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ŚAIVISM AND BRAHMANISM IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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The earliest evidence of the cult of Śiva in India goes back well before the early medieval period that is the concern of this lecture. Śiva's trident (*triśūlam*) and representations of Śiva himself in the form of the phallic Liṅga begin to appear sporadically on Indian coins as early as the second century B.C., and some form of the religion is well enough established by the middle of that century for the grammarian Patañjali to speak of the sale of images of Śiva and of pike-wielding (*ayaḥśūlika-*) religious mendicants called Śivabhāgavatas. Anthropomorphic representations of Śiva are seen around the beginning of the Christian era on coins of the Indo-Parthian kings Maues and Gondophares, and the prevalence of some form or forms of Śiva worship is attested throughout the first four centuries of that era by the policy of issuing coins with images of Oēsho (Śiva) and his bull on the reverse during the reigns of the Indo-Scythian kings of the Kushan empire, from Wima Kadphises to Vāsudeva I, and by an abundance of surviving stone Liṅgas and anthropomorphic images.

But there is nothing in this evidence that enables us to define the worshippers it indicates as belonging or not belonging to one or other of the traditions known from Śaiva scriptural and commentatorial sources. The first evidence of that kind appears in inscriptions in the fourth century AD, and almost all Śaiva literature and epigraphy is considerably later than that. These early inscriptions show the existence of adherents of the forms of early ascetic Śaivism known as Pāśupata, which later sources group together as the subdivisions of the Atimārga, identifying this as one of the two primary divisions of the Śaiva religion. These later sources belong to the other division, which considers itself superior and appears in our epigraphical evidence from the sixth century onwards. It refers to itself as the Mantramārga and I have adopted this term to refer to this form of the religion in preference to 'Tantric Śaivism' or 'Āgamic Śaivism', the terms that have become current in Indological usage. Its virtue is that it brings to mind what I take to be the most distinctive features of this tradition, both implicitly through its differentiation from the Atimārga and explicitly through its own meaning. I propose that the Atimārga was so called because its initiates were required to become lifelong celibate ascetics beyond (*ati-*) the social world (*atyāśramī, lokātītaḥ*). The Mantramārga is tacitly defined by contrast as Śaivism without this restriction: it requires its initiates to maintain the social state (*āśramaḥ*) that they are in

at the time of their initiation, and this may be either that of the lifelong celibate ascetic or that of the married householder (*gṛhasthaḥ*), who must therefore maintain his discipline as a Śaiva initiate in the midst of his worldly obligations (*laukiko dharmaḥ*). Moreover, it opened initiation to all four caste-groupings, whereas the Atimārga, as both its prescriptive literature and inscriptions emphasize, was a path closed to all but brahmins.

This extension beyond the community of brahmin ascetics is the first of the Mantramārga's distinguishing features. Others are evoked by the term Mantramārga itself. For while Mantras are indispensable in both Mārgas, they are more central, more diverse in function and much more numerous in the non-Atimārgic complex. While in both Mārgas their utterance, silent or otherwise, serves to empower ritual action and meditation, in the Mantramārga they are venerated as the embodiment of the deities themselves: the Mantramārga's pantheon is one of Mantra-deities (*mantradevatāḥ*). It is the Path of Mantras, then, in the sense that it is that in which the deities are worshipped in the form of Mantras. Further, it provides methods of propitiating these as the means of access to supernatural ends of all kinds. In the Atimārga the purposes of Mantras are purification and salvation, no goal but liberation being recognized. But the Mantramārga is also concerned with the mastering or propitiating of Mantra-deities (*mantrasādhanam, mantrārādhanam*) as the means of bringing about the protective, apotropaic, therapeutic, destructive, empowering and other supernatural effects known as Siddhis ('accomplishments' , 'feats') for the benefit of initiates themselves or their clients. The Mantramārga is in other words the Path of Mantras in their full nature as the means of liberation and Siddhi.

Within the Mantramārga we see a dichotomy between a relatively exoteric tradition known as the Siddhānta in which worship is centred on Śiva himself and more esoteric traditions whose initiates saw themselves as transcending the Siddhānta from within, in which the principal Mantra-deities propitiated are not Śiva but Bhairavas or various female deities of a predominantly ferocious character.

All forms of the Mantramārga share a single ritual system, both in the ordering of their ceremonies and in the construction of each. All set out the same elaborate procedures for the initiation (*dīkṣā*) of recruits and the consecration (*abhiṣekaḥ*) of officiants, the same ceremonies for the installation of images and other substrates of worship (*pratiṣṭhā*), and the same rituals of obligatory regular worship (*nityakarma* and *naimittikakarma*) comprising the summoning of the deity into the person of the worshipper, the deity's worship first there (*antaryāgaḥ*) and then externally (*bahiryāgaḥ*) by projection into a material substrate such as a Liṅga, Maṇḍala, or anthropomorphic image, followed by the repetition of the deity's Mantras (*japaḥ*), and their gratification with offerings in fire (*homaḥ*, *agnikāryam*), with inflections and elaborations of all these for the attainment of *siddhiḥ* (*kāmyakarma*). The features that differentiated the

divisions of the Mantramārga, such as the choice of deity propitiated, the specific character of the visualizations, (*dhyānam*) Mantras, Maṇḍalas, Mudrās, substrates of worship, and offerings that these choices entailed, were surface features that did not affect significantly this deeper structural unity, a fact that greatly facilitated the production of new revelations, which proliferated, especially in the cults of Bhairava and the Goddess.

