaraṇādikam eva svataḥ putrabhṛtyādipreṣaṇena vā.*

[28] See pp. 208ff.

referred to as the Atimārga[29] ("the path beyond [the brahmanical socio-religious order]") and characterised by their "counter-cultural" ascetic code.[30] These groups focused on attaining liberation through ascetic meditative methods and unusual practices and behaviours, such as living in cremation grounds and smearing the body with ashes. Such practices challenged the norms imposed by orthodox brahmanical society. There is little surviving textual evidence about these Atimārgic traditions. But based on the few extant sources, also from outside the Atimārga, as well as epigraphic evidence, Sanderson has been able to identify three groups within the Atimārga: (1) the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas, (2) the Lākulas, also referred to as Kālamukhas, and (3) the Kāpālikas, also referred to as Mahāvratins or as followers of the Somasiddhānta.[31]

Of these traditions, we only have surviving texts from within that of the Pāñcārthika Pāśupatas.[32] These include the *Pāśupatasūtra* together with Kauṇḍinya's commentary on it, the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*. These two texts depict an individual path to liberation based on a set of practices that includes eccentric behaviour and yogic methods, all of which is to take place in complete isolation from mainstream society.[33] A collection of as yet undated manuals by a certain Gārgya have been discovered and edited by Diwakar Acharya.[34] These give insight into the ritual life of a certain branch of Pāśupatas that principally venerated Śiva's incarnation on earth as Lakulīśa (which is why Acharya refers to them as the "Lākulīśa Pāśupatas"). This

[29] Here I adopt the term Atimārga to refer to the systems of Kapālavratins and Pāśupatas that Sanderson (2006) has shown are mentioned in the early Śaiva scripture *Niśvāsa* (pp. 158–169).

[30] See Sanderson 2013, p. 213.

[31] For Sanderson's classification of the various Atimārga groups, see Sanderson 2014, pp. 4–5 as well as pp. 8–12, and Sanderson 2013, p. 213.

[32] See Acharya 2011 for a characterization and overview of the Pāśupata religion.

[33] The *Pāśupatasūtra*s were translated by Hara (1966), and many points of their doctrines are examined in a series of articles collected in Hara 2002. See also Bisschop 2006 for the Sūtrapāṭha of the *Pāśupatasūtra* and 2014 for Kauṇḍinya's role in systematizing Pāśupata Pāñcārthika doctrine, as well as Bisschop & Griffiths 2003 on Pāśupata features in the *Atharvaveda Pariśiṣṭa*. In the earliest evidence that can be found, Acharya has shown that these practices go back to a Vedic observance called the *govrata*, in which the practitioners adopt the behaviour of a bull, an observance explicitly connected to the description in the *Mahābhārata* of a group of Brahmin men who worshipped Śiva Maheśvara. See Acharya 2011, p. 458 and Acharya 2013.

[34] See Acharya 2007, 2010, 2011b and (forthcoming).

group of manuals also contains a section on death rites, which will be examined below.[35] For the Lākulas as well as the Kālamukhas, no texts have survived from within the tradition. Some information about these cults can be gleaned from literary sources,[36] as well as from some tantric scriptures that make occasional references to them.[37] In addition to these sparse textual materials, there are a few surviving inscriptions that shed some light on the historical reality of Atimārgic groups. Some of the practices recorded in epigraphs are quite different from what the authoritative scriptures envisage. For instance, the early prescriptive sources forbid Pāśupata ascetics from holding public religious offices. And yet – as Sanderson has demonstrated – a great deal of epigraphic material bears witness to early activities of Pāśupata officiants at temples.[38] Further, in contrast to the stipulation in the authoritative scriptures of an ascetic lifestyle, some Pāśupata *ācārya*s are depicted as having wives and being in charge of larger properties that they appear to own.[39]

From perhaps as early as the fifth century, a new form of initiatory Śaivism emerged.[40] It called itself the Mantramārga ("The path of mantras"), to distinguish itself from its purely ascetic antecedents. This type of Śaivism, also commonly referred to as Āgamic or Tantric Śaivism by modern scholars, continued to accommodate the practices of ascetics, but also clearly admitted married householders (*gṛhastha*) into its tradition.[41] As

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[35] See below, chapter 2.

