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Amṛtasiddhi A Posteriori: An Exploratory Study on the Possible Impact of the *Amṛtasiddhi* on the Subsequent Sanskrit Vajrayāna Tradition

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Abstract: Recent research into source materials for *haṭhayoga* (Birch, Mallinson, Szántó) has revealed that the physical techniques and esoteric anatomy traditionally associated with Śaiva practitioners likely found a genesis within Vajrayāna Buddhist communities. The physiology and practices for longevity described in the 11th-or-12th-century *Amṛtasiddhi* are easily traced in the development of subsequent physical yoga, but prior to the discovery of the text's Buddhist origin, analogues to a *haṭhayoga* esoteric anatomy found in Vajrayāna sources have been regarded as coincidental. This paper considers both the possibility that the *Amṛtasiddhi*, or a tradition related to it, had a lasting impact on practices detailed in subsequent tantric Buddhist texts and that this *haṭhayoga* source text can aid in interpreting unclear passages in these texts.

Keywords: Buddhism; tantra; yoga; India; Nepal

1. Introduction

This paper will outline an investigation of the possible impact of the *haṭhayoga* “source text” upon two late Vajrayāna *mūla tantras*, namely, the 12th-century *Samvarodayatantra* (SUT) and the 13th-century *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* (CMT). The *haṭhayoga* source text is the 11th-century *Amṛtasiddhi*. This paper will also note some precedents of and parallels with the physiological model found in the *Amṛtasiddhi* in earlier and contemporaneous Vajrayāna texts.

I was first exposed to the *Amṛtasiddhi* in 2016 when James Mallinson regularly came to Oxford to work through it with Péter-Dániel Szántó and I joined in the readings. It was almost immediately evident that the text had Buddhist influences (for example, its opening *maṅgala* verse is an invocation to the Buddhist goddess Chinnamastā), and Mallinson subsequently released an article¹ detailing some of these Buddhist elements. Mallinson and Szántó will publish a full edition of the text and translation in 2020.

The text first received treatment in contemporary scholarship in Kurtis Schaeffer's 2002 article in which he pointed out that it is difficult to identify the text as Buddhist, Nātha, or anything else. Schaeffer also highlighted the importance of the text in Tibet. Mallinson especially,² but Jason Birch and others in the last two decades have illustrated the impact of the text upon the development of *haṭhayoga*. The goal of this paper is to begin to investigate the impact the *Amṛtasiddhi* may have had on subsequent developments in Sanskrit Buddhism.

For the purposes of this paper there are two key ideas in the *Amṛtasiddhi* I will discuss, which, when combined, would eventually become the fundamental physiological theory of *haṭhayoga*. The first

¹ A draft of a chapter to be in a forthcoming *festschrift* for Prof. Alexis Sanderson.

² See (Mallinson 2016), (Mallinson 2017), (Mallinson and Singleton 2017), and (Mallinson 2018).

idea is that if one is able to preserve the store of *bindu*, or *amṛta*, that is, semen, in the cranial vault, that one may extend one's own life. This *bindu* drips, drop by drop, over a lifetime, and once it is exhausted, the individual dies. In females it is present as well, although as female sexual fluid or menstrual blood, not seminal fluid. The second idea is that through *prāṇāyāma* and physical manipulation of the body, a *yogin* can force wind through the *nāḍīs*, the subtle channels of the body, into the central channel and upwards, and reverse the downward course of the ever-dripping *bindu* for the specific purpose of prolonging one's own life. This is the *amṛtasiddhi*, the accomplishment of immortality.

2. Precedents in Vajrayāna

There is a long, well-documented history of alchemy and practices for longevity in Vajrayāna prior to the *Amṛtasiddhi*,³ but the text's particular model does not appear to exist in tantric Buddhism, at least not in any of the materials that we are aware known of. That is, the model of a store of life-sustaining substance in the cranium, and the ability to move subtle wind through the channels of the body to propel this substance upwards for the purpose of life-extension or death-prevention. There are, however, *similar* physiological systems within Vajrayāna prior to the *Amṛtasiddhi*. The examples presented in this section are not intended to be exhaustive (and indeed they are not), but to showcase the existence of such systems in Vajrayāna prior to or within the 11th century.

The concept of something called *bindu* is found in the 8th-century *Guhyasamājatantra* as a point upon which a *yogin* places a seed-syllable visualized in meditation.⁴ There is also a mention of *bindu* as a drop of seminal fluid produced through sexual union.⁵ In the *Guhyasamājottara*, the 18th chapter of the *Guhyasamājatantra*, and likely a late 8th-century addition to the original tantra, we see *bindu* as an object of the mind during *prāṇāyāma*, a drop or point of *prāṇa* called "*prāṇabindu*".⁶ Here *bindu* is an object in meditation, the point one places one's own seed mantra upon, not a physical substance; however, it is noteworthy that centuries later, at the time of the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s production, the famed Nāropā locates this *bindu* in the forehead.⁷

The *Laghukālacakratra*, or simply *Kālacakra*, produced circa 1030 CE (so more or less contemporaneous with the *Amṛtasiddhi*), includes four, individual *bindus* located in respective *cakras*, which lead to wrong speech and behavior but, when purified, result in a perfected body. This purification happens through *binduyoga*, where a drop of semen is sent upwards and then diffuses throughout the body, leading to bliss.⁸

As regards the *nāḍīs*, a fully developed system of 32 channels, with sun and moon corresponding to the primary right and left channels, respectively, exists in Vajrayāna as early as the late 9th-century

³ For an overview of alchemical practices in both South Asia and Sanskrit Buddhism in general see White, David Gordon. *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London. 1996. For practices related directly to the *Laghukālacakratra* and speculation regarding the wider tradition it draws from, see (Wallace 2001).