Central in all this was the enactment of the belief that while mundane, brahmanical ritual can affect only the body or status of the individual Śaiva ritual works directly on the soul, that through intense imagination reinforced by incantation, breath-control, and a choreography of hand gestures the soul itself can be grasped, manipulated, and transformed. This is the driving force of all the rituals of the Mantramārga, and it is most clearly displayed in the 'fusion with Śiva' (*śivayojanikā*) at the climax of initiation, when the officiant, seen not as an agent in his own right but as a vessel through which Śiva himself is acting, enters the initiand's body through the flow of the breath, takes hold of his soul, visualizing it as a point of brilliant light, draws it out and into his person with the return of the breath, fuses it with his own, and then as he exhales raises them up as one to exit through the cranial aperture to unite with the deity.

The principal features that differentiate the two divisions are (1) that in the choice of offerings for the propitiation of the deity the rituals prescribed in the Saiddhāntika scriptures generally remained within the parameters of purity set by brahmanical convention, while those of the non-Saiddhāntika systems transgressed these parameters to a greater or lesser extent by requiring the inclusion of alcoholic and sanguinary offerings, in keeping with the special character of their deities; and (2) that the rituals of installation taught in the Siddhānta extended beyond the consecration of small moveable Liṅgas for the worship performed by initiates for their own purposes or those of individual clients to include the consecration of temples where worship was to be performed on a regular schedule for the public good, typically those established by royal patrons, and the installation in such temples of a large immoveable Liṅga which would serve as the principal embodiment of the deity, who was then individualized for legal purposes (*vyavahārārtham*) by the prefixing of the name of the donor to *-īśvara*, thus allowing it to be treated in law as the owner of the benefactions in the form of land-revenue and other valuables that would sustain the cult.

The Atimārga certainly continued to prosper after the rise of the Mantramārga. But it was through the latter, with its greater social reach and breadth of function that Śaivism achieved its greatest impact in India and beyond. It is probably for that reason also that a vast amount of Mantramārgic literature in the form of scriptures, commentaries, independent treatises, and ritual manuals has come down to us but comparatively little from the Atimārgic systems.

Now, during the early medieval period, from the fifth century of the Christian era onwards, Śaivism rose to pre-eminence throughout the Indic world, both in the subcontinent and in Southeast Asia, as the principal beneficiary of royal patronage in the great majority of its kingdoms. This is revealed by the epigraphical record of pious donations, by the preponderance of Śaiva temples at this time, and by abundant evidence that Śaivism's Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist, and Jain competitors developed systems of ritual observance during this period along the lines of the Śaiva Mantramārga.

Considering the epigraphical record of acts of patronage and the evidence of changes over time within the Śaivas' prescriptive literature, I propose the hypothesis that the principal cause of this success was that Śaivism greatly increased its appeal to a growing body of royal patrons by extending and adapting its repertoire to contain a body of rituals and normative prescriptions that legitimated, empowered, or promoted all the key elements of the social and political developments that characterize the early medieval period.

The key elements that I have in mind are (1) the spread of the monarchical model of government through the emergence of numerous new dynasties at subregional, regional, and supraregional levels; (2) the proliferation of land-owning temples, and (3) new urban centres; (4) the expansion of the agrarian base through the creation of villages, land reclamation, and the construction of water-reservoirs, wells, and other means of irrigation, with the steady growth in population that these developments imply; and the cultural and religious assimilation of the growing population of communities caught up in this expansion.

I propose that the principal factors of Śaivism's engagement in this process are the following. (1) The granting of Śaiva initiation was extended to kings and reconceptualized in that special case as a means of increasing their military power and thereby protecting the state. (2) The prescriptive literature also teaches that this ceremony should be followed by a Śaiva elaboration of the brahmanical royal consecraton ceremony and presents this as necessary empowement of the king to occupy his office as the guardian of the socio-religious order. (3) It extended the function of this ritual by also performing it for the king on the eve of battle as a means of empowering him to attain victory (*jayābhiṣekaḥ*). (4) It developed a range of apotropaic, invigorative, and hostile Mantra-rites to promote the success of royal patrons and the frustrating of their enemies. (5) It developed rituals for the establishing of the royal Śiva temples whose foundation marked the rule of all but the most ephemeral sovereigns, developing a secondary body of scriptural authorities, the Pratiṣṭhātantras, devoted exclusively to this domain and generating a class of Śaiva officiants known as Sthāpakas who specialized in these rituals. (6) It included in the repertoire of these specialists rituals for the construction by kings of residences for their Śaiva Rājagurus, these leading in time to the creation of a pan-Indian network of interconnected seats of Śaiva learning