[36] For the Kapālikas and Lākulas, see, e.g., Lorenzen 1991 ([1]1972), Sanderson 2006a, Törzsök 2012 and Ferstl (forthcoming).

[37] An important tantric source for reconstructing some of the Atimārgic traditions is the *Niśvāsa* (see also below, p. 42), which gives descriptions of various Śaiva traditions known to the authors, including the Pāśupatas and Lākulas. See Sanderson 2006a.

[38] See Sanderson 2013, pp. 226–234.

[39] Sanderson 2013, pp. 228–229.

[40] There is still a great deal to be explored regarding the genesis of Tantrism and how tantric ideology and ritual practice is related to preceding traditions. The *Niśvāsa* has been identified by Sanderson (2006) as a valuable source for such an investigation. On the basis of the section called *Mukhasūtra*, he investigates the nature of the development from the Atimārga to the Mantramārga, in particular tracing the Atimārgic Lākulas in the tantric milieu. For an investigation on the role of the *Śivadharmaśāstra* in providing conceptual frameworks that are developed in Tantrism, see Mirnig (forthcoming b).

[41] See Sanderson 2006, pp. 147–148, for an overview of the fundamental differences between Atimārgic practices, in particular those of the Pāñcārthika system, and those of the Mantramārga. Particularly relevant in this context is the fact that members of the Atimārgic

will become apparent in the context of the development of Śaiva tantric death rites, this integration of the brahmanical mainstream became a common characteristic of the early medieval Śaiva tantric traditions.[42] However, here again this integration appears to have happened only gradually. The earliest extant tantric scripture, the *Niśvāsa*, dating perhaps to sometime between the fifth and sixth centuries CE,[43] describes the ritual world of a group of power-seeking practitioners (*sādhaka*s) at the edges of society rather than active householder initiates fully integrated into society. Also, as Dominic Goodall mentions in the introduction to his edition of this work, it describes no social rituals at all.[44] He states that "the *Niśvāsa* reflects an earlier phase in the evolution of the social dimension of the religion of the Mantramārga."[45]

The *Niśvāsa*'s lack of social engagement was, however, soon overturned. A wide array of scriptural traditions emerged within the Mantramārga; many introduced rituals of wider social value – including also funerary practices. This quickly growing Mantramārgic scriptural corpus developed into two larger groups. One was the Śaiva Siddhānta, the more conservative strand, which focused on the worship of Śiva in his benign manifestation. For the most part, this group remained, in its choice of substances offered in worship, within the boundaries set by brahmanical norms of purity. On the other side were Āgamic systems focusing on the worship of Śiva in his wrathful manifestation as Bhairava, including, or sometimes solely focused on, the worship of his female consort. Here brahmanical notions of the pure and impure were not taken into account, but were rather challenged through the inclusion of practices considered extremely transgressive from a brahmanical point of view.[46] Both strands were based on

traditions were required to be permanent ascetics (*naiṣṭhikavratin*); in the case of the Pāśupatas, these were even further specified as Brahmin men who had undertaken the *upanayana* ritual (i.e. brahmanical initiation). The Mantramārga, as just mentioned, also included householders (*gṛhastha*) as well as temporary ascetics (*bhautikavratin*).

[42] See Sanderson 2013.

[43] See p. 42.

[44] See the prolegomena in Goodall 2015 (pp. 19–84).

[45] See Goodall 2015, p. 47.

[46] On how the dualistic theology of the Siddhānta and non-dualistic theologies of non-Saiddhāntika traditions are reflected in ritual observance, see, for instance, Sanderson 1995, p. 17.

private worship, but the former extended its ritual repertoire to worship in temples for the wider good.[47] As mentioned in the preface, it is this tradition – the Siddhānta – that is the focus of the present volume.

