

“Rudras on Earth” on the eve of the Tantric Age: The *Śivadharmaśāstra* and the making of Śaiva lay and initiatory communities

Nina Mirnig¹

Introduction: Religious and historical context

The fifth to seventh centuries of the Common Era see the beginning of the production of Sanskrit Śaiva religious literature, reflecting the increasing popularity of the Śaiva religion – also on a religio-political level – across the Indic world.² One of the products of this time is the *Śivadharmaśāstra* (ŚDh), a popular and widely transmitted work³ that was composed sometime in the sixth or seventh century,⁴ probably in the North of the subcon-

¹ I am very grateful to Peter Bisschop and Timothy Lubin for carefully reading through my paper and their invaluable suggestions and corrections.

² For works addressing these larger developments within the Śaiva world at this time, see, for instance, SANDERSON 2009, BISSCHOP 2010, and BAKKER 2014.

³ The ŚDh and *Śivadharmottara* (ŚDhU) have been transmitted in manuscripts from Nepal, Kashmir, Bengal as well as in South India. See SANDERSON 2012–2013: 86, especially n. 220 and n. 221. For references to the recitation of the ŚDh in epigraphical material, see HAZRA 1952: 14 and 16, DE SIMINI 2016b, and SANDERSON 2012–2013: 85.

⁴ The dating of the ŚDh and ŚDhU is problematic and remains subject to debate. The first scholar to advance a hypothesis was HAZRA (1952), who proposed a date of composition sometime between 200 and 500 CE. He arrived at this estimation by, firstly, placing the text before the composition of Śaiva Tantras on the grounds that the ŚDh is free of any Tantric influence, and, secondly, he argues that the kind of astrological and astronomical terminology employed in the ŚDh is indicative for a date between the composition of the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* as the terminus post quem and the *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira as the terminus ante quem. However, evidence collected by Bisschop has demonstrated that such an early date is unlikely for the ŚDh, or at least for the entire text as it has been preserved. In his study of Caṇḍeśa and other deities in early Śaivism, BISSCHOP (2010: 244) discusses material of the sixth chapter of the ŚDh and draws attention to the fact that the deity Gaṇeśa/Vināyaka is described as Śiva’s son, a relationship that came to be well-

continent.⁵ It is amongst the earliest extant texts to systematise and canonise Śaiva devotional activities centred on the practices of the lay householder.⁶ These include various forms of *liṅga* and idol worship, religious observances (*vrata*) as well as the many ways in which the Śaiva devotees can support religious institutions through offering their services and donating land grants, valuables, or money for religious infrastructure.⁷

known but was popularised only relatively late, being even entirely absent in demonstrably early Purāṇas such as the *Vāyupurāṇa* and the original *Skandapurāṇa*, which contains the earliest systematisation of Śiva mythology (TÖRZSÖK 2004: 19). The *Skandapurāṇa*, in turn, has been suggested to date to sometime between 550 and 650 (ADRIAENSEN et al. 1998 and YOKOCHI 2013). If this dating is correct and the close relationship of both texts is applicable, this would indicate that it is unlikely that the ŚDh has reached its final form before the sixth century, and perhaps even as late as the seventh century.

⁵ See HAZRA 1952: 16–17. However, the issue of provenance remains to be further investigated. So far, HAZRA's assessment from the 50ies has not been improved upon. He ascribes the work to the North on the basis of the sacred sites featured therein (*ibid.*). He even more specifically hypothesises that it was conceived either in Southern Kashmir or Northern Punjab due to the mention of the “Devikā, a small river in Southern Kashmir, and of the Chandrabhāga” in the Nepalese manuscripts. A full evaluation of such specific claims, however, will need to wait for the critical edition of the chapter in question (chapter 12).

⁶ Other texts of this period that concern the forms of lay Śaivism are the following: (1) First, the ŚDhU, a work closely related to the ŚDh and often transmitted together. The ŚDh and the ŚDhU constitute a closely-knit network of information on early Śaiva devotional activities and institutions. Composed in the sixth or seventh century, the two works cover the wealth of Śaiva devotional practices carried out by lay devotees, in particular the worship of the *śivaliṅga*, particular observances (*vrata*), and meditative practices as well as rituals to target the king as a client. While the first two are covered mainly in the ŚDh, the latter two feature as topics of the ŚDhU (see DE SIMINI 2016). Given the complementarity of these two works, the hypothesis has developed amongst Śivadharmā scholars that both texts were composed close in time, if not even at the same time. Personally, I currently assume that there is a sequence in their composition, with the ŚDh having been put together first, since many of the theological conceptions and strategies developed in the ŚDhU appear to be a continuous afterthought and build on it. (2) Second, the old *Skandapurāṇa*, the earliest extant systematisation of Śiva-mythology. (3) And third, the *Niśvāsamukha*, which itself is part of the earliest extant Tantric corpus but contains chapters on the various forms of concurrent Śaivism, including the form of lay Śaivism as we find it propagated in the ŚDh (for an edition and translation, see KAFLE 2015).

⁷ A brief overview of the ŚDh's topics is found in HAZRA 1952.

Regarding the socio-religious milieu around the ŚDh, with its date of composition the work falls within a period in which the Brahmanical socio-religious order (*varṇāśramadharmā*) was firmly established under royal patronage across the subcontinent,⁸ paired with an increase of religious systems favouring devotion to a deity (*bhakti*) over Vedic ritualism. At this time, it was in particular the Vaiṣṇava devotional movement – centred on the worship of the god Viṣṇu – which enjoyed a long-standing popularity in the royal sphere as well as amongst the mainstream, a circumstance recorded in literature, inscriptions, and iconography. These Vaiṣṇava groups were the Śaiva's main competitors for royal patronage and support from the mainstream within the Brahmanical fold.⁹ Outside this Brahmanical fold, Buddhist communities also counted amongst their competitors. By the time of the sixth century, Buddhism in its manifold manifestations had already been a major religious force on the subcontinent for many centuries, with its religious life structured around monastic networks and with support from the royal sphere.

As for the Śaiva world at the time, there is plenty of material evidence for Śaiva lay devotional practices – such as *līṅga* shrines – from as early as the beginning of the Common Era, as well as inscriptions attesting to these activities as early as the fourth century.¹⁰ Thus, material and epigraphical evidence for Śaiva modes of worship predate the ŚDh by some centuries, but are only marginally visible in earlier religious literature (see below, p. 490). Leading up to and including the ŚDh's date of composition, two major developments within Śaiva circles took place: First, members of some Śaiva ascetic groups that were originally at the margins of society had started to increasingly appear in public and institutionalised religious life as temple priests and recipients of religious donations in epigraphical records.¹¹ Second, Tantrism emerged as a larger phenomenon in both Śaiva and Buddhist circles,¹² and propagators of this new religious trend gradually stepped out from the purely esoteric sphere into the public domain.¹³

⁸ See, e.g., SANDERSON 2013 for epigraphic references to the king's duty to maintain the *varṇāśramadharmā*.

⁹ See, e.g., BAKKER 2014.

¹⁰ See, e.g., SANDERSON 2013.

¹¹ SANDERSON 2013: 225.

¹² See GOODALL and ISAACSON 2016.

¹³ SANDERSON 2009.

It is against the backdrop of these developments that we can attempt to interpret the literary activities of the ŚDh's redactors and try to determine its role within early Śaiva history. Responding to this religious milieu, we can identify two agendas at work: First, the ŚDh offers a normative model for a Śaiva community that synthesises Śaiva practices with the Brahmanical socio-religious substratum, recasting the *varṇāśramadharmā* into their devotional framework – a development addressed by Lubin.¹⁴ Second, there is the contemporaneous attempt to create a socio-religious model that has the potential to transcend this Brahmanical order by seemingly foregrounding devotion over caste status. As is typical with this kind of work, there is no single thread that ties all expressed soteriological and spiritual concepts together into a coherent whole, and we are probably confronted with a work that aimed to synthesise several agendas relating to different Śaiva groups. Overall, we will see that the advocated ideals oscillate between a conformity to and the transcendence of Brahmanical norms, just as they do between those of the ascetic and the householder.

In this contribution, it will be argued that a cornerstone of the dual agenda characteristic of this newly emerging Śaiva socio-religious order propagated in the ŚDh is the divinisation of the Śaiva devotee (*śivabhakta*), a novel feature specific to the time of the ŚDh that anticipates similar discourses on divine embodiment by the devotee in popular Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotional movements centuries later.¹⁵ It will be shown how this link between devotion and divinisation of the *śivabhakta* acts as a strategic device to advocate the spiritual superiority of the community of practitioners. As such, it will be argued that in addition to recruiting the Brahmanical base into the Śaiva devotional fold, the socio-religious model advocated by the ŚDh also plays a critical role in the spread of the Śaiva teaching into new areas and in creating a socio-religious environ that eventually facilitates the participation of Śaiva initiatory traditions in public religious life on the eve of the “Śaiva Age.”¹⁶ In this context, also the relationship between the ŚDh and the initiatory traditions will be investigated: on the one hand, it will be traced how certain practices and concepts of the ascetic Atimārgic traditions are adapted for the householder milieu, despite their

¹⁴ See, for instance LUBIN's unpublished paper “On feeding *Śivabhaktas* and other rules of *Śivāśrama-Dharma*” (AOS 2017) (LUBIN forthcoming). I thank Prof. Lubin for sharing his paper with me prior to publication.

¹⁵ E.g., see PRENTISS 2000 and HOLDREGE 2015.

¹⁶ The expression “Śaiva Age” alludes to SANDERSON's monumental work (2009) on the rise of Śaiva Tantric groups throughout the early medieval period.

originally esoteric and eccentric nature. On the other, it will be addressed how certain notions of the ŚDh continue into the newly emerging Tantric traditions, the so-called Mantramārga,¹⁷ suggesting that some ideals advocated in the ŚDh may also have influenced the formation of Tantric practices.

The Śivadharmaśāstra's new concept of śivabhaktas as divine beings on earth

Prior to the composition of the ŚDh, discourses on the devotee were already well-known in the milieu of Vaiṣṇava devotionalism as, for instance, expounded upon in the *Bhagavadgītā* (BhG) in the early centuries of the Common Era.¹⁸ Here, the conceptualisation of the *bhakta* tends to revolve around the deep bond between the devotee and Viṣṇu,¹⁹ sometimes expressed in terms of mutual love and dependence on each other, and the devotee serving the deity.²⁰ The community of worshippers is thus defined by their shared love and longing for Viṣṇu. Their socio-religious duty is to carry out their *svadharma*, that is to say, the duties incumbent on the devotee according to their inherent socio-religious status related to the *varṇāśrama* system.²¹ The directive is that these duties must be carried out permeated by the love for the deity and without attachment to the fruits of the action.²² In this way, the devotional framework is synchronised with the Brahmanical socio-religious order, which the devotee must maintain.²³

¹⁷ For the emic distinction between the Śaiva Atimārga, referring to the early initiatory ascetic Śaiva traditions, and the Mantramārga, the traditions now commonly referred to as Tantric, see SANDERSON 2013: 212–215.