for the training of candidates for this office. (7) The Sthāpaka's activities were also extended to encompass the rituals attendant on the foundation of the palaces of their royal patrons; and (8) the layout of the palace taught in these texts is only part of the layout for an urban settlement to be established by the king around the palace, complete with markets and segregated areas for the dwellings of the various castes and artisans, with detailed instructions on the size and plan of these dwellings determined by caste status. (9) One of the early Pratiṣṭhātantras, the *Devyāmata*, devotes a chapter to the layout to be followed not only in new towns but also in new rural settlements; and (10) Śaiva officiants also designed new rituals basd on and subsuming brahmanical models to enable them to officiate in the consecration of the works of irrigation that were a key element of the royal promotion of agrarian expansion that marks this period. (11) The *Netratantra* shows the existence of a further class of Śaiva officiants who functioned in almost all the areas traditionally reserved for the king's brahmanical chaplain, the Rājapurohita. He is to perform the king's recurrent duties to worship the various deities on the tithis assigned to them, to celebrate the major annual royal festivals of the Indrotsava and Mahānavamī, to protect the royal family through rites to ward off ills (*śāntiḥ*), to restore them to health after illness, to ward off or counter the assaults of dangerous supernaturals of every kind, to empower through lustration (*nīrājanam*) the king's elephants, horses and weapons of war, and to protect the king with apotropaic rites before he eats, sleeps, and engages in his regular practrice of martial skills. (12) The Śaivas reserved the office of the king's Guru to brahmins, but they opened initiation to candidates from all four caste-classes, thus enabling the integration of powerful agriculturalist castes classed as Śūdra that were dominant in the countryside, and providing a means of articulating a social unity that encompassed and transcended the disjunctions and oppositions of the brahmanical social order. (13) The non-Saiddhāntika traditions of the worship of Bhairavas and goddesses were used to encompass and incorporate the local cults of territories being assimilated into Śaiva-brahmanical culture through the expansion of state-formation at the subregional level. Finally, (14) Śaivism mirrored and validated the incorporative structure of the state's power by elaborating an inclusivist model that ranked other religious systems as stages of an ascent to liberation in Śaivism, the religion of the king made manifest in his initiation, his Śaiva consecration, and his royal temples.

In this way, Śaivism became an integral and indispensable part of the early medieval polity, achieving as it progressed a transregional organization and a consequent standardization of its rituals and doctrines. This transregional uniformity, I propose, further heightened its appeal to kings by enabling it more easily to be perceived as a transcendent means of legitimation, empowerment, and the integration of regional traditions, as an essential part of a pan-Indian socio-religious order that each regional kingdom sought to exemplify.

This, I contend, is the principal force behind Śaivism's rise to pre-eminence over the Vaiṣṇavas, Jainas, and Buddhists. Only Buddhism was able to compete on equal terms with Śaivism, and where it did so, notably in Eastern India and Java, it was a Buddhism centred on the Tantric Mantranaya, which is to say Mahāyāna Buddhism remodelled along Śaiva lines, equipped with a parallel apparatus of Tantric ceremonies of initiation, installation, and regular worship, and offering the same supernatural benefits to the same royal clients.

But the Vaiṣṇavas, Jainas, and Buddhists were not the Śaivas' only rivals. In addition there was the long-established and deeply rooted tradition of Brahmanism. Its theoreticians denied the validity of any religious practice that was undertaken on the authority of texts lying outside the brahmanical scriptural corpus, that is to say, outside the primary Vedic revelation (Śruti) and such secondary literature (Smṛti) as was accepted to derive from it. The Śaiva theoreticians, for their part, made no claim that their scriptures were valid by the criterion of Brahmanism. They insisted rather both on their independent validity and on their superiority to the scriptures to Brahmanism.

It might appear, then, that Śaivism was as much distinct from, and opposed to, Brahmanism as Buddhism and Jainism were. However, its approach to brahmanical authority was of a very different, more accommodating kind. This may no doubt be cited as a further explanation of Śaivism's success, for it helped it to put down deep and far-reaching roots throughout society, not merely in the special environment of the royal courts and temples. On the other hand, as we shall see, it was also a threat to its identity as a distinct entity, a threat of which its theoreticians were aware and against which they tried to immunize the faithful with, it seems, only limited success, pockets of high-principled distinctionists holding out against the pervasive tendency of Brahmanism to absorb and emasculate what sought to rise above it.

For while the Śaivas thought their scriptures superior to the brahmanical and the followers of the latter thought their own superior, the two religions' views of each other were not symmetrical. For while most theoreticians of Brahmanism during this period condemned the Śaiva scriptures as false the Śaivas held unanimously that the Śruti and Smṛti of Brahmanism are universally and uniquely valid in their own sphere, that of prescribing the conduct and religious observance obligatory for persons in their identity as married and unmarried members of the caste-classes (*varṇāśramadharmaḥ*), and that as such they are man's sole means of valid knowledge both of all actions (*karma*) that benefit and harm the soul's destiny in the domain of recurrent incarnation (*saṃsāraḥ*) and of the nature of the consequences of these actions, from the rewards of the heavens to the tortures of the hells. Nor did they deny the reality of Brahmanism's ultimate goal, that of liberation (*mokṣaḥ*), offered to those who aspired to escape recurrent incarnation through knowledge, unmotivated

obedience to ritual injunctions, or both. They denied only that it was ultimate, holding that true, definitive liberation lay beyond it and could be reached through Śaivism alone, by undergoing initiation in the presence of the Maṇḍala of Śiva (*śivamaṇḍaladīkṣā*) and then following the Śaiva ritual and meditative disciplines, or, in the case of those prevented by incapacity or social responsibilites from taking up those disciplines, notably their royal patrons, through initiation followed by fervent devotion manifest in support of the Śaiva religion and its institutions.

Nor was the validity of the scripures of Brahmanism irrelevant to the Śaivas within their own world of Śaiva rites and belief. Indeed Sadyojyotis, who is much the earliest of the commentators on the Śaiva scriptures whose works have reached us—he flourished at some time between the second half of the seventh century and the beginning of the ninth, probably no later than the first half of the eighth—insisted that the defence of the validity of the brahmanical scriptures is essential to a belief in the validity of the scriptures of the Śaivas themselves.