It was thus mainly in the form of the Mantramārga that the Śaiva initiatory traditions finally moved into the orthodox brahmanical domain. In addition to developing a ritual repertoire that proved appealing for wider parts of the society, this process of increasing popularity was also assisted by the success of the traditions' propagators in forging close ties with kings. They offered pacifying and empowering rites, acted as royal chaplains, and initiated kings into the cult.[48] The Siddhānta in particular was successful in securing royal support and as a result, created a large network of monastic institutions across the sub-continent, largely sponsored by kings.[49] Archaeological evidence of monastic sites[50] together with inscriptional evidence proves that this form of initiatory Śaivism was already present and to some extent institutionalized by the seventh century.[51]

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[47] Following the Śaiva Siddhānta's engagement with public worship, Saiddhāntika Tantras gradually introduced rituals for installing *śivaliṅga*s for public worship. The *Guhyasūtra* of the *Niśvāsa* corpus contains probably the earliest surviving account regarding the installation of *śivaliṅga*s. However, it is not clear whether these were set up for private or public worship (see Goodall 2015, pp. 64–5); not only does the text not specify this, but other early Saiddhāntika sources that mention *śivaliṅgapūjā* do so in the context of appropriating existing *liṅga*s for the private worship of the *sādhaka* to obtain the power of special mantras (Takashima 2005, pp. 136–8). As Takashima has pointed out, the first surviving Saiddhāntika source that clearly mentions *liṅgapratiṣṭhā* for public worship is the *Kiraṇatantra* or a later recension thereof (Takashima 2005, p. 136). For more on the topic of *liṅgapratiṣṭhā* in the early Mantramārga, see Goodall (forthcoming). For early Śaiva sources on temple construction, see Mills 2014 and her doctoral thesis "Dating and placing early Śaiva texts through *prāsādalakṣaṇa*. A study of *prāsādalakṣaṇa* material in six early Śaiva texts: the *Bṛhatkālottara Mahātantra*; the *Niśvāse Mahātantre Pratiṣṭhātantra*; the *Mayasaṃgraha*, with its commentary, the *Bhāvacūḍāmaṇi*; and the *Brahmayāmala Jayadrathādhikāra Piṅgalāmata*" (Mills 2011).

[48] Sanderson has provided abundant evidence demonstrating such Śaiva involvement with the state in the early medieval period, as well as the accompanying spread into the domain of the householder society. See, e.g., Sanderson 2005, 2009 and forthcoming b.

[49] See, for instance, Goodall 2000, which discusses the Siddhānta monastic networks of medieval South India.

[50] See Sears 2008 and 2014. Sears 2008 examines the archaeological remains of a Śaiva *maṭha* founded in 973 CE in Candrehe, arguing that the layout of the site betrays monasteries having a public function in addition to their primary function as a residence for Śaiva ascetics.

[51] See Sanderson 2006, pp. 148–149 and Goodall 2004, p. xix. Fn. 17 gives the most important epigraphic evidence for the presence of the Śaiva Siddhānta across India starting

2.3. Methodological limitations when reconstructing the social reality of Śaiva initiate communities

Looming over any socio-historical study of the early Śaiva tantric world are the limitations of our material, which consist mainly of prescriptions. There are very few descriptions. Questions such as the exact size and nature of the various Śaiva initiate communities at given times are therefore impossible to answer, as mentioned above, nor can we reconstruct how these prescriptions were performed in reality. Crucial questions are left unanswered, including how often certain rites were performed, or why, by how many, or whom.[52] Theoretically the Śaivism of the Mantramārga was open to all caste classes and to both men and women,[53] but the question remains whether this principle was translated into practice and how large the actual initiate community was. On the basis of evidence from the pre-tenth-century Śaiva Siddhānta scripture *Sarvajñānottara*, Sanderson asserts that the initiated Śaiva was "[…] not merely a married man but also the married head of the household", and thus one who had succeeded to the headship of the joint household, taking on the deceased person's father's ritual duties.[54] This hypothesis would confine initiated practitioners of Mantramārga Śaivism in the early medieval period to a small elite who could afford to undergo the expensive rites and sustain the complicated post-initiatory discipline. According to Sanderson, such people most likely belonged to "wealthy, land-owning households".[55] Based on such considerations, he has further hypothesized that in the socio-religious setting as envisaged by the *Sarvajñānottara*, active initiates were likely to have been few in number and Brahmin men, though not restricted to them.[56] But for lack of more

from the late 7th century, also including that mentioned earlier in Sanderson 2001, pp. 8–10, fn. 6. More evidence is mentioned in Sanderson 2013. On a 6th-century Saiddhāntika monastery, see Bosma 2013.

[52] As Sanderson puts it, "[...] it is possible, I would say necessary, to read the literature and inscriptions with the sort of questions in mind that a social historian would wish to ask." (Sanderson 2005, p. 230). See also Sanderson 2013, pp. 215–217, on the limitations of using prescriptive literature to evaluate a tradition's historical reality.