¹⁸ The dating of the BhG is still subject to debate, moving between the fourth century BCE and the fourth century CE (MALINAR 2007: 14). MALINAR herself estimates that the text in its final redaction dates to the first century CE (ibid.: 15). On the various views regarding the date of the BhG, its textual layers, and the question whether it is to be considered as a separate work or part of the Mbh's narrative, see MALINAR 2007: 29–34.

¹⁹ See, e.g., MALINAR 2007: 9.

²⁰ See, e.g., MALINAR 2007: 11–12, discussing the subordination of the *bhakta* to the deity in the royal context.

²¹ For an overview of the development and principles of the *varṇāśrama* system, see OLIVELLE 1993.

²² Cf., e.g., EDGERTON 1997 (1944¹): 161 and 175–176.

²³ See also the large sections on those outside this system, the *pāṣaṇḍas*, in Vaiṣṇava Dharma literature. Cf. GRÜNENDAHL 1983: 44–45 on the prominence of discourses on *pāṣaṇḍas* in the *Viṣṇudharma*.

Accordingly, the spectrum of worshippers stretches from the householders of the various *varṇas* to the Brahmanical renouncer, for each of whom different ways to reach liberation channelled through devotion (*bhakti*) are offered, all consolidated into a single system famously propounded by the BhG. The centrality of the *dharma* and the socio-religious structures implicit in the concept of these forms of Vaiṣṇava devotionism is also emphasised through the often-used trope that Viṣṇu incarnates on earth as the saviour to reestablish the *dharma* at its decline. Similar sentiments of conformity to the *varṇāśrama* system are further expounded upon in the works closer in time to the ŚDh, such as the *Viṣṇudharma*,²⁴ the Kashmirian *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra*, also known as *Viṣṇusmṛti*,²⁵ as well as another *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra*²⁶ transmitted as part of the *Mahābhārata* in the southern recensions.

There is evidence that certain well-established tenets of Vaiṣṇava devotionism as expressed in Sanskrit literature continue into the ŚDh. For instance, the theme of mutual dependency between God and the devotee as taught in the BhG is paralleled in the first chapter of the ŚDh.²⁷ However,

²⁴ See, e.g., GRÜNENDAHL 1983: 64. For editions and studies on the *Viṣṇudharma*, see GRÜNENDAHL 1983, 1984, 1989. Note that studies on the comparison between the *Viṣṇudharma* and the ŚDh are currently being undertaken by Timothy Lubin and Nirajan Kafle and have been presented at various conferences.

²⁵ See OLIVELLE 2010, in particular the introduction.

²⁶ This work is known by the same name as the Kashmirian work above, but it is classified as part of the southern recension of the *Mahābhārata*. See Mbh, Appendix, no. 4, lines 168–227. The text is also preserved in a single early Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript, as identified by GRÜNENDAHL (1984: 52–54). Studies about the religious context of the *Vaiṣṇavadharmaśāstra* are currently being carried out by Marion Rastelli.

²⁷ Compare BhG 6.30 (*yo mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṃ ca mayi paśyati | tasyāhaṃ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati* ||. “He who sees me everywhere and who sees everything in me, for him I do not disappear and he does not disappear for me.”) and BhG 9.26 (*patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktiyā prayacchati | tad ahaṃ bhaktiyupahṛtam aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ* ||. “He [who offers] me leaves, flowers, [and] fruits with devotion, from [this] devoted soul I accept what was offered with devotion.”) with ŚDh 1.30–32 (*patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyam yo me bhaktiyā prayacchati | tasyāhaṃ na praṇaśyāmi sa ca me na praṇaśyati* || *yo mām na sarvagam paśyen na ca sarvaṃ mayi sthitam | sa mām parvatadurgeṣu mārgamāṇo vipadyate* || *yo mām sarvagataṃ paśyet sarvaṃ ca mayi saṃsthitam | tasyāhaṃ nityam ātmasthaḥ sa ca nityam mayi sthitah* ||. “He who with devotion offers me leaves, flowers, [and] fruits, for him I do not disappear and he does not disappear for me. He who does not see me everywhere and not everything established in me, he seeks in *inaccessible mountains* (?) and fails. He who sees me everywhere and everything established in me,

in addition to such well-established notions, the ŚDh also introduced aspects to the conceptualisation of the *bhakta* and his spiritual status that were novel within the Brahmanical sphere. First of all, unlike the contemporaneous Sanskrit Vaiṣṇava sources, the ŚDh does not stress adherence to the Brahmanical order nor includes discourses on the devotee's *svadharma* or the fate of heretics (*pāṣaṇḍas*) (see n. 23 and p. 492). Instead, Śaiva devotion is foregrounded, even to the extent that in some passages on this topic Brahmanical norms are openly challenged. The most radical statement to this effect is found in the opening chapter of the ŚDh. Here, in an often-quoted passage, it is stated that through devotion even those who are considered the most extreme kinds of social outsiders according to the Brahmanical order attain a spiritual status equal to a learned Brahmin:

Even a foreigner (*mleccha*), in whom this eightfold devotion²⁸ exists, is [equal to] the foremost of learned Brahmins, a glorious sage, an ascetic, and a scholar. I do not care that someone knows the four Vedas; if he is devoted to me, even if he is a dog-eater, to him should be given, from him should be taken, for he should be worshiped just as I am.²⁹

Vaiṣṇava devotional literature features similar sentiments, but the subtle difference in framing on this point becomes evident when comparing the above verses with the following passage of the BhG:

for him I always remain in [his] soul and he always remains in me.”).

²⁸ This eightfold devotion is explained just prior to these verses and features the cornerstones of Śaiva *bhakti*. It is specified as (1) affection towards Śiva's devotees, (2) rejoicing in the worship others offer Śiva, (3) worshipping Śiva with devotion, (4) carrying out physical work for Śiva, (5) listening to the recitals of Śiva's deeds, (6) being visibly affected by the devotion to Śiva (e.g., trembling), (7) thinking of Śiva at all times, and (8) not living off his revenue; ŚDh 1.26–27: *madbhaktajanavātsalyaṃ pūjāyāś cānumodanam | svayam abhyarcanam bhaktyā mamārthe cāṅgaceṣṭitam || matkathāśravaṇe bhaktiḥ svaranetrāṅgavikriyā | mamānusmaranaṃ nityaṃ yaś ca mām upajīvati ||*. This passage and the one quoted in the next note will become frequently quoted, sometimes in modified form, in both Śaiva- and Vaiṣṇava-centred literature, cf., e.g., *Śivapurāṇa* 7.2.10.68–71, *Gāruḍapurāṇa* 1.227.6b–11, and *Haribhaktavilāsa* 11.616–619.

²⁹ ŚDh 1.28–29: *bhaktir aṣṭavidhā hy eṣā yasmin mlecche 'pi vartate | sa viprendro munih śrīmān sa yatih sa ca paṇḍitaḥ || na me priyaś caturvedo madbhaktaḥ śvapaco 'pi yah | tasmai deyaṃ tato grāhyaṃ sa ca pūjyo yathā hy aham ||*. Note that ŚDh 1.29 is frequently quoted, e.g., Abhinavagupta ad *Tantrāloka* 4.203.

Even if a very evil doer reveres me with single devotion, he must be regarded as the righteous in spite of all; for he has the right resolution. Quickly his soul becomes righteous, and he goes to eternal peace. Son of Kuntī, make sure of this: no devotee of mine is lost. For if they take refuge in Me, son of Pṛthā, even those who may be of base origin, women, men of the artisan caste, and serfs too, even they go to the highest goal. How much more virtuous brahmans, and devout royal seers, too!³⁰

Here too, devotion is foregrounded so that even someone of lower social standing or a person who has carried out misdeeds can attain the highest spiritual goals through this path.³¹ However, the BhG's focus rests on social groups within the *varṇa* system and does not explicitly feature outsiders such as the foreigner (*mleccha*) or the outcaste (e.g., the dog-eater). Nor is there a sentiment in the BhG that those of lower castes rise to the status of a Brahmin through their devotional practice and may be worshipped like a god. Rather, the passage states that the religion is also accessible to those of lower social standing. In contrast, we have seen that the ŚDh explicitly, and perhaps provocatively, features the epitomes of social outsiders and goes as far as to propose that through Śaiva devotion they themselves become worthy of worship, a position reserved for Brahmins in the Brahmanical religion. The ŚDh's view expressed in the above verse is thus more radical in its approach towards the Brahmanical socio-religious system at the time of its composition, and it is only subsequently that we see similar sentiments adopted in other Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava works.³² However, it must be kept in mind that such principles as the ones expressed in the ŚDh did not necessarily translate fully into the practiced religion. Nor does the ŚDh propose to completely dismantle the Brahmanical socio-religious structures. Quite the contrary, other parts of the work foreground alignment with the Brahmani-

³⁰ Transl. Edgerton 1997 [1944¹]: 49. BhG 9.30–33b. *api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananyabhāk | sādhuḥ eva sa mantavyaḥ samyagvyavasito hi saḥ || kṣipraṃ bhavati dharmātmā śaśvacchāntiṃ nigacchati | kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati || mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpayonayaḥ | striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim || kiṃ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas tathā |*

³¹ See also MALINAR 2007: 9. MALINAR (ibid.: 13) argues even further that the Bhakti tradition as described in the BhG is not to be regarded as a form of religion associated with “folk” religion or lower strata of society, but rather as a form of esoteric knowledge targeting also for higher classes of society.

³² See above, n. 28 and n. 29.

cal system and the promotion of the Śaiva Brahmin devotee, aspects, which, as mentioned above, also form part of the strategies to establish the Śaiva religion and its institutions in broader society, as discussed by Lubin (see also p. 491).³³

Nevertheless, the ŚDh seemingly pushes multiple agendas, and passages such as the one quoted above undeniably signal that the propagators sought to create ways of potentially including the social outsider and elevate him on the spiritual hierarchy. The ŚDh goes even further in its rhetoric of spiritual superiority, and throughout the work we find passages that promote the devotees not only as comparable to God but as actual divine beings on earth, as we see here in a passage from the opening chapter:

Those calm-minded Śiva devotees who have as their goal Śiva and worship the supreme *dharmā*, they are Rudras, there is no doubt. Those who meditate on Virūpākṣa once, twice, three times, or always, they are Gaṇeśvaras.³⁴

Here, intense devotion to Śiva is considered as indicative of the devotee's divine status in this world as a Rudra, that is to say, as a divine being comparable to Śiva in his manifestation as Rudra.³⁵ Less often, such devotees are also portrayed as Gaṇeśvaras, the divine chief attendants of Śiva.