He offered two cogent reasons. The first is that if the scriptures of Brahmanism were not the source of valid knowledge in their domain, as the Buddhists and Jains insist, then Śaivism's central claim that it frees the initiate from the cosmic hierarchy of the levels of incarnation would be empty. Śaivas must believe that the Veda is valid because the initiation rituals prescribed in their scriptures and performed by Śiva himself through their officiants enact the progressive freeing of the soul from a cosmos created and maintained for and by the enactment and consequences of meritorious and demeritorious actions, and these actions, as we have seen, are held to be good and bad on the authority of the Veda alone. If it were the scriptures of a religion other than Brahmanism, say Buddhism or Jainism, that transmitted the correct view of the world to be transcended, then the Śaiva rituals would be ineffectual, or would have to be rewritten to enact the stages of progressive liberation from a differently structured moral and physical universe.

The second reason—and it is this that is more weighty in an assessment of the lived relations between Śaivism and Brahmanism—is that the Śaiva scriptures themselves insist that the rules of the brahmanical socio-religious order are binding on Śaiva initiates. Śaivas were subject to that order at the time of their initiation and to the extent that they chose to continue to live within it after their initiation they were enjoined to continue to adhere to its rules.

So Śaivism, while claiming to transcend Brahmanism by offering true liberation, was nonetheless tied to it in a close embrace. It was the brahmanical world rather than the Buddhist or the Jain that Śaivas rose through to salvation; and on their path thereto they continued to be bound by its rules, adding their Śaiva obligations rather than substituting them for the brahmanical. Because of this it could not have spread as Buddhism did into Inner Asia and the Far East. To achieve that it would have had

to sever this link with the Veda and either to reinvent itself in a form that required no such link or to rewrite its rituals of induction to enact the freeing of their beneficiaries from the bondage of whatever was the locally established religion. It did neither. So we find it only where the brahmanical socio-religious order had been established. We find it, therefore throughout the Indian subcontinent, and, beyond that, only where brahmanical ideology had been adopted as the basis of state-formation: in Indonesia, Cambodia (Kambuja), and central coastal Vietnam (Campā).

The Śaiva's adherence to these brahmanical rules was to differ from that of the non-Śaiva only in the attitude with which he was instructed to view them in the light of their coexistence with his Śaiva obligations. Two passages of early Saiddhāntika Śaiva scripture that were much cited by the commentators clarify this attitude. The *Sarvajñānottara* tells us that the Śaiva should maintain his brahmanical observances after initiation but without believing that they are fully real. He is to do them but without subjective commitment. He should not think that by accommodating brahmanical rites beside the Śaiva he brings about a doubling of the benefit that he will derive or that if he were to omit them he would damage that benefit. He is to see himself as acting in this regard not for his own advantage but so as not to undermine through a pointless non-conformity the brahmanical order within which Śaivism is embedded. The *Mataṅgapārameśvara* teaches likewise that he should not see his brahmanical observances as ancillaries of the Śaiva, but should maintain them nonetheless for the sake of conformity to mundane convention.

But how far was the Śaiva's compliance with the injunctions of Brahmanism expected to go? The *Mataṅgapārameśvara* does not address this question, saying only that Śaivas "should follow the brahmanical observances that have been adopted in whatever is their region, in accordance with the teaching of their [branch of the] Veda''.The *Sarvajñānottara* is more specific. It states that the Śaiva should abide by brahmanical regulation in matters of caste, which is to say that he may contract or condone marriages only under the restrictions of endogamy and exogamy that apply to the uninitiated, and that before he can take Śaiva initiation he must be put through all the brahmanical life-cycle rites from that of conception to those of tonsure (*cūḍākarma*), initiation as a student of the Veda (*upanayanam*), and marriage. He must therefore, it is implied, ensure that these rituals are performed in due course for his offspring. He must also accept the restrictions imposed by Brahmanism on his behaviour in such matters as food and social interaction; and if he infringes these restrictions he must perform whatever penances may be imposed.

It also rules that Śaivas should continue to perform (1) the observances at the first juncture of the day (*pūrvasaṃdhyā*), (2) the recitation of the Gāyatrī (*japaḥ*), (3) the fire-sacrifice (*homaḥ*), and (4) "whatever other rituals are traditional'' (*karma yac ca kramāgatam*). The first two are the most elementary of the brahmanical duties,

since they are obligatory even for one who has gone through initiation into the study of the Veda (*upanayanam*) and has not yet married and for a married man who has not yet established a sacrificial fire. The third item can only be the fire-sacrifice that a married man was obliged to offer daily and periodically in various forms once he had established that fire as a man was obliged to do once he had become the head of an independent property-owning household (*gṛhapatiḥ*). From this we may infer, incidentally, that the Śaiva initiate that the *Sarvajñānottara* takes as the standard or default case, is not any married man but only one who had succeeded to the headship of the joint household. For in such a household, which was the norm, unseparated coparcenors, typically junior brothers and sons under the senior's tutelage, would not be qualified to perform the fire-sacrifice, even if they were married with their own families.

This model clarifies further the need for the initiated paterfamilias to maintain his brahmanical ritual duties. For if there were uninitiated persons under his tutelage without their own sacrificial fires then he would have to continue his brahmanical duties for their benefit, since religious observance on this level, unlike the Śaiva, is one in which the individual acts not merely for himself but as the representative of all the members of the household that he heads. If he wished to restrict his observances to the Śaiva he would have to choose the path of asceticism outside the family and its ties.

How a Śaiva was to manage to co-ordinate the not inconsiderable ritual duties of an initiate with those that he had inherited on the brahmanical level when he became the head of his household is not a question that has been addressed anywhere in the Śaiva literature of which I am aware. But this very silence suggests the possibility that initiated Śaivas did not conform to the rule of the *Gṛhyasūtras* that brahmins should perform the domestic sacrifices themselves, with or without the assistance of a Brahman officiant (*brahmā*), but rather had a family-priest (*kulapurohitaḥ*) to act for them, as was required in the case of the brahmanical rites of rulers.