[53] Sanderson forthcoming b, pp. 147–148.

[54] Sanderson forthcoming b, p. 22.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Sanderson forthcoming b, pp. 19ff.

material, such considerations remain hypothetical and may or may not be representative of other Śaiva tantric schools at the time.

Another point concerns the role of female members of the community. On this, Sanderson asserts that women "[…] in the Siddhānta were for the most part purely passive beneficiaries," even though they were theoretically able to receive initiation.[57] In fact, I have not found any reference to death rites performed for women in this early corpus of Saiddhāntika texts, other than in the relatively late scripture *Bṛhatkālottara* of the eleventh/twelfth century, which is not only later but also an eclectic work, integrating a variety of traditions.[58] Other than this, women are practically invisible in the early texts on Śaiva Siddhānta funerary practices. While this may tell us something about the constitution of Śaiva tantric communities at the time, we also must keep in mind that this silence about their presence may simply be due to the position commonly assigned to them in the medieval Indian context, one that was usually passive.[59] It is therefore a common feature in brahmanical religious literature that women are never autonomous at any stage of their lives, which is also reflected in the prescriptions being centred on men's ritual duties.[60] Nevertheless, we do find instructions for post-mortem rites for women in the brahmanical sphere – even if mainly as variations on those for men. Their complete absence in the early Śaiva tantric sources before the twelfth century is notable.[61]

A further matter about which our sources are not completely clear for this early period is whether Śaiva gurus were only ascetics or could also be married householders. We do know that there was a strong pan-Indian system of monasteries (*maṭha*s) under the direction of ascetic gurus. But there are also indications, though no explicit references in the textual passages examined here, of the existence of *gurukula*s, that is, guru households in

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[57] Sanderson 2006, pp. 147–148.
[58] See p. 83.
[59] See Olivelle 1993, p. 36, quoting Gonda (1965, p. 206).
[60] Cf. YājS Ācārādhyāya 85d (*na svātantryaṃ kvacit striyaḥ*).
[61] Note that in later tantric ritual manuals of Kashmir, women are integrated into the deification process. See p. 195, fn. 64.

which new disciples could live.[62] The distinction between ascetics and married householders is particularly relevant when interpreting rules of inheritance or impurity caused by death (*śāvāśauca*) for those related to the deceased. This topic will be discussed below in chapter 4, but the available material actually does not offer enough information to make any decisions on this issue.

A last difficult point that affects decisions regarding the potential clients of tantric funerary rites is the extent to which the tradition was supported by lay devotees rather than initiates proper. Were the initiatory traditions similar to the Buddhist monastic model, where an uninitiated laity supports a community of religious specialists, receiving services from them in return? Or did the social opening of the Śaiva Mantramārga lead to a situation in which those connected to and supporting the order were initiates, but active in society? If so, was there a tendency to remain exclusive and to initiate only select people, or was the community expanded by offering more neophyte initiations (*samayadīkṣā*), which were more easily accessible than full initiations (*nirvāṇadīkṣā*)? It is, for instance, conceivable that there was a large community of neophytes (*samayin*s) who had received a first initiation into the religion but who were not full initiates (*putraka*s). Again, the available sources do not allow us to determine the relative size of such a *samayin* community. There are only hints in the ritual repertoire suggesting that at some point in time, conditions were created for accommodating lower initiatory levels. In the ritual manuals of the tenth century onwards, the system of initiation is divided into several stages that mirror different initiatory levels. This suggests that more categories had become necessary to accommodate a wider range of initiates. In her annotations to the *Somaśambhupaddhati*, Hélène Brunner-Lachaux has noted that this increase of initiatory ranks has caused considerable confusion regarding the function and structure of the various initiation rituals, even from an emic point of view. This seems to suggest that despite claims of exclusiveness,

[62] Note that a system of married gurus still survives today in South India, for example, amongst the Ādiśaiva priests serving at the Mīnākṣī temple in Madurai, as described by Christopher Fuller in his anthropological study on South Indian temple life. See Fuller 1984, pp. 25–27.

the historical reality had seen a broadening of the base of initiates.[63] How early this development started, however, cannot be determined with any certainty from our sources.