³³ See LUBIN forthcoming. Thus, as we will see below, we also find that despite the claim of *bhakti* transcending caste-boundaries and introducing social equality, the lay devotee Śūdra is still differentiated from the rest in terms of practice and status.

³⁴ ŚDh 1.13–14: *yair ayaṃ śāntacetaskaiḥ śivabhaktaiḥ śivārthibhiḥ | samsevate paro dharmas te rudrā nātra saṃśayah || ekakālaṃ dvikālaṃ vā trikālaṃ nityaṃ eva vā | ye smaranti virūpākṣaṃ vijñeyās te gaṇeśvarāḥ ||*. For further examples of the promotion of the devotee as a divine being, see ŚDh 3.76c–77b: *kuśāpsu tarukuḍye vā apy aṅgulyāpi* (corr. *aṅgulyāpi?*) *yo likhet || krīḍayā sāyutaṃ kalpaṃ bhavet so 'pi gaṇeśvaraḥ |*. “Even if someone draws [a *liṅga*] with the finger on kuśa water or on a tree wall, or playfully makes a suitable resemblance with half-melted butter, he too is a Gaṇeśvara.” ŚDh 12.2 (T32, p. 142 and T72a, p. 141): *kvacid gacchan yadā *paśyeta* (T32, *payśyaṃ* T72a) *śivaliṅgam *apūjitam* (T72a, *prapūjitam* T32) | **tadā* (T72a, *sadā* T32) **sampūjya* (T32a, *tat pūjya* T72a) *yo gacchet sa rudro nātra saṃśayah ||*. “When going anywhere, he who sees a *śivaliṅga* that is not worshipped [and] then only proceeds after having worshipped it, that [person] is a Rudra, there is no doubt.”

³⁵ This would potentially result in the existence of multiple Rudras; this understanding may build on earlier beliefs and myths of Rudras being followers of Rudra, already found in Vedic literature (e.g., *Śatarudrīya*), which appears to have been a common perception at the time (note the reference to this concept even in BhG 10.23).

The ŚDh offers several approaches on explaining this divine nature of Śaiva devotees on earth. The first is associated with the then well-established trope that on account of their meritorious activities on earth, the worshippers will achieve divine existence in heaven. In the case of Śaiva devotees, the ŚDh specifies that they become Rudras in Rudra's heaven (*rudraloka*) due to their acts of Śaiva devotion. The concept of the divine devotee implies that after having exhausted all their merit, they return to earth, not only in the form of some auspicious rebirth but also while retaining their divine identity.³⁶ Thus, continuing the passage quoted above, the ŚDh teaches the following:

Those who always worship Rudra are not ordinary men [but] Rudras descended (*paribhraṣṭa*) from Rudraloka. They are Rudras, there is no doubt.³⁷

This theme of descending from Rudra's heaven upon earth is often encountered throughout the work,³⁸ at times paired with the idea that the devotee

³⁶ Note that in the 11th/12th-century *Vāyavīyasamhitā* of the *Śivapurāṇa*, we find the same sentiment of Rudras descending to earth, but here it is linked with the idea that they do so out of compassion, almost reminiscent of Buddhist Bodhisattva ideals; *Vāyavīyasamhitā* 7.2.11.32: *madbhaktānām hitārthāya mānuṣaṃ bhāvam āśrītāḥ | rudralokāt paribhraṣṭās te rudrā nātra saṃśayaḥ* ||. “They are Rudras, who have come down from Rudraloka and taken on a human existence for the benefit of my devotees, there is no doubt.”

³⁷ ŚDh. 1.16: *ye 'rcayanti sadā rudraṃ na te prakṛtimānuṣāḥ | rudralokāt paribhraṣṭās te rudrā nātra saṃśayaḥ* ||. The same sentiment, but with the specification that the devotees are Gaṇeśvaras, is found in ŚDh 7.1: *ye smaranti sadākālam īśānam pūjayanti vā | rudralokaparibhraṣṭā vijñeyās te gaṇeśvarāḥ* ||. “Those who meditate or worship the Lord at all times, they should be known as Gaṇeśvaras, who have come down from Rudra's world.” Cf. ŚDh 1.13–14 above (n. 34).

³⁸ The term *paribhraṣṭa* usually has a negative connotation in brahmanical literature and implies failure of practice or losing one casts (e.g. *Viṣṇudharma* 57.3: *yas tu vipratvam utsrjya kṣatriyatvaṃ niṣevate | brāhmaṇyāt sa paribhraṣṭaḥ kṣatrayonyāṃ prasūyate* ||. “He who abandons the status of a Brahmin and becomes a Kṣatriya, he has fallen from the status of being a Brahmin and is born in the womb of a Kṣatriya.”). However, given the context of divine descent on earth, the term appears to have also a positive connotation in the ŚDh. The ambiguity in phrasing may be inspired by a concept in the BhG, according to which a yogin who has failed in his practice (*yogabhraṣṭa*) is not punished for trying but rather – due to his already elevated spiritual status – only “falls” in as much as that he reaches the heavenly worlds after death and thereafter obtains an auspicious rebirth, in which he can continue his

passes through several inferior heavens before an auspicious rebirth.³⁹ This essentially suggests that the devotee is divine because prior to his current

quest for perfection, see BhG 6.41–43: *prāpya puṇyakṛtām lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ | śucinām śrīmatām gehe yogabhraṣṭo 'bhijāyate || athavā yoginām eva kule bhavati dhīmatām | etad dhi durlabhataram loke janma yad tdr̥sam || tatra taṃ bud-dhisamyogaṃ labhate paurvadehikam | yatate ca tato bhūyaḥ samsiddhau kuru-nandana ||*, “Someone who has failed in his yogic practice (*yogabhraṣṭo*) reaches the heavens for meritorious people [and] after dwelling [there] for a long time (lit. eternally) is reborn in a house of pure and noble people. Alternatively, he is even born in a family of wise yogins; but a rebirth of such kind is difficult to obtain. There, [once reborn], he [re]gains knowledge/understanding of his previous life and then strives again for complete perfection, O descendant of Kuru.” It may be that the ŚDh’s notion of descended Rudras developed from similar concepts and is, in fact, a reworking of the BhG’s teaching: similar to the yogins, the Śaiva devotees in question are already far advanced on their spiritual path but require another rebirth to strive for complete perfection. Passages as the following might support this, see ŚDh 8.36: *rudralokāt paribhraṣṭo bhvej jātismaro naraḥ | pūrvābhyāsenā tenaiva punaḥ śivapadaṃ bhajet ||*. “Having descended from Rudra’s heaven, [that] man remembers his [previous] birth, and through [his] previous practices he again enjoys the state of Śiva.” I am grateful to Timothy Lubin for pointing the important passage in the BhG out to me.

For more on the theme of descending from Rudra’s world in the ŚDh, see n. 39 below.

³⁹ For a similar example, see, e.g., ŚDh 8.21: *samyak sampreksanam kṛtvā rudralokam avāpnuyāt | surūpaḥ subhagaḥ śrīmān paribhraṣṭas tu jāyate ||*. “[He who] performs in the proper manner a spectacle [along with his *liṅga* worship (described in the verses preceding this)] attains Rudra’s world [and] [after having] descended [from it] is reborn with a handsome look, with riches, and possessing luck.” For an example of a gradual descent from Rudra’s heaven as part of the spiritual path, see, e.g., ŚDh 10.100–109 (edition in preparation by Nirajan Kafle), which teaches an observance called the *umāmaheśvaravrata* for female devotees, as a result of which a woman first enjoys some time in Rudraloka with the Rudras and then gradually descends through the various heavens, spending further time in each of them until she is reborn on earth and obtains a young king as a husband. A similar notion to the gradual descent from Rudra’s heaven is also found in the portrayal of lay religion in the *Niśvāsamukha* 1.108c–110b; here the devotee descends from Rudraloka via Vāyuloka and Agniloka and is reborn on earth as king or Brahmin. Incidentally, we can note that in the contemporaneous Vaiṣṇava sources, such as the VDh, commonly either a general heaven (*svarga*), Brahmaloaka, and/or Viṣṇuloka (examples are endless, but see, e.g., VDh 7.23 for *svargaloke*, VDh 47.5 for *brahmaloke*, and VDh 3.42 for *viṣṇuloke*) are found as the spiritual destinations of the devotee, as opposed to the multitude of heavens – topped with Rudraloka – in the ŚDh. We can also note that the VDh does not incorporate any heaven of Śiva/Rudra. This may be one indication for a relative chronology of these works, with the ŚDh being composed after the VDh.

rebirth he already enjoyed a divine status in heaven, which is indicative of the fact that the devotee had already advanced far on his spiritual path in previous births and therefore already holds a much higher spiritual status than ordinary men, potentially also being close to obtaining the highest spiritual goal of liberation.⁴⁰ While it is likely that this rationalization was rather a doctrinal attempt to provide some sort of cosmological structure for explaining the proposed divine status of Śaiva devotees on earth, rather than a wide-spread belief in practiced religion, some passages suggest that the concept of the divine devotee is not merely to be understood figuratively. To this effect, we find statements that emphasise the corporeal reality of a Rudra on earth, the most explicit image being that of the devotee being a Rudra bound in human skin:

He who in this way keeps the vow for as long as he lives, he is a Rudra bound in human skin, there is no doubt.⁴¹

This sentiment of tangible manifestation of divinity ties in with the second approach to account for the divine nature of the devotee on earth, namely through linking it to the performance of certain ritual activities and the adoption of certain characteristic features reminiscent of Śiva's iconography. Thus, in the following passage a devotee carrying *rudrākṣa*-beads is declared to be Rudra both in this world and thereafter:

How wonderful is it that one becomes Rudra through the gift of *rudrākṣa*-beads! [He who carries] his rosary in his hand at all times is a Rudra walking on earth. The *rudrākṣa*-beads themselves are Rudra, and so are those who carry the *rudrākṣas*. By carrying the *rudrākṣas* one is Rudra in this world and the next.⁴²

⁴⁰ Cf. n. 38 above for the possibility that this rationalization is a reworking of the BhG's concept of spiritually advanced yogins, who need another rebirth to attain complete perfection (BhG 6.41–43).

⁴¹ ŚDh 3.48: *evam nirvahate yas tu yāvajjīvaṃ pratijñayā | mānuṣyacarmaṇā baddhaḥ sa rudro nātra samśayah* ||. This verse features at the end of a longer discourse on the importance of worshipping the *liṅga* and Śiva, to the extent that it is better to commit suicide or cut off one's head than to eat without previously worshipping Śiva (ŚDh 3.47: *varam prāṇaparityāgaḥ śirasō vāpi chedanam | na tv evāpūjya bhuñjīta bhagavantam trilocanam* ||).