As is well known, brahmanical sacrificial ritual is of two kinds: the Smārta domestic rituals performed in the single, domestic fire, which are obligatory for all heads of brahminical households, and the more elaborate and prestigious Śrauta ceremonies from the Agnihotra to the Soma sacrifice that the head of a household with a single fire could have performed for him in the three Vaitānika fires (*tretāgniḥ*) established for this purpose. The *Sarvajñānottara*'s formulation is vague enough to encompass both forms of sacrifice. However, it says that after initiation a Śaiva should maintain his brahmanical duties only to a limited extent (*kiṃcid ācaret*) and this makes it improbable that it envisaged the inclusion of the Śrauta rites, their performance being the hallmark only of those heads of households who were the most exemplary representatives of brahmanical orthopraxy.

Nor is it certain that the *Sarvajñānottara*'s restriction was intended only to allow the omission of the Śrauta domain. It is possible that it envisaged Śaivas performing only the principal among the Smārta sacrifices or that it avoided greater specificity to take account of the fact that Śaivas differed in the communities of which it was aware in the extent of their Smārta observances.

It is certainly probable that in some regions, perhaps the majority, the Śaiva's brahmanical rites were indeed drawn solely from the Smārta domain. This is what we would expect, for example, in Nepal and Kashmir, both regions in which Śaivism flourished and the Śrauta tradition was relatively weak.

However, if the guiding principle was compliance with the expectations of the brahmanical communities within which Śaivas were recruited and continued to live, then we would expect that they would be required to include the Śrauta domain within their brahmanical observances in regions in which it had been maintained; and we would expect to find examples of such compliance particularly in those areas that have preserved strong Śrauta traditions into modern times, notably Kerala, the Tamil South, Andhra, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Benares.

Such compliance was certainly required in the twelfth century among the Śaivas of the Tamil South, who, under the patronage of the Śaiva Coḷa emperors, inherited and maintained the doctrinal and liturgical positions of Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha and the other Kashmirian Saiddhāntika Śaiva authorities of the tenth century. For in his commentary on the *Mṛgendrapaddhati* of his teacher Aghoraśivācārya of Cidambaram Vaktraśambhu argues that a Śaiva's brahmanical observances after initiation must indeed be as comprehensive as those of the most orthopractic non-Śaiva brahmins, comprising both the Smārta and the Śrauta ceremonies.

It is reasonable to assume that Vaktraśambhu's emphatic position was not purely theoretical but was intended to justify current practice; and the truth of this assumption is confirmed by the historical record. As usual, that is extremely sparse. So it does not allow us to determine how common or widespread the practice was. But it does at least allow us to conclude that it existed, and, as one might predict, in areas where the Śrauta tradition has continued to flourish, namely Benares, Kerala, and Tamilnadu.

Śaivas, then, did indeed incorporate the brahmanical within their ritual lives, and while in some cases this extended only to the Smārta domain, in others it extended beyond this to include the Śrauta sacrifices. The decisive factor in every case was no doubt the expectations and influence of the orthodox brahmanical community within which the Śaivas of a region were recruited.

What the Śaivas advocated, then, was not an alternative to Brahmanism in the manner that Buddhism or Jainism were alternatives, but rather a Śaiva-brahmanical order in which Brahmanism was to be defended and sustained in its entirety. Indeed the concern of Vaktraśambhu in the passage in which he requires the maintenance of

both Smārta and Śrauta ritual duties is less to address instructions to Śaivas on how far they are obliged to conform to brahmanical regulation as to show why followers of the brahmanical religion should themselves feel no inhibition about receiving Śaiva initiation, since Śaivism, far from opposing their religion, will require them to maintain all the ceremonies, from the domestic rites to the Soma sacrifices, that define its most exemplary practitioners. His message is that Śaivism can be added to these religious observances without compromising them in the slightest degree while conferring a benefit beyond their reach.

Nor is this stance a late development peculiar to Vaktrasambhu or his region. He is elaborating a position already articulated several centuries before by Sadyojyotis, the earliest of the Saiddhāntika theoreticians whose works have come down to us:

> This [teaching of Śiva (*śaivam*)] does not challenge the validity of the [non-Śaiva teachings] in their domains; it has ruled that the observances of the caste-classes and disciplines [taught] in [the brahmanical among] those [teachings] apply [equally to Śaiva initiates]; and no other means of valid knowledge [, either perception or inference,] contradicts the teaching of Śiva in the domain [of knowledge] proper to it. Therefore it should be accepted as valid by [all,] including those who are learned in the Veda (*śrotriyaiḥ*)[, which is to say, by those whose brahmanical observances include the Śrauta], as the means of achieving a greater benefit [than can be achieved through the Veda alone].