Hence we know little about the historical reality of the Śaiva initiate community's makeup. And means of finding out more seem limited in the absence of the kind of historical data needed for this purpose. However, what we can do is read these texts while asking questions such as the following: Who were the beneficiaries? What was the relative distribution between ascetics and householder initiates? Were Śaiva *ācārya*s mainly ascetics, as in the Atimārga, or were they married? Were all caste classes represented or were the twice-born prevalent? And was proper Śaiva initiation reserved only for an elite? For some of these questions, the sphere of death rites does reveal aspects of the social reality, since death affects not only the individual who has died, but also his environment, and this at emotional, personal and logistic levels. The prescriptions for the rituals that take place on this occasion thus also inadvertently give information about the deceased person's social status and his immediate environment, the objects of our inquiry.

3. The early Siddhānta literature under consideration

In the past few decades, a great deal of new insight has been gained on the historical development of the Śaiva Siddhānta. For a long time, this tradition was mainly associated with the religious movement that developed under this name from approximately the twelfth century onwards in Tamil-speaking South India. However, major scholarly advances of the past four decades have established that its roots reach much further back, into the early medieval period, when a body of scriptures related to the Siddhānta was composed in Sanskrit.[64] While it was initially believed that this early stratum of composition contained a large number of scriptures, thanks to pioneering research carried out on these texts based on text critical methods, it has been established that only a few were definitely composed be-

[63] See Brunner-Lachaux 1977, pp. 416–418, fn. 457.

[64] See, for example, the preface to Goodall 2004 for an extensive treatment and review of this topic.

fore the twelfth century. Notably, Sanderson, in his 2001 article "History through Textual Criticism", established parameters for determining the age of these scriptures, which has helped identify a list of pre-twelfth-century works. He further made the observation that a corpus of Śaiva Siddhānta scriptures must have been well established by the seventh century.[65] Moreover, Goodall, first in the introduction to his critical edition of chapters of the Saiddhāntika scripture *Kiraṇatantra*, and later in his introduction to the scripture *Parākhya*, uses material evidence as well as cross references to establish a relative chronology of the pre-twelfth century Saiddhāntika scriptures that have been identified. Among the deciding factors are whether texts exist as Nepalese palm-leaf manuscripts dating to the ninth or tenth centuries, and whether they contain certain archaic expressions and usages. These include archaic structures, such as not being organized into the four-*pāda* division, a division that has been shown to be a sign of a relatively late date of composition, as well as the use of so-called *aiśa* language, a type of Sanskrit that contains grammatical anomalies and is considered an archaic linguistic form, as it seems to have been later purged from texts in order to transform the language to a higher level of Sanskrit.[66]

The focus of this book will be on the accounts of funerary procedures in these early works. It will first examine scriptures composed before the tenth century: the *Guhyasūtra* of the early *Niśvāsa* corpus (i.e. the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* [Ni]), the *Svāyaṃbhuvasūtrasaṃgraha* (SvāSS), the *Sārdhatriśatikālottara* (SārK), the *Sarvajñānottara* (SJU), the *Kiraṇatantra* (Kir), and the *Dīkṣottara* (DīU) of the *Niśvāsakārikā* associated with the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā*. Secondly, the earliest extant ritual manuals, dating to between the tenth and the twelfth century, will be considered. These include the *Naimittikakriyānusandhāna* (NaiKri) of the *Brahmaśambhupaddhati*, the *Somaśambhupaddhati* (SP) (or *Kriyākāṇḍakramāvalī*), the *Kriyākramadyotikā* (KKD) (or *Aghoraśivapaddhati*), and the *Jñānaratnāvalī* (JR). The dates of these will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Two appendices contain, respectively, editions and annotated translations of selected texts, namely, the *Svāyambhuvasūtrasaṃgraha* 22.9–20,

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[65] Sanderson 2001, in particular pp. 2–7.
[66] Goodall 1998, pp. lxv–lxxi and 2004, pp. lxxviii–lxxxv.

Sarvajñānottara chapters 12 and 13, *Kiraṇatantra* chapters 60 and 61, and the chapters on funerary rites (Antyeṣṭiprakaraṇa [AP]) and post-mortem ancestor worship (Śrāddhaprakaraṇa [ŚP]) of the *Jñānaratnāvalī*.