⁴² ŚDh 12.103–104 (T32, p. 152): *rudro rudrākṣadānena bhavatīti kim adbhutam | tanmālayā sadā haste rudraś ca kramate kṣitau || rudrākṣāni svayaṃ rudro ye ca*

Further, the divine embodiment of the devotee is also emphasised in the following verse, linking it to the practice of ash-bathing:

Therefore he who takes the fiery Śiva-bath (i.e., the ash-bath) is a Rudra with this very body, there is no doubt.⁴³

In another passage containing a long list of characteristics a *śivabhakta* should have (see p. 489), the ŚDh further depicts the devotee as consisting of Rudra (*rudrātman*), as well as being part of the supreme Rudra (*rudrāmśa*), the latter being a slightly different notion to the former:⁴⁴

They consist of Rudra, they are intent on Rudra, they are in part Rudra, they feel devotion to Rudra; [these] are men on earth endowed with such conducts.⁴⁵

Based on this paradigm shift to divinise the devotee, the ŚDh further propagates the idea that this divine identity is central to the devotee's performance of devotional activities. One can worship the deity only as a Rudra:

A non-Rudra does not think of Rudra, a non-Rudra does not worship Rudra, a non-Rudra does not praise Rudra, a non-Rudra does not obtain Rudra.⁴⁶

As we will see below (p. 501), this imperative to identify with the divine in order to worship the divine is a notion that will continue into the Tantric

rudrākṣadhārakāḥ | rudrākṣadhāraṇāt tasmād iha rudraḥ paratra ca ||

⁴³ ŚDh 11.30: *tasmād etac chivasnānam āgneyam yaḥ samācaret | anenaiva śarīreṇa sa rudro nātra saṁśayah ||*. Note that descriptions of ascetics smeared in ashes are also reported in the Chinese travel records, testifying to the social reality of such practices. See, e.g., BEAL 2004 (1884¹): 55 and 114.

⁴⁴ Note the term *rudrāmśa* has a complex history within Śaiva literature, ranging from denoting a practitioner considered to be a partial incarnation of Rudra to simply being a devotee of Rudra; see Mirnig's forthcoming entry in TAK 4.

⁴⁵ ŚDh 4.9: *rudrātmāno rudraparā rudrāmśā rudrabhāvanāḥ | ityācārasamāyuktāḥ bhavanti bhūvi mānavāḥ ||*

⁴⁶ ŚDh 1.24: *nārudraḥ saṁsmared rudraṁ nārudro rudraṁ arcayet | nārudraḥ kīrttayed rudraṁ nārudro rudraṁ āpnuyāt ||*

sphere, where, in an extended form, it becomes a core feature of Tantric ritual ideology.

The novelty of the concept of the divine Rudra-nature of the devotee also becomes apparent when we compare the ŚDh with other sources within the Śaiva sphere. Contemporaneous works dating to about the sixth or seventh century that describe the same religious milieu of the Śaiva lay householder – the *Skandapurāṇa* and sections of the *Niśvāsamukha* (see n. 6) – do not conceptualise the devotee in the same manner. While they too teach that divine existence in heaven is the spiritual goal of pious devotees, the nature of this heavenly existence often remains unspecified, and if it is specified, devotees are portrayed as a chief of Śiva’s divine attendants (*gaṇas*), namely a Gaṇeśvara (“chief of attendants”), but never as a Rudra.⁴⁷ Nor do we find the trope of the divine Rudra-devotee on earth in these early sources but only in those postdating the ŚDh.⁴⁸ Even in an episode of the *Skandapurāṇa*, which alludes to the specific practice of the ash bath by relating how gods diving into a heap of ashes next to Śiva were identified as devotees, they are only referred to as *raudras*, i.e. “followers of Rudra”.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ We may note here that the Śaiva sources differ from the contemporaneous Vaiṣṇava texts on this point, in which the devotee is granted entry into heaven rather than given a specific divine identity (see, for instance, the examples of the VDh given in n. 39).

⁴⁸ E.g., LP 2.21.81: *ekakālaṃ dvikālaṃ vā trikālaṃ nityam eva vā | ye ’rcayanti mahādevaṃ te rudrā nātra saṃśayaḥ ||* (almost parallel to ŚDh 1.14) and LP 2.21.82, parallel to ŚDh 1.24 (see n. 46). *Haracaritacintāmaṇi* 10.217c–218b: *ye śrīmadvijayeśānam arcayanti yathāvidhi || rudralokāvātīrṇās te rudrā eva mahītale |* “Those who worship the venerable Lord of Victory (i.e., Śiva) according to the rules, they certainly are Rudras on earth, having descended from Rudra’s heaven.” *Śivopaniṣad* 7.138–139: *ye śrāvayanti satataṃ śivadharmam *śivārthinaḥ* (conj.; *śivārthinām* cod.) *| te rudrās te munīndrās ca te namasyāḥ svabhaktiḥ || ye samutthāya śṛṃvanti śivadharmam dine dine | te rudrā rudralokeśā na te prakṛtīmānuṣāḥ ||* “Those who are longing for Śiva [and] always proclaim the Śivadharmā, they are Rudras, and they are the best of sages, to be worshipped through one’s own devotion. Those who get up and listen to the Śivadharmā every day, they are Rudras, the Lords of Rudra’s heaven, they are no ordinary men.”

⁴⁹ SP 32.209ab: *raudrāḥ paśava ete hi praveśād bhasmano ’dhunā |* See also SP (Bh) 180.2c–4b.

Points of influence in the *Śivadharma*'s conceptualisation of the divine devotee

While the ŚDh introduces many concepts that are novel compared to other contemporaneous literature, such texts were certainly not produced in isolation. As products of their time, they reflect and respond to existing practices and also feature direct influences or inspirations of earlier or concurrent traditions. As we would expect, this is also the case with the conceptualisation of the devotee, in which certain elements can be linked with preceding or contemporaneous motives or practices, even if they were pieced together differently to propagate a new model. The following identifies such aspects from three strands of influence, namely the Brahmanical tradition, old Śaiva ascetic initiatory groups, and early Buddhist traditions.

The Brahmanical milieu: of Brahmins and kings as divine embodiments on earth

The trope of the divine walking the earth in human form, as we have seen in the passages above, is not in itself a novel feature of the ŚDh. We find this motive already in the Brahmanical literature, but there it is restricted to the political and religious elites of the system, namely kings and Brahmins. Thus, in classical literature we find that kings are often described as God incarnate on earth, analogous to the mythical kings Rāma and Daśaratha, who are considered as incarnations of Viṣṇu.⁵⁰ As for Brahmins, it is a well-known idiom that they are divine beings on earth,⁵¹ which is how their prerogative of receiving offerings on behalf of the deity is explained. As will also be discussed below, encroaching on this privileged space of the Vedic Brahmin was one of the strategies of the propagators of the ŚDh. This agenda may be a contributing factor to the development of the trope of worshippers as divine Rudras on earth, mirroring the Brahmanical concept

⁵⁰ For Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu walking the earth, see, e.g., Mbh 3.147.28: *atha dāśarathir vīro rāmo nāma mahābalaḥ | viṣṇur mānuṣarūpeṇa cacāra vasudhām imām* ||. “Then the son of Daśaratha, the hero of great strength named Rāma, was Viṣṇu walking this earth in human form.” A similar example with Āditya can be found at Mbh 2.11.2. See also VdhU 1.36.12.

⁵¹ Cf. Vdh chapter 50 outlined in GRÜNENDAHL 1984: 15–16.

of the divine identity of exceptional practitioners and extending it to the entire community of Śiva worshippers regardless of social level.

Ascetic practices transposed into the householder ritual milieu

Another point of influence appears to come more directly from the Śaiva milieu. As we have seen, divine identity is also linked with the bearing of the characteristic marks of Śaiva devotees, such as the *rudrākṣa*-beads and ashes. These go back to the sectarian marks and eccentric practices pertaining to the Śaiva ascetic groups of the Atimārga (see n. 17), in particular the Pāśupatas, for whom the wearing of such marks of devotion form part of the soteriological path.⁵² In part, these marks are worn in order to imitate Śiva in his ascetic cremation-ground manifestation.⁵³ In the formation of a new model for conceptualising the devotee community, Śaiva propagators may thus also have been inspired by these well-known ascetic practices aimed at imitating the divinity, while conceptually shifting from imitation of the deity to adopting a divine identity – from *raudra* to *rudra*, as it were. While the authors may in fact have originally envisaged the ascetic practitioners when speaking of these characteristics, they – at least theoretically – extended these practices to the householder devotee, who now is also recommended to carry *rudrākṣa*-beads or smear himself with ashes. Thus, aspects that are considered core elements of the antinomian practices on the Pāśupata's soteriological path also form part of the practices of lay householders in the context of the ŚDh.

A paradigmatic example for this is the *śivaliṅgamahāvratā* taught for lay devotees in the ninth chapter,⁵⁴ “the great observance of the *śivaliṅga*,” a term directly alluding to the sectarian *mahāvratā*.⁵⁵ This is an ascetic

⁵² For instance, bathing in and sleeping on ashes constitute the first injunctions for the ascetic Pāśupata practitioner in the tradition's authoritative scripture, the *Pāśupatasūtra*. Thus, see *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.2–3: *bhasmanā triṣavaṇaṃ snāyīta || bhasmani śayīta ||*. “One must bath in ashes three times a day [i.e., at dawn, noon, and sunset]. One must lie in ashes [for sleeping].” See also *Kauṇḍinya*'s commentary thereon. On the significance of ashes in the Pāśupata context, see HARA 2003, and for literary descriptions of Pāśupatas wearing ashes outside the tradition's prescriptive literature, see HARA 2002b: 150–151, n. 29.

⁵³ See, e.g., BAKKER 2010 and ACHARYA 2013: 127.

⁵⁴ A critical edition and study of this chapter is currently under preparation by the author.

⁵⁵ See Bisschop's forthcoming entry on *mahāvratā* in TAK 4.

observance that consists of imitating the deity's expiatory observance after cutting off Brahman's head by walking around smeared with ashes and with a skull bowl. Not only does the terminology of the *śivaliṅga-mahāvratā* call into mind this practice, but also the observance itself as described in the ŚDh contains ritual elements that are particular to Pāśupata practice. These include, for instance, a specific set of offerings (*upahāra*) that the adherent is to present to Śiva, consisting of eccentric elements such as mad dancing, laughter, and making the ominous "mouth-sound" (*mukhavādyā*).⁵⁶

Also the conceptualisation of the spiritual goal of ultimate liberation appears at times to be inspired by Pāśupata terminology in the ŚDh. In some passages the spiritual goal is described as the state in which merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharmā*) no longer affect the soul, a dictum frequently used to describe the final liberated state of the Pāśupata ascetic practitioner.⁵⁷ Here we encounter the by this time common transposition of spiritual goals associated with ascetic practice into the householder context: liberation is no longer the result of austere practices classically associated with the soteriological path, but it is promised along with worldly desires to the householder as the result of devotional ritual activities, which here also contain elements of Śaiva ascetic practices. This synthesis of both value systems – the one of the ascetic and the one of the householder – that characterises many parts of the ŚDh is epitomised in passages such as the following, in which the devotee obtains Rudra's world through *liṅga* worship and may choose between *bhukti* (enjoyments) and *mukti* (liberation) once his heavenly existence comes to an end:

⁵⁶ See, e.g., ŚDh 5.8–9, 129 and 158. For these *upahāras*, see *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8. The exact nature of the *mukhavādyā* sound is still subject to debate; probably it consists of making sounds by hitting the mouth. See BISSCHOP & GRIFFITHS 2007: 34, n. 155.