It may be objected at this point that the picture I have drawn of the integration of Śaivism and Brahmanism applies only to married householders. For the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* completes its remarks on the duty to maintain brahmanical observance by saying that the requirement is not strictly binding for ascetics. In this domain at least, then, it would seem that the Mantramārga preserves the purely ascetic Atimārga's commitment to transcendence of mundane, brahmanical norms. But it should be noted that the *Mataṅgapārameśvara*, though it is a Saiddhāntika scripture that retains more Atimārgic features than most, does not require the abandonment of conformity to these norms but only allows this as a possibility. Where prescriptive texts state options they do not, of course, give us any means of deciding which choice was the norm. To determine that we must look to the historical evidence preserved in inscriptions. That certainly does not encourage the view that transcendence of Brahmanism was standard. For while some inscriptions from our period containing praise of distinguished Śaiva ascetics of the kind that presided over Śaiva monastic establishments (*tapovanam*, *maṭhaḥ*) and occupied the position of the Royal Preceptor in their kingdoms mention only their purely Śaiva activities others reveal that the learning and patronage of such ascetics were not restricted to the Śaiva Mantramārga but extended into the brahmanical domain. Indeed we find the same in epigraphical records of Atimārgic Śaiva institutions. In an inscription of A.D. 1193 the ascetic

Vāmaśakti, Royal Preceptor and abbot of the Kālamukha Kōḍiya Maṭha (*koṭimaṭhaḥ*) attached to the temple of Dakṣiṇa-Kedāreśvara in Baḷḷigāve, is praised as a scholar not only of his own scriptures but also of the brahmanical Upaniṣads and Smṛtis; and an inscription of A.D. 1036, recording a royal grant of land by for the support of the temple of Pañcaliṅgeśvara in the same city, made to Lakulīśvara, the Kālamukha incumbent of this site, concludes with a verse that threatens with the king's justice any who criticize either Śiva, that is to say, his Śaiva teachings, or the brahmanical system of the caste-classes and religious disciplines taught in the Veda.

Now, as this last citation indicates and common sense suggests, the Śaivas depended on the support of their royal patrons to impose and maintain this Śaiva-brahmanical order; and accordingly they provided their prescriptive literature with appropriate rituals and exhortations to strengthen their position in this regard.

Thus when introducing the procedure of a Śaiva version of the royal consecration ritual (*rājyābhiṣekaḥ*) to be given to a king after he has received Śaiva initiation the *Naimittikakarmānusaṃdhāna* of Brahmaśambhu, completed in A.D. 938/9 and the earliest surviving guide to the Saiddhāntika Śaiva rituals, states that the purpose of this ceremony is to qualify the king for his office as the guide and guardian (*guruḥ*) of the system of the castes and disciplines. This is none other than the role assigned to him by purely brahmanical authorities; and accordingly the Mantras used in this empowerment are predominantly brahmanical. But since it is as an initiated Śaiva that the king is to assume this role it is evident that the socio-religious order entrusted to his care by his Śaiva Rājaguru is not just that envisaged by the brahmanical authorities but rather the expanded religion that comprised both the brahmanical and the Śaiva traditions. For the Śaiva literature elsewhere requires him to ensure that the strata of this complex of injunction, the Śaiva, the Smārta, and the Śrauta, are maintained in the proper order of relative authority, with the brahmanical subordinate to the Śaiva, promising him that to do so will guarantee him a long reign and the prosperity of his kingdom, and implying thereby that failing to do so will have the opposite consequences.

This model in which Brahmanism is maintained under the aegis of Śaivism through royal patronage might be suspected to have been more ideal than real were it to rest on this prescriptive evidence alone. However, it is in harmony with what is conveyed by the historical records of the period. They certainly do not support a position that the rise of Śaivism during these centuries led to a corresponding decline in the hold of the brahmanical order. On the contrary, they point to a renaissance in that sphere; and they show that Śaiva kings were active in promoting it.

A good part of the thousands of inscriptions that have come to light from this time consists of copper-plate charters in which kings, including those who were Śaiva, have recorded their establishing orthodox (Vaidika) brahmins in their territories through

grants of tax-exempt land, thus fulfilling one of the principal duties imposed on them by brahmanical scripture, extending the penetration of Brahmanism, while facilitating the administration of their territories and promoting agricultural development.

Further, numerous kings, Śaivas prominent among them, have been commended during this period, particularly at its beginning, for having imposed the brahmanical system of caste-classes and disciplines (*varṇāśramadharmaḥ*) in their newly established kingdoms, this frequently being presented as a restoration after a period of decline. Thus the Śaiva Vākāṭaka Pravarasena II of Vidarbha (420–450) is praised for having 'restored by Śiva's favour the [social order] of the First [and Perfect] Age (Kṛta Yuga)'; of the Śaiva Bhauma Bhāskaravarman of Prāgjyotiṣa (Assam) (r. *c.* 600–50) we are told that he was 'a king created to impose the proper division of the duties of the caste-classes and disciplines that had [long] been abandoned'; and of Pṛthivīmūla, a feudatory of the Viṣṇukuṇḍi Indrabhaṭṭāraka of Veṅgī (r. *c.* 527–555) we learn the following:

> He protected without question all the duties of the caste-classes and brahmanical disciplines by virtue of the wisdom and discrimination produced in him by his understanding of the matters ordained by Śruti and Smṛti, and took up the heavy burden of sovereignty with no motive other than that of promoting the welfare of others, being supremely devoted to Śiva and supremely devoted to Brahmanism, a righteous conqueror.

Nor was this promotion of Brahmanism by Śaiva kings restricted to the socio-religious level. It extended on occasion to the commissioning of the horse-sacrifice (Aśvamedha) and other solemn Śrauta rituals. These were associated with the acquisition and celebration of sovereignty; but their performance was also a signal of a king's desire to be seen as an exemplary supporter of the Veda, dedicated to the revival of Brahmanism in its entirety.

This double religion, combining Brahmanism and Śaivism under royal authority, was from the point of view of all Śaiva theoreticians a two-tiered hierarchy with Śaivism on top and Brahmanism below. Even Vaktraśambhu, for all his insistence that the Śrauta and Smārta rites are integral to the proper conduct of the Śaiva religion, does not forget that only the Śaiva rites themselves are to be seen as the cause of liberation. The theoreticians' ahistorical and fundamentalist presentation depicts no overlap between the two levels, no encroachment of one upon the other, or rather. it uses theory to outlaw any such encroachment.