⁵⁷ For instance, *dharmādharmaṃvivarjita*, "free of merit and demerit," in ŚDh 3.53. Cf. the description of the final liberated state of the Pāśupata yogic practitioner in Kauṇḍinya's commentary on *Pāśupatasūtra* 5.38–39: *ekaḥ kṣemī san vītaśokaḥ | apramādī gacched duḥkhānām antam īsaprasādāt* |. "Alone, secure, existing [without action], free from sorrow, mindful he will reach the end of suffering from the grace of the master." (Transl. HARA 1966): *atra dharmādharmaṃvivarjito vṛttītor uparame avasitaprayojanatvāt pakvaphalavat sarpakañcukavad gataprāyeṣu kāryakaraṇeṣu rudre sthitacitto niṣkala eka ity abhidhīyate*. "When merit and demerit cease their activities and the effect [body] and the instruments [sense-organs] have almost departed since they have accomplished their object like a ripened fruit or like the slough of a serpent, the aspirant with his mind fixed upon Rudra and without material components is called alone." (Transl. HARA *ibid.*).

He who establishes one *līṅga*, following the prescriptions, together with gifts [such as the ritual fee] attains ten million times ten million of the amount of merit arising from all religious traditions. Having rescued twenty-one generations from the mother's side and the father's side, and the wife he has married, he is celebrated in the heaven of Rudra. After having enjoyed plenty of pleasures [in heaven], at the time of cosmic dissolution, he reaches union [characterised by ultimate, liberating] knowledge (*jñānayoga*) and is liberated right there. Alternatively, if he desires a kingdom, he will be born in another life as a powerful king over the earth with its seven continents and oceans.⁵⁸

Buddhist themes

In several aspects of the conceptualisation of the devotee in the ŚDh we can sense themes and influences that were already well-established within the Buddhist sphere, even if we cannot trace specific textual influences. Given the spatial proximity of Buddhist and Brahmanical groups and their competition for the same resources and patronage of kings, it would, however, not be surprising to see similar aspects and strategies in these emerging Śaiva works and practices. For instance, the ŚDh's stance that the degree of devotion can supersede caste-boundaries in terms of spiritual status and the absence of any emphasis on the concept of *svadharmā* calls into mind the Buddhists' fundamental rejection of the Brahmanical socio-religious system, with discourses on the insignificance of caste and class already long present at the time. Already in the Pali canon we find the concept of the "true Brahmin," whose superiority is defined through his morals and actions rather than his birth status.⁵⁹ Eltschinger has demonstrated how Buddhist thinkers as early as the fourth to sixth centuries even provided sub-

⁵⁸ ŚDh 3.59–62: *yo līṅgaṃ sthāpayed ekaṃ vidhipūrvam sadakṣiṇam | sarvāgamodītaṃ puṇyam koṭikoṭiṅgaṃ labhet || mātrjāṃ pitrjāñ caiva yāś caivodvahate striyam | kulāikaviṣṇam uttārya rudraloke mahīyate || bhuktvā ca vipulān bhogān pralaye samupasthite | jñānayogaṃ samāsādyā sa tatraiva vimuñcati || athavā rājyam ākāmṣej jāyate sa bhavāntare | saptadvīpasamudrāyāḥ kṣiter adhipatir vaśī ||*. Similarly, ŚDh 3.38: *yas tu pūjayate nityaṃ līṅgaṃ tribhuvaneśvaram | sa svargamokṣarājyānāṃ kṣipraṃ bhavati bhājanam ||*. "He who constantly worships the *līṅga* that is the Lord of the three worlds (i.e., Śiva) quickly attains heaven, liberation, or a kingdom."

⁵⁹ MASEFIELD 1986: 146ff.

stantial philosophical arguments to refute the ontological reality of caste status and argued that it is merely a matter of convention rather than an innate quality.⁶⁰

Buddhism is also a precursor regarding the idea of developing ways to reach the highest spiritual goal of *nirvāṇa* through devotional practices rather than exclusively through gnostic, meditative and ascetic methods. For instance, in his study on early Mahāyāna inscriptions dating to the beginning of the first millennium, Schopen has demonstrated how lay as well as monastic practitioners donated images with the hope of accumulating merit that would lead them to *nirvāṇa*, despite the imperative to pursue gnostic methods in authoritative scriptures.⁶¹ Similarly, in the ŚDh the establishment of Śaiva cult images – in particular the *śivaliṅga* – are presented to the householder as a way to attain liberation, surpassing the common Purāṇic goals of heavenly existence and auspicious rebirth.⁶²

Descriptions of the characteristics of a lay devotee in the ŚDh also appear to mirror principles and characteristics of the Buddhist lay disciple, the *upāsaka* and focus exclusively on moral qualities. Characteristics that are specific to the Brahmanical sphere, such as knowledge of the Veda and Vedic ritual as well as the common physical qualities of proper Brahmin priests are conspicuously absent. Thus, the fourth chapter of the ŚDh opens with the following passage:

Śiva worshippers, who employ great effort, are completely devoted to the worship of Śiva, self-controlled, [and] endowed with *dharma*, they achieve all goals. [They are] free of all opposites, with eternally zealous minds, completely devoted to serving others, intent on serving the *guru*, honest, gentle, content, agreeable, speaking good words, not proud, possessing intellect, having abandoned envy, without desire, calm, with a smiling face, gracious, always pronouncing welcomes, of concise speech, speaking little, valiant, experienced in giving, perfected through pure conduct, completely focused on compassion and kindness, free of deceit and jealousy, speaking in accordance with the truth, intent on sharing, wise, and also honest and unrepachable, and also not attached to any sense objects, just like the lotus leaf [is not stained] by water, not distressed, nor tainted, nor

⁶⁰ ELTSCHINGER 2012 (2000¹).

⁶¹ SCHOPEN 1997.

⁶² See MIRNIG 2016 for Nepalese epigraphical evidence for such practices contemporaneous to the ŚDh.

subject to disease, they have their selves focused, have faith, and are honoured by good people. [These] wise men, being free of all passions, they are not unsteady regarding their feet, hands, mouth, eyes, ears, genitals, and stomach. They consist of Rudra, they are intent on Rudra, they are in part Rudra, they feel devotion to Rudra; [these] are men on earth endowed with such conducts. Resorting to exclusive devotion [for only Śiva], they abide in these good qualities. [They should] eternally worship Śiva for attaining lower and higher powers.⁶³

The divinisation of the devotee: strategy and impact on socio-religious structures

To what extent is this conceptualisation of the divine worshipper on earth relevant for forming an understanding of the community of worshippers envisaged by the text? Considering the religio-political landscape at the time of the composition of the ŚDh, we know that prior to this period Śaiva devotional practices were not very visible in Sanskrit normative literature or the epics,⁶⁴ although archaeological and epigraphical evidence demonstrates that forms of Śiva worship were already present in the population for some centuries prior, as alluded to earlier.⁶⁵ Some signs that suggest the presence of *liṅga* worship are also mentioned in the epics; however, as

⁶³ ŚDh 4.1–10: *śivabhaktā mahotsāhāḥ śivārcanaparāyaṇāḥ | saṃyatā dharma-sampannāḥ sarvārthān sādhyanti te || sarvadvandvavinirmuktā nityam udyuktacetasaḥ | paropakāraniratā guruśuśrūṣaṇe ratāḥ || ārjavā mṛdavaḥ svasthā anukūlāḥ priyamvadāḥ | amānino buddhimantaḥ tyaktasparhā gatasprhāḥ || śāntāḥ smitamukhā bhadrāḥ nityam svāgatavādikāḥ | alpavāco 'lpavaktārah śūrāḥ tyāga-viśārādāḥ || śaucācāreṇa sampannā dayādākṣiṇyatatparāḥ | dambhamātsa-ryanirmuktāḥ yathātathyaprabhāṣiṇaḥ || samvibhāgaparāḥ praññāsāthās cāpy akutsitāḥ | viṣayeṣv api nirlepāḥ padmapatram ivāmbhasā || na dīnā nāpi malinā na ca rogavaśānugāḥ | bhavanti bhavitātmānaḥ śraddhāḥ sādhuṇiṣevitāḥ || na pādapāñivākcakṣuḥśrotuśiśnodare budhāḥ | capalyam naiva kurvanti sarvavyasanavarjitāḥ || rudrātmāno rudraparā rudrāṃśā rudrabhāvanāḥ | ityācārasamāyuktā bhavanti bhuvi mānavāḥ || ekāntabhaktim āsthāya guṇeṣv eteṣu vartante | pūjanīyaḥ śivo nityam parāparavibhūtaye ||.*

⁶⁴ For the discrepancy between early archaeological evidence of Śiva worship and its late appearance in Sanskrit literature, see BAKKER 2001, especially pp. 402–404.

⁶⁵ See SANDERSON 2013. A well-known example is, for instance, the production of *śivaliṅgas* in Mathurā starting from the third century onwards. On the development and dating of the iconographical scheme around the production of *śivaliṅgas* in Mathurā, see KREISEL 1986.

Bakker argues, they are there associated with the practices of certain kinds of demonic beings (*rakṣa*), thereby suggesting that this mode of worship was associated with more inferior social groups from the orthodox Brahmanical point of view.⁶⁶ These facts indicate that although this level of devotional practices was present, it was sidelined by the religious elite, unlike devotion directed to Viṣṇu, which is widely emphasised in the epics and normative literature as well as in the iconography of kings leading up to this period.⁶⁷ With the sixth century, it thus seems that works such as the ŚDh were produced to elevate this level of practice by producing a Sanskrit corpus that provided scriptural authority. In this religio-historical context, the device of divine identity of the devotee community can also be seen as a tool to transgress existing social norms and generally elevate the status of Śaiva worshippers in a religious world dominated by a Brahmanical religious elite, which favoured Vaiṣṇavism over Śaivism and promoted the spiritual superiority of the Vedic Brahmin. By introducing such strong notions of the Śaiva devotee's spiritual superiority, the ŚDh was able to promote the *śivabhakta* as a worthy receptacle for offerings – a crucial position within the socio-religious framework and a prerogative originally reserved for the community of Brahmins. As discussed earlier, Brahmins were also described with the same trope of being the divine walking the earth.⁶⁸ The parallelism between the divine *śivabhakta* and the divine Brahmin is striking, and in fact – as Lubin shows⁶⁹ – one of the agendas found in the ŚDh includes the substitution of ordinary Brahmins by *śivabhakta* Brahmins as a receptacle for offerings (*pātra*). Lubin argues that this is part of the larger agenda to subsume and recast the Brahmanical social order within a Śaiva devotional framework, redefining each of the life stages of the *varṇāśrama* system as a *śivāśrama* in the ŚDh's eleventh chapter, and teaching that each of these stages is enhanced through Śaiva devotion. Thus, as alluded to earlier, despite the radical statements of superiority over the Brahmanical system, we see that the work neither rejects adherence to the traditional system nor suggests that it should be abandoned, an inclusivistic attitude that will remain central to the success of Śaiva traditions.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ BAKKER 2001.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., GONDA 1993 (1954¹): 164–167.