Nonetheless, when we see that the brahmanical domain has been so comprehensively accommodated we are bound to look for evidence of the undermining of the orthodox Śaiva view of Śaivisms' transcendence. And we find it. It is already present near the end of the ninth century in the *Nyāyamañjarī* of the Kashmirian philosopher Jayantabhaṭṭa, minister of king Śaṅkaravarman (*r. c.* AD 883--902). Though he is no

Śrauta ritualist or Mīmāṃsaka, he shows himself, as one would expect in a work of the Nyāya system, to be the proponent of an essentially brahmanical standpoint. Yet he argues for the validity of the Śaiva scriptures. Among his arguments are two of three that are advanced by the orthodox Saiddhāntikas themselves. The first is that of compliance with brahmanical ordinances. The second is from the testimony of the Veda itself: the Saiddhāntikas argued that brahmanical attacks on their religion were refuted by the abundant evidence of veneration for Śiva and his Vedic prototype Rudra in their own scriptures, even claiming, quite wrongly, that references to *dīkṣā* in the *Mahābhārata* in the context of propitiation of Śiva are to the Śaiva initiation ceremony. Only Sadyojyotis' argument that Śaiva initiation relies upon the Veda's validity is lacking. Evidently that is because it is incompatible with even the most tolerant brahmanical view, since it is inseparably connected with the doctrine that Śaivism is superior to the faith of the Veda, accepting the validity of the Veda in its sphere only because it needs to believe that its initiation is liberating the soul from real bonds. It is in the same spirit that Jayantabhaṭṭa puts forward the vague and inaccurate claim that the teachings of the Śaiva scriptures are consistent with those of the brahmanical Upaniṣads. This in short is a view that accommodates the religion of the Śaivas but overlooks what makes them unique in their own estimation, choosing not to see the respects in which the teachings of the Śaivas differ from those of the brahmanical traditions in matters of theology, even though some of these positions bear strongly on their sense of identity and purpose. The price of brahmanical recognition, then, is that the Śaivas must accept a watered-down version of themselves, one in which they are no longer the inheritors of a uniquely efficacious vehicle of salvation, but subscribers to a bland ecumenism that argues that there is but one god with many forms teaching various paths to the same goal. They are invited in other words to become 'Hindus'.

We could see this simply as a view of Śaivism from the outside, a view to which no-one who called himself a Śaiva would have subscribed. But this seems improbable in the light of the fact that Jayantabhaṭṭa claims that his position on Śaivism is that of respectable society in general (*mahājanaḥ*), which he defines as comprising all who live within the system of the four castes and disciplines in accordance with the ordinances of the Veda. I see no reason to doubt him and cannot believe that this could have been a widespread view in the absence of Śaivas who subscribed to it. It is surely more plausible, therefore, to suppose that Jayantabhaṭṭa is expressing the view of an already well established and populous segment of the Śaivas themselves.

There are other indications that such an ideologically emasculated double of Śaivism existed. Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha, writing when Saiddhāntika learning in Kashmir was at its height, tells us that one of his reasons for writing his great commentary on the *Mataṅga* was to counteract attempts to draw the text into the brahmanical domain.

He also attacks the view of certain Śaivas that the execution of the regular rituals of worship is merely the fulfilment of a duty, with no higher purpose than conformity to scriptural injunction, the Mīmāṃsakas' view of brahmanical observance.

One of the Śaiva arguments that the anti-Śaiva Aparāditya puts up to refute in the early twelfth century in his commentary on the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* evidences a similar self-assessment. The Śaiva is made to argue that since the adherents of Brahmanism hold that the injunctive force of the Veda is directed only to specific, restricted classes of persons they have no reason to deny that the Śaiva scriptures are valid for Śaivas as members of a similar community of birth. Aparāditya counters this by attacking the very notion that it is possible to be a Śaiva by birth (*jātyā*), arguing rather lamely from the grammatical derivation of the word *śaivaḥ* itself that a Śaiva is simply a person who chooses to follow Śiva's scriptures, a step to which the whole weight of brahmanical authority is opposed. What matters to us is that the argument would be pointless unless there were Śaivas who were making this claim.

The existence of such Śaivas is also the most plausible explanation for the fact that a substantial amount of Saiddhāntika ritual material has been propagated within Purāṇas. The *Uttarabhāga* of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* is largely devoted to the prescription of rituals in this tradition; and the *Agnipurāṇa* contains almost the entire text of Somaśambhu's famous manual of AD 1095/6. In the *Liṅgapurāṇa* we see that while ritual forms and Mantras are preserved, the distinctive features of Śaiva doctrine are mostly jettisoned. So, for example, the system of the thirty-six levels of existence (*tattvam*) that demonstrates to the Śaivas the superiority of their scriptural revelation reverts to the system of twenty-six Tattvas taught in such brahmanical sources as the *Mokṣadharma* in the Epic.

Evidence that Śaivism was being drawn into the mundane sphere to the detriment of its distinct identity is for the most part postscriptural. However it is also to be found in the scriptures themselves in their treatment of the functions of the class of Śaiva officiants termed Sthāpakas or 'installers'. These were specialists in the Śaiva rituals for the installation and consecration of temples and images. A lay devotee who wished to commission such works had to engage a Sthāpaka who could ensure that the work of the architect, the image-maker, and other craftsmen proceeded within the scriptural requirements, and could correctly perform with his assistants all the elaborate rituals required before the foundation could be activated and the merit received. The distinct character of the Sthāpaka is reflected in the emergence of the Installation Tantras (*pratiṣṭhātantrāṇi*), a class of scriptures dealing exclusively with this field of knowledge. Among early works of this kind are the *Devyāmata* and the *Mohacūrottara*.