⁶⁸ See p. 485.

⁶⁹ LUBIN forthcoming.

⁷⁰ See SANDERSON 2013 on the adherence of Śaiva initiatory groups to the Brahmanical socio-religious order.

At the same time, the ŚDh also promotes Śaiva ascetics as suitable receptacles for offerings, as will be discussed below (see p. 494). Further, throughout the ŚDh this adherence to the Brahmanical socio-religious order is never explicitly made an imperative. In fact, as was alluded to earlier, key terms and discourses present in the contemporaneous Vaiṣṇava works to promote adherence to the Brahmanical order are absent in the ŚDh. Thus, the term *svadharma* does not feature a single time, nor do we find any treatments of heretics (*pāṣaṇḍa*), both of which are important topics in Vaiṣṇava literature and make up large parts of works such as the *Viṣṇudharma*.⁷¹ Further, with the exception of the Brahmin and a single verse about the Śūdra (see below), the categories of *varṇa* are not mentioned outside the *śivāśrama* chapter. On the contrary, we have seen that in the opening chapter even the ultimate social outsiders according to Brahmanical norms, the dog-eaters and foreigners, are considered better than a Brahmin if only they are Śaiva devotees. Nor is the quality of knowing the Vedas ever mentioned as a requirement, as we have seen earlier.⁷² The redefinition of the spiritual status not according to concurrent orthodox norms but through one's divine nature as a *śivabhakta* thus introduced a paradigm shift that opened the door to the participation of groups considered inferior or outside the social system as well as religious professionals from lower classes. Within the Brahmanical system this concerns particularly the Śūdras, who in the ŚDh are explicitly included as participants in institutionalised religious life, as servants to *yoga* masters, and as living on the temple grounds and tending to the temple gardens.⁷³ In this context, we may note that the Śūdra devotee is referred to as *gaṇa*, a divine attendant,

⁷¹ See GRÜNENDAHL (1983: 64) who points to the frequent discourses on *pāṣaṇḍas* and how they threaten the Brahmanical socio-religious order in the *Viṣṇudharma*; e.g., chapter 25 and 44. The topic of the *pāṣaṇḍas* in the VDh will be further explored by LUBIN forthcoming.

⁷² Cf. ŚDh 4.1–10 on pp. 489f.

⁷³ ŚDh 11.42–44. Incidentally, we find that in Tantric works such as Trilocanaśiva's *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* the Śūdra lay devotee also features in the list of communities for which purificatory rituals are prescribed. There, the Śūdra lay devotee is associated with the practice of wearing ashes and *rudrākṣa*-beads. See *Prāyaścittasamuccaya* 584: *ye ca māheśvarāḥ śūdrā bhasmarudrākṣadhāriṇaḥ | teṣāṃ pañcadaśāhena śuddhiḥ sūtau mṛtāv api ||*. “As for lay-devotees of Śiva who are Śūdras and who wear ash and *rudrākṣas*, they are purified after fifteen days, both in the case of birth and death.” (Transl. SATHYANARAYAN 2015: 303).

thus again giving the devotee an elevated divine status, albeit one inferior to the Rudra.⁷⁴

This potential to include lower social groups or even those outside the *varṇa* system may have been a contributing factor to why the text became particularly popular in the South, where the society featured several groups that were not considered part of the orthodox Brahmanical *varṇa* system. We know that *bhakti* movements grew to constitute an important religious force in the South Indian religious landscape. In fact, the ŚDh only slightly precedes, if at all, the vernacular devotional literature, such as the Tēvāram, a collection of Śaiva devotional poetry dating to the seventh to eighth centuries. In her analysis of *bhakti* in the South, Prentiss points out that in the hymns of one of the Śaiva saints named Appar Tirunāvukkaracu Nāyaṇār (seventh century) “the sameness of the *bhaktas* through the shared essence of kinship and partaking of Śiva’s nature” is emphasised. She argues that through this rhetoric of shared identity the practitioners did not only promote the *bhaktas* as superior in the spiritual hierarchy but also derived a divine ethnic legitimation, since “Śiva is the Lord of the Tamil lands and language, the *bhaktas* share their Tamilness with each other and with Śiva.”⁷⁵

The promotion of the Śaiva yogin: “cala/jaṅgama līṅgas”

Aside from – at least theoretically – making the religion thus available for social outsiders, the ŚDh follows another significant agenda alluded to above, namely the promotion of Śaiva ascetic *yogins*. Especially in the twelfth chapter we find a broad range of recommended donations to such

⁷⁴ Note that in subsequent Tantric circles initiation names given to Śūdras – who in this context were also not excluded from participation – were, in fact, names ending in *-gaṇa*. See GOODALL’s entry on *gaṇa* in TĀNTRIKĀBHIDHĀNAKOŚA 3. While we do not have explicit reference to Śaiva initiations for Śūdras in the ŚDh, note that there are two passages, which enjoin that Śūdras without a *śivasamṣkāra*, i.e. to some Śaiva purificatory ritual or even initiation, may not drink milk from a Kapilā cow, whose milk is considered particularly sacred for brahmanical ritual activities, namely ŚDh 5.14: *kāpilyaṃ yaḥ pibec chūdraḥ śivasamṣkārarajitaḥ | pacyate sa mahāghore suciraṃ narakārṇave ||*; and ŚDh 8.50: *kapilāṃ yaḥ pivec chūdraḥ śivasamṣkārarajitaḥ | sa prayāti mahāghoraṃ narakaṃ nātra samśayaḥ ||*. These verses could be interpreted both ways: either that there is a possibility to receive *śivasamṣkāra* for Śūdras and if they do so they obtain the ritual privilege to drink the milk from a Kapilā cow; or the verses may imply that Śūdras cannot receive *śivasamṣkāra* and are therefore unable to drink the sacred milk.

⁷⁵ PRENTISS 2000: 68.

śivayogins, including valuables, practical items, and housing. Further, we find that such *śivayogins* are even recommended as suitable receptacles for food during *śrāddha* offerings.⁷⁶ Offering housing and making *śivayogins* part of core religious rites suggests that the ŚDh thus also envisaged an increasing institutionalisation of such ascetic groups, supported by the laity, reminiscent of the ways in which Buddhist monastic circles looked for support from the sphere of lay practitioners.⁷⁷

In this respect, the content and history of the following passage of the ŚDh is particularly interesting. In the third chapter, which is dedicated to the origin myth of *liṅga* worship and discusses various types of *liṅgas* and how to worship them, a passage classifies the *liṅga* into mobile (*cara*) and immobile (*acara*) forms, with the former possibly referring to the ascetic practitioner:

There are two *liṅgas* enumerated, namely the mobile and the immobile. The mobile is known as *prāṇin* [i.e., the living being];⁷⁸ the immobile [consists of those materials] such as earth. Maheśvara, being

⁷⁶ Timothy Lubin, in a series of conference presentations provides various sources of evidence to show that more generally the *śrāddha* feeding of Brahmins was itself encouraged as a response to insitutionalized feeding of Buddhist monks and other ascetics (e.g. “Feeding Monks, Feeding Brahmins: Competing Idioms of Religious Semiotics in Early india”, 45th Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, 20–23 October 2016), thus making this move to promote *śivayogins* as recipients of *śrāddha* offerings part of a larger development (see also Lubin’s paper on On Feeding Śivabhaktas and Other Rules of Śivāśrama-Dharma,” paper for a panel on “Śivadharma and the Formation of Lay Śaivism” at the 227th Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Los Angeles, 17–20 March 2017.)

Note that feeding Śaiva ascetics features also in later Tantric ritual *śrāddha* practices. See, e.g., MIRNIG 2019.

⁷⁷ BISSCHOP 2010.

⁷⁸ The constitution of the text is uncertain and corrupted at this point in most manuscripts. This translation is based on the marginal corrections of the Nepalese palm-leaf ms. Add 1645 (Cambridge) and ms. G3852 (Calcutta). Other readings, however, appear to support this reading: *prāṇeti* in ms. G4077 (Calcutta), *pratīti* in the post correctionem reading of A1082-3 (NAK) and in the Pondicherry transcript IFP 514, *prūṭi* in the ac reading of A1082-3 (NAK) and post correctionem reading of G3852 (Calcutta), and *prāṇi* in the ante correctionem reading of Add 1645 (Cambridge); Bod. Or. B 125 (Oxford) reads *vratīti*, i.e., “the vow-holder,” suggesting that the scribe also thought it suitable to explicitly mention the ascetic and thus further supporting the interpretation. The full apparatus will be available in the author’s forthcoming edition of this chapter.

pleased, resides at all times in the moving [*liṅga*]. The unmoving [*liṅga*] is prepared with *mantras*. Both are eternal and forever auspicious. By disrespecting the moving [*liṅga*]/the ascetic, the fixed [*liṅga*] becomes fruitless. Therefore the wise man should never disrespect either *liṅga*.⁷⁹

While in this passage the mobile *liṅga* can also be interpreted to refer to a small *liṅga* carried by the practitioner, it may also denote a practitioner that is considered as a moving *liṅga*, that is to say Śiva, a conceptualisation that closely corresponds to the concept of the divine on earth. This interpretation of the mobile *liṅga* denoting a Śaiva practitioner and more particularly an ascetic is not only suggested by the readings of the manuscripts, but also by a later addition to the text in the southern recension. Here, one transcript defines the mobile (*jaṅgama*) *liṅga* explicitly as an initiate, and another as the worshipper.⁸⁰ While this cannot completely clarify whether this was originally intended at the time of the ŚDh's composition, the interpretation of the ascetic or worshipper as a mobile form of the deity appears in subsequent sources. For instance, we have a close parallel example in a later Vaiṣṇava text on ascetics, namely the *Yatidharmaprakāśa*, where the mobile form of the deity is explicitly named to be the renouncer, the *saṃnyāsin*.⁸¹ Further, we find that in the Vīraśaiva tradition, whose authoritative scriptures often draw on the ŚDh,⁸² precisely the above quoted passage is frequently drawn upon to demonstrate that Vīraśaiva ascetics are to

⁷⁹ ŚDh 3.54–56: *liṅgadvayaṃ samākhyātaṃ sacarācaram eva ca | caram prāṇīti vikhyātaṃ acaram pārthivādikaṃ || care sadā vasaty eva prītyukto mahēśvaraḥ | acaro mantrasaṃskāro dvayaṃ nityaṃ sadāśivam || jaṅgamasyāpamānena sthāvaro niṣphalo bhavet | tasmāl liṅgadvayaṃ prājño nāvamanyeta jātucit ||*

⁸⁰ Insertion by T 32 and T 514 after verse ŚDh 3.55: *sthāvaram jaṅgamaṃ caiva dvividhaṃ liṅgam *ucyate (T 514, iṣyate T 32) | sthāvaram *sthāpitaṃ liṅgam jaṅgamaṃ dīkṣitaṃ viduḥ (T 32, liṅgam ity āhuḥ jaṅgamaṃ tasya pūjakam T 514) ||*. “The *liṅga* is said to be of two kinds, namely an immobile and mobile one. *They know the immobile *liṅga* to be the one that has been established [through a consecration ritual and] the mobile [*liṅga*] to be an initiated [person] (T32, T 514: They call the immobile one the *liṅga*, and the immobile one the worshipper).”