The former shows anxiety over the quality of the Sthāpaka whom the patron will engage. It devotes several verses to distinguishing types and to exhorting the devotee to

avoid all but one, who is described as learned both in the general Śaiva scriptures and in the specialized Tantras of Installation, as content with the teaching of Śiva, focused wholely upon it, strictly adhering to the discipline of the initiated (*samayācāraḥ*), without any inclination towards the scriptures of the uninitiated (*paśuśāstram*), taking no pleasure in the mundane religion (*laukiko dharmaḥ*), but delighting in the religion of Śiva alone (*śivadharmānurañjitaḥ*). In the light of this repeated insistence that a true Sthāpaka should have nothing to do with the brahmanical tradition it is not surprising to learn that the types condemned are those whose practice and belief are contaminated by it. Of those that should be avoided, whom I arrange here in the order of their increasing unsuitability, the first are Sthāpakas who have received Śaiva initiation and have acquired knowledge not only of the Tantras of Installation but also of the primary Śaiva scriptures, yet in spite of this are orthodox brahmanical in their religious commitment (*paśuśāstrānurañjitaḥ*). Worse than these are initiates of this kind who have no knowledge of the primary scriptures and only a limited knowledge of the Tantras of Installation. But then there are Sthāpakas who are not Śaivas at all. They have not taken initiation and have not studied the primary scriptures but have acquired a greater or lesser degree of technical competence in this field by studying the Tantras of Installation.

Aparāditya provides independent evidence of the worst of these developments. Though opposed in general to the view that the Śaiva scriptures are valid as injunction he concedes that brahmanical Sthāpakas do follow the instructions of the Śaiva installation Tantras, but points out that they do so only in part and only in certain phases of the rituals, and, above all, that they do not take Śaiva initiation to qualify them to do so. Here we see a territory within Śaivism being multiplied in forms in which it is progressively stripped of its religious identity to meet the requirements of a different, more brahmanical clientele.

The existence of this range of compromises was no doubt the consequence of the very coexistence with the mundane religion that the Śaiva scriptures advocated. Once that process was initiated with the emergence of the Mantramārga it was bound to be difficult to keep alive in all initiates the spirit of a merely apparent conformity.

So an examination of the development of the literatures of both traditions over time shows Śaivism exerting pressure on Brahmanism and Brahmanism responding to this pressure by assimilating and brahmanicizing the practice, both private and priestly, of the Śaivas.

This, of course was not a uniform process. The relative strength of the various Śaiva and brahmanical traditions, dependent as it was on such inconstant factors as royal patronage within the ever-changing landscape of power as dynasties and states rose and fell during the early medieval period, could not be constant in all regions and times. Nor can we expect to find a single picture even within a single period and

region; and where such a picture does emerge from the evidence we must be aware that the constancy is probably more apparent than real, that it reveals the strength of certain voices and not the absence of others.

For it is highly probable that in any region and time there were more voices than have reached us. The degree of compromise and resistance differed from region to region and from time to time; and even within single contexts we find a range of responses, from adamant opposition to any blurring of the boundary between the two religious paths to a view of Śaivism as no more than an equipollent variant within a broader religion which though it received no name during this period corresponds approximately to what came to be called Hinduism, united if not named through its opposition to Buddhism and Jainism and, later, to Islam and Christianity.

The key to a balanced perception of the history of Śaivism lies, then, in seeing it in terms of two antithetical tendencies. On the one hand an ineluctable drift towards loss of transcendence and on the other the effort of its fundamentalist theoreticians to counter this drift by constructing doctrinal positions that are designed to immunize the Śaivas against succumbing to an acceptance of this loss of transcendence. In the case of the Siddhanta this was particularly difficult to accomplish, since it was so strongly committed to the principle that Śaivism must conform to brahmanical standards both by maintaining brahmanical observances and by inscribing brahmanical principles of caste-separation and purity within its own procedures and institutions. This may help us to understand another major phenomenon in the history of Śaivism during this period. This is the emergence on to the stage of high culture of the cults of Bhairava and the Goddess. For while these were valued within the culture of the court for their reputed power to promote the might of the monarch especially in the context of war, they were also taken up and developed by learned Śaiva brahmins as esoteric vehicles of of inner transformation in which transcendence of the agent's brahmanical identity is inscribed not merely in theory, as in the Saiddhāntika domain, but in practice. Śākta Śaiva theory, most clearly articulated by Abhinavagupta around the end of the first millenium, conceived of that identity as a false consciousness that had to be jettisoned internally if salvation was to be attained; and Śākta Śaiva practice required this identity to be jettisoned externally, at least in the domain of the Śākta Śaiva's rituals, through observances that went against brahmanical principles of purity and caste.

We see, then, that if we are to gain a balanced understanding of Śaivism as a force in early medieval Indian culture it is not enough to look at the views of its pre-eminent theoreticians, since these gain much of their meaning from a context of historical change that they are designed to counteract; and in doing so they push it out of view or at least out of the foreground in which it would easily be perceived. It is necessary also to consider the representations of the religion recorded outside the

Śaiva literature, especially but not exclusively in Brahmanical sources, and to test the picture that emerges from these diverse textual materials against the evidence of the epigraphical and material record.