⁸¹ *Yatidharmaprakāśa* 53.18: *vāsudevasya dve rūpe calaṃ cācalam eva ca | saṃnyāsi tu calaṃ rūpam acalaṃ pratimātmakam ||*. “There are two forms of Vāsudeva: the mobile and the immobile. The mobile form is the renouncer, while the immobile consists of images.” (Text and transl. from OLIVELLE 2011: 235–236).

⁸² A paper on this topic is currently being prepared by Jonathan Duquette and Nina Mirnig.

be perceived as mobile *liṅgas*, i.e., mobile manifestations of the deity. Further, southern epigraphical material of the Kālāmukhas frequently features the same notion of the *jaṅgamaliṅga* denoting the Śaiva ascetic.⁸³ We also find another example of this concept in the South Indian Śaiva Tantric tradition, more particularly the prominent Śaiva Siddhānta, where in the twelfth century Aghoraśiva, a famous author of ritual manuals and philosophical treatises, describes in a passage on ritual processions that the Śaiva Tantric priest is sometimes referred to as the mobile version of Śiva.⁸⁴ Thus, we see that here too, the conception of the divine deity on earth in the form of the practitioner – here in terms of the *liṅga* – becomes an important and influential trope in the perception of this particular religious group and its professionals.

The ŚDh and the Śaiva initiatory traditions

With the various strategies contained in the ŚDh, the work lends itself to the promotion of Śaiva cults within the mainstream and in new territories. This raises the question of which specific organised Śaiva groups were behind its production or may have subsequently taken advantage of it. Given the religious landscape at the time, it is tempting to link the production of the work to some of the Śaiva initiatory groups that had formed by the sixth century and were looking to expand their reach. However, if we try to link the ŚDh to specific Śaiva initiatory groups that may have been involved in its composition, we are faced with the problem that the work contains no explicit sectarian references.⁸⁵ Even in the case of the *śivayogin*

⁸³ See, e.g., RIPEPI 2007: 74, n. 23, FILLIOZAT 2001: 61–62, and V. FILLIOZAT & P.S. FILLIOZAT 2012.

⁸⁴ DAVIS 2010: 38: “Priests even invoke Śiva into a bowl of moist paste that is smeared on the *liṅga*, the icons, and the devotees just before the great chariot procession on the seventh day. Some Āgamas describe the priest himself as a form of Śiva, a ‘mobile *liṅga*’ (*calaliṅga*). It is as if the festival were designed to offer a practical demonstration of Śiva’s ubiquity.”

⁸⁵ Some speculations on this topic have already been voiced. Thus, while HAZRA remains silent on this issue regarding the ŚDh (HAZRA 1952), he claims that the ŚDhU is a Pāśupata text because it mentions terminology originating in these circles (HAZRA 1956). In the same line of argument, the SP, probably contemporaneous with the ŚDh, has been suggested to be a Pāśupata text. See ADRIAENSEN & BAKKER & ISAACSON 1998: 4 and, in particular, BISSCHOP 2006: 38–50. However, these exclusive claims of Pāśupata authorship cannot be regarded as certain, as will be demonstrated below.

no sectarian affiliations are specified. This question of sectarian affiliation is also further complicated by the range of different socio-religious agendas at play. On the one hand, the strong promotion of Śaiva Brahmins could be interpreted as an indication that precisely such groups originating from the Brahmanical elite, rather than from Śaiva ascetic circles, were involved in the composition of the text. On the other, we see that another central agenda is to promote the transcendence of the Brahmanical socio-religious order as well as to further the institutionalisation of Śaiva ascetic practitioners, who originally largely adopted antinomian practices that would not be acceptable in an orthodox Brahmanical context. The single uniting factor is the notion of the elevated divine identity of the Śaiva devotee. Essentially an egalitarian ideal is promoted, so that within this community any kind of *śivabhakta* is spiritually equal. This strategy makes the ŚDh's socio-religious model highly flexible and adaptive, serving a multitude of agendas and allowing for both the participation of religious officiants that do not conform to Brahmanical norms as well as the compliance with Brahmanical ritual life, which is considered enhanced by Śaiva devotion. I would like to argue that it is through this dual agenda that the ŚDh canonised a Śaiva social order that facilitated the rise of the integration of Śaiva initiatory traditions into public life, thus creating the religious milieu that contributed to their success. After all, the composition of the ŚDh follows an increased presence of public expressions of adherence to Śaiva faith and Śaiva devotional activities amongst the mainstream in the epigraphic records as well as the appearance of members of ascetic groups, such as the Pāsupatas, in public life.⁸⁶ And it is from this period onwards that Tantrism became an important religious force within the Śaiva world, further highlighting the pivotal moment for Śaiva history which is also characterised through the composition of the ŚDh. In the following, continuities from the existing initiatory traditions into the ŚDh and continuities from the ŚDh into the newly emerging Tantric ideology will be traced to further investigate this point.

The Śivadharma and the Atimārga

At the time of the composition of the ŚDh, Śaiva initiatory groups consisted of ascetic groups, subsequently grouped by the Śaiva tradition under the umbrella term Atimārga (see n. 17). Amongst these it was in particular the

⁸⁶ See, e.g., SANDERSON 2013: 225. For more on early epigraphical evidence for Śaivism in this period, see also the contribution in BOSMA & MIRNIG 2013.

Pāśupatas who emerged as officiating priests, recipients of donations, and administrators of temple assets in epigraphical records,⁸⁷ despite the fact that their prescriptive sources prohibit precisely this kind of interaction with public life.⁸⁸ It is those Pāśupatas that are commonly put forward as key players in the production of the ŚDh, a proposition first made by Hazra (see n. 85). As we have seen, there are several aspects which suggest that Pāśupata propagators indeed formed part of the religious milieu from which the ŚDh emerged: First, the emphasis on ash-bathing, which is also central to the Pāśupata practice.⁸⁹ Second, certain technical terms and phrases associated with Pāśupata teachings appear in the ŚDh, such as forms of Pāśupata worship and the description of the liberated state.⁹⁰ From a societal point of view, given the eccentric and antinomian practices associated with the Pāśupatas and designed to provoke the mainstream,⁹¹ they constitute precisely the kind of group that would have seemed objectionable in an orthodox Brahmanical setting. In the ŚDh, however, we have already seen that the ritual and visual features originating from this scene were not only integrated into the range of recommended practices, but they were also directly linked with the divine nature of the devotee on earth. By featuring such eccentric practices, the ŚDh thus clearly demonstrates an attitude of openness towards even controversial forms of Śaiva devotion, making it not only acceptable but commendable. This would have also promoted the participation of priests from this sphere – as evidenced in plenty of inscriptions⁹² –, even if they may at first have seemed objectionable to orthodox society. To demonstrate the case in point, the Nepalese epigraphical material provides an example in which we can trace this process in society. Here, while protection of the Brahmanical *varṇāśramadharmā* was clearly

⁸⁷ For an overview, see SANDERSON 2013. For case studies, see, e.g., RAMESH & TIWARI 1990 for Pāśupatas in Bagh and MIRNIG 2016 for Pāśupatas in the Kathmandu Valley.

⁸⁸ See SANDERSON 2013.

⁸⁹ See above and, e.g., *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.2. *bhasmasnāna*. Cf., e.g., HARA 2002a: 61–62 for the centrality of ashes to Pāśupata ritual and the purifying nature they are believed to have.

⁹⁰ E.g., ŚDh 3.53cd: *śivatvaṃ yānti vai kṣipraṃ dharmādharmavivarjitāḥ* ||. “[These Śaiva religious practitioners] quickly attain Śiva-nature and become free of *dharma* and *adharmā*.” See p. 487, n. 57.

⁹¹ One of the stages of Pāśupata practice famously constitutes imitating mad behaviour in order to induce a merit transfer from those wrongly judging the practitioner. See, e.g., HARA 2002b: 105ff. and INGALLS 1962.

⁹² See SANDERSON 2013.

expressed as a duty of the king,⁹³ we find an upsurge of Śaiva donative records starting with the fifth century, suggesting the increase of Śaiva devotion amongst the elite. Initially there are no specific religious officiants linked to these activities, aside from a single reference to Brahmins, but with the beginning of the seventh century we see the appearance of Pāśupata priests in leading roles, not only as recipients of donations but also as administrators and agents in the establishment of infrastructure. Further, the location initially linked with their activities, the Pashupatinath Temple, emerges as the national shrine around the same time, suggesting a strong link to the ruling elite.⁹⁴

While the Pāśupatas were the most prominent Śaiva ascetic and initiatory group at the time, there are also others that have largely disappeared from our textual records, but whose presence remains known from epigraphical material and occasional references in belletristic and Tantric literature, such as the Kālamukhas and Lākulas (SANDERSON 2013: 229–232). These few references indicate that their appearance and practice must have been based on premises similar to those of the Pāśupatas.⁹⁵ Of those groups, we have a more prominent epigraphical record for the Kālamukhas, namely in the area of present-day Karnataka, where they feature in inscriptions as being in charge of temples and supported by the royalty.⁹⁶ Significant for the present context is that the Kālamukhas thus represent another ascetic group that would have profited from the kind of socio-religious environ created by the ŚDh's model as the Pāśupatas. In fact, as alluded to above, we know that the ŚDh was popular in this area, partly from epigraphical references as well as through the wide circulation of the text we find in the South. Further, the ŚDh and many of the notions expressed in the text can be shown to have carried into and strongly impacted the formation of the scriptural corpus of the local Vīraśaivas/Liṅgāyats.⁹⁷ These groups followed precisely the same agenda of including social outsiders into a socio-religious framework that transcends Brahmanical norms and yet remains rooted in the Veda, reminiscent of the ŚDh's model.

⁹³ Cf. SANDERSON 2009: 41, in particular n. 1.

⁹⁴ MIRNIG 2016.

⁹⁵ This also often leads to the conflation of the various Atimārgic ascetic groups in belletristic literature, as discussed by FERSTL in this volume.

⁹⁶ See LORENZEN 1991 (1972¹): 13ff and FILLIOZAT 2012.

⁹⁷ A paper on this topic is currently under preparation by Jonathan Duquette and Nina Mirnig.

Nevertheless, it has to be kept in mind that – beyond the shared practices alluded to above – the ŚDh specifically refers to neither the Pāśupatas nor the Kālamukhas. The *śivayogin* is never specified beyond the fact that he practices *yoga* and wears ashes, *rudrākṣa*-beads, and the *tripuṇḍra*, all of which are features that could apply to many of the ascetic groups. It may be precisely this vagueness and flexibility that made the ŚDh's model so attractive in providing a framework that aligned a potential mainstream householder society – within and outside the Brahmanical order – with the presence and participation of unorthodox and nonconformist Śaiva initiatory groups, potentially collectively subsumed under the nebulous *śivayogin*.

Continuities into the Tantric milieu

Around the time of composition of the ŚDh, Tantric initiatory traditions emerge on the scene in both Śaiva and Buddhist circles.⁹⁸ Tantric communities were initially a marginal phenomenon on the periphery of society, as demonstrated by studies of the *Niśvāsa*, the earliest extant Śaiva Tantra.⁹⁹ However, at the same time we know that these Tantric communities very quickly transformed into dominant players on the socio-religious scene of early medieval India.¹⁰⁰ The transformation from the Atimārga to the Mantramārga is still subject to some speculation, since there is little evidence available for the period between the earliest signs of the Atimārgic tradition in the fourth century and the first firm testimonies of Tantric Śaivism.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ For an account of the shared features of ritual syntax of the newly emerging Tantric systems in both Śaivism and Buddhism, see ISAACSON & GOODALL 2015.

⁹⁹ See GOODALL 2015. On the *Niśvāsa* being the oldest surviving Śaiva Tantra, see also SANDERSON 2006 (particularly pp. 153–154), GOODALL & ISAACSON 2007, GOODALL 2009, and GOODALL & ISAACSON 2016. That the *Niśvāsa* represents an early stage within the corpus of Tantric literature is also suggested by the fact that the text does not refer to different schools in the Mantramārga and may well predate a split into the various schools of Tantric Śaivism, i.e., the Śaiva Siddhānta and the various non-Saiddhāntika traditions (GOODALL 2014: 29).

¹⁰⁰ Sanderson 2009.

¹⁰¹ The earliest evidence of the Pāśupata Pāñcārthika tradition is found in a Mathura pillar inscription dated 380 CE (BHANDARKAR 1931 and SANDERSON 2006: 148). Evidence for Mantramārga or Āgāmic/Tantric Śaivism can be traced back to ninth-century Nepalese manuscripts preserving some of the early Śaiva scriptural corpus that may go back as early as the fifth century, references by tenth-century Kashmir commentators, and references to practices based on Śaiva scriptures in inscriptions in Cambodia of King Rājendravarman (r. 944–968), which refer to a

However, a major discovery in this respect has been the aforementioned *Niśvāsa*, which, as Sanderson points out, “shows a greater awareness of pre-Āgamic Śaivism than other texts of this tradition” and contains evidence of the transition from the Atimārga to the Mantramārga.¹⁰² On the basis of this account, Sanderson establishes that there were certain links between the Atimārgic and Mantramārgic ritual world, which he traces through the structural and functional similarities of the initiation rituals of the Atimārgic Lākulas and in Tantric traditions.¹⁰³

In addition, I would like to suggest that a further intermediate space within this development is occupied by the ritualistic and socio-religious world envisaged in the Śivadharmā literature. In fact, the set of values advocated by the ŚDh may in itself have played an important role in the formation of Tantric ideology and the ways in which it was embedded in society. This is suggested by the fact that several features found in the ŚDh appear as part of the new Tantric ideology and practice. These include in particular the following notions.

The first point relates to the issue of the divinisation of the Śaiva devotee in the ŚDh. As we have seen, this divine identity is also declared central to the performance of the devotional practices, in the sense that it is only as a Rudra that one can worship, meditate upon, and be devoted to Rudra. This is reminiscent of the core principle of Tantric ritual worship, namely the self-identification with the deity before its worship,¹⁰⁴ as expressed in

Śaiva *ācārya* who died in ca. 890 and was employed to perform sacrifices for the king (SANDERSON 2001: 7, n. 5). This evidence is outlined in SANDERSON’s monumental work “History through textual criticism” (2001), in particular pp. 2–7, and it is also found in the details concerning the scriptural corpus of the Śaiva Siddhānta listed in GOODALL 2004: xviii–xxxiii.

¹⁰² SANDERSON 2006: 153 and GOODALL 2015.

¹⁰³ See SANDERSON 2006. The issue in question concerns the new conception of the initiation ritual within Tantric ritual, where it not only serves to grant access to the religion and its scriptures but also has a transformative function to the extent that through initiation the soul can be directly liberated. Sanderson has shown that passages on the Lākula’s initiation ritual in the *Niśvāsa*’s *Mukhasūtra* reveal that such groups already practiced some form of transformative initiation ritual of this kind. See *Niśvāsamukha* 4.88d–98. An edition, annotated translation, and study of the *Niśvāsamukha* is KAFLE 2015.

¹⁰⁴ This observation was first made by Dominic Goodall during a joint reading session of the author’s critical edition of ŚDh, chapter 3, during a research stay at the EFEO, Pondicherry, in January 2016. I would like to thank Dominic Goodall for his input and exchange of ideas at the time.

the common dictum *śivaṃ bhutvā śivaṃ yajet*, one must identify with Śiva in order to worship Śiva.¹⁰⁵ While this is usually considered one of the specifically novel Tantric features of ritual technology, the ŚDh already anticipates this in its conceptualisation of the devotee and his practices. Related to this, there is also another concept that is expressed in the ŚDh and that Tantric circles will include in their dictum, namely the terminology of being “a part of Rudra” (*rudrāṃśa*). In the Tantric world, this term will be used as a designation for either a kind of *sādhaka* – a Tantric practitioner who aims at attaining supernatural powers (*siddhi*) – a lower-level initiate (the *samayin*), or a lay devotee.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, we have seen how one of the main ritual and spiritual strategies of the ŚDh is to extend practices and values from the ascetic milieu to the domain of the householder. The attainment of liberation or spiritual benefits were now accessible through ritual and no longer required engagement in arduous ascetic or yogic practices, and among spiritual goals the practitioner could choose between enjoyments (*bhukti*) or liberation (*mukti*). Precisely the same mechanisms are promoted in Tantric traditions, albeit with an enhanced Tantric ritual technology, and the same duality of *bhukti* and *mukti* is promoted as goals unrestrictedly available to the householder practitioner.¹⁰⁷

Thirdly, as alluded to earlier, Sanderson has shown that part of the success of the Śaiva Tantric traditions was their ability to maintain adherence to the Brahmanical socio-religious order while at the same time transcending it. As we have seen above, precisely this aspect is also characteristic of the ŚDh. Here too, it is possible to maintain one’s socio-religious status according to the Brahmanical order while at the same time enhancing one’s spiritual status by additionally adopting modes of Śaiva worship.

¹⁰⁵ See DAVIS 1991, chapter 2, where he argues that through this ritual identification with Śiva the worshipper continually enacts his liberated state in preparation of his final liberation (e.g., DAVIS 1991: 83).

¹⁰⁶ See MIRNIG forthcoming. The term thus features in the pre-tenth-century Saiddhāntika Tantric scripture *Kiraṇa* and is frequently referred to in Saiddhāntika ritual manual literature from the eleventh century onwards.

¹⁰⁷ Some formulations, such as *parāparavibhūti* (ŚDh 4.10, see above), are paradigmatic to this effect.

**Conclusion: the *Śivadharma*'s socio-religious model
and the success of Tantric groups**

The new normative model the ŚDh canonised and promoted laid the socio-religious foundations that were conducive to these new players. We have seen how early Tantric groups built on some of the core features of the ŚDh' teachings, including the notion of embodying the divine in order to worship the divine. As such, the ŚDh's socio-religious model may constitute an important piece of the puzzle in the formation of Tantric traditions. While evidence from the *Niśvāsa* suggests that Tantric communities first formed from Atimārgic ascetic circles, it may be that some of the notions in the ŚDh formed important aspects of the emerging Tantric ideology in these early stages, especially in relation to the householder practitioner. Further, we have seen that the ŚDh's socio-religious model lays the foundations for the participation of officiants pertaining to the Śaivite initiatory traditions in public life, who until then had appeared as rather antinomian groups at the fringes of society.¹⁰⁸ Eventually, it was through the same structures that Tantric groups were successful in taking up important positions in the religio-political landscape of early medieval South Asia. While alignment with the Brahmanical socio-religious order was possible both in the model of the ŚDh and that of Tantric groups, theoretically the social order promoted in those texts could even exist independently of an established Brahmanical substratum. Such ideas would be of potential importance when considering the introduction or adaptation of this religious order in new territories of different socio-religious constitution. We know that the Śaiva religion expanded beyond South Asia into South-East Asia, and in the context of Śaiva Tantric traditions Sanderson has identified the ability to offer socio-religious structures for such new territories as one of the aspects that have led to their success in putting down firm roots throughout the early medieval period (SANDERSON 2013). The same potential holds true for the ŚDh with its flexible and adaptable socio-religious model. The ŚDh and its teachings may well have been part of the literary

¹⁰⁸ Concrete examples for the interface between Tantric and lay communities are, for instance, found in prescriptions for Tantric postmortem ancestor worship (*śrāddha*). Here, explicit references show how Tantric priests extended their services to perform *śrāddha* rituals to lay communities. The prescriptions in the ŚDh, which promote Śaiva Brahmins as well as Śaiva Yogins as suitable receptacles for *śrāddha* offerings instead of the ordinary Brahmin, as we have seen above, would thus play into the hands of these new Tantric funerary priests.

package, as it were, that travelled with Śaiva propagators who sought to reach into new territories. After all, epigraphical evidence has been identified that suggests that the ŚDh was known in the Khmer kingdom¹⁰⁹ and Campā,¹¹⁰ bearing testimony to the presence of the work as far east as present-day Cambodia and Vietnam.

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¹⁰⁹ See SANDERSON 2012–2013: 86, especially n. 222 and n. 223. A tenth-century Old Khmer inscription cites a Sanskrit verse that appears in the ŚDh, and an undated stele probably prepared during the reign of Sūryavarman (1002–1050) describes the king as “a meditator on Śiva, skilled in the *śaḍaṅgavidhiḥ*,” which SANDERSON identifies as a distinctive royal rite prescribed in the ŚDhU.

¹¹⁰ See BISSCHOP 2018: 18–19.

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