⁴ *buddhamāṇḍalamadhyasthaṃ vajrākṣobhyaṃ prabhāvayet | hūṃkāraṃ hrdaye dhyātva cittam bindugataṃ nyaset || buddhamāṇḍalamadhyasthaṃ amitābhaṃ prabhāvayet | āḥkāraṃ hrdaye dhyātva vajraṃ bindugataṃ nyaset || Guhyasamājatantra* 11.42–43. "He should visualize Akṣobhya situated in the center of the Buddha *maṇḍala*; [then] visualizing the HŪM syllable in his heart, he should fix [the syllable] at the *bindu* at the mind. He should visualize Amitābha situated at the center of the Buddha *maṇḍala*; [then] visualizing the ĀḤ syllable in his heart, he should fix [the syllable] at the *bindu* at the *vajra*."

⁵ *svavajraṃ padmasamyuktaṃ dvayendriyaprayogataḥ | svaretobindubhir buddhān vajrasattvāṃś ca pūjayet || Guhyasamājatantra* 7.26. "The two sense organs united, his own penis joined with her vagina, he should worship the Buddhas and Vajrasattvas with drops of his own seed."

⁶ *niścārya piṇḍarūpeṇa nāsikāgre tu kalpayet | pañcavarṇaṃ mahāratnaṃ prāṇāyāmam iti smṛtam | svamantraṃ hrdaye dhyātva prāṇabindugataṃ nyaset | Guhyasamājottara* 147cd–148. "Exhaling, one should set the great jewel of five colors in the form of a ball (*piṇḍarūpeṇa*) on the tip of the nose. This is called 'restraint of the breath' (*prāṇāyāma*). Having visualized one's own mantra as located in the heart, he should fix [the mantra] on the *prāṇabindu*."

⁷ *niścārya piṇḍarūpeṇa | iha piṇḍaṃ savyāvāsavyamaṇḍalānām ekatvaṃ madhyamāyām avadhūtyām prāṇavāyoḥ |* "Breathing out in the form of a ball.' Here, the ball is the *Prāṇa* wind of the *maṇḍalas*/areas of the right and left [channels], that is unified in the central channel (*madhyamā*), the *Avadhūti*." *bindugataṃ bindusthānaṃ lalāṭaṃ tatra nyasen nirodhayet |* "'at the *bindu*.' In other words, it must be arrested in the location of the *bindu*, the forehead." *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*, commentary on GSU 147c and 148d, respectively.

⁸ C.f. (Wallace 2001, p. 22, 200) and the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on *Kālacakratra* 4.110.

Hevajratantra.⁹ With the *Kālacakra* we see the number of channels suddenly explode to number into the hundreds. The *Kālacakra* also employs a six-limbed yoga (*ṣaḍaṅgayoga*), detailed in a sort-of commentary on the *tantra*, the 11th-century *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga*, which comments on a number of texts to explicate its system. Here, in this six-limbed yoga, the goal is *upāsiddhi*, a partial awakening, leading to *mahāmudrā*, the perfected state¹⁰ As mentioned before, the deeply complicated subtle body detailed in the *Kālacakra* mentions *bindu*, although not quite in the same way as the *Amṛtasiddhi*. The *tantra* prescribes methods of *prāṇāyāma*, but to put wind into the central channel for the goals of perfection and awakening, not to prolong the *yogin*'s life.¹¹ There is an equating of *bindu* with seminal fluid and a connection with the moon, but this connection is explained by both the *Kālacakra* and the *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* as having to do with a co-mingling of fluids in the uterus leading to the development of a fetus, which is part of a larger journey of perfection in which a *yogin* is influencing his rebirth, or so it seems.¹²

Bindu can be used by the *yogin* in his own mental transformation towards perfection in the *Kālacakra*, but what the *bindu* actually does is not made clear.¹³ Somehow an arresting of the semen at the glans of the penis will bring about awakening if, for whatever reason, a perfected *yogin* does not reach the ultimate goal at the moment he should—"If he does not get this desired perfection of *mantrins* through *pratyāhāra* and so on (that is, through the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*), he can accomplish it forcefully (*haṭhena*) by a repetition of sound by arresting the *bindu* in the vajra-jewel in the lotus."¹⁴ *Haṭha* and the involvement of the seminal fluid are a last resort, employed when all else fails.

It is noteworthy that in texts prior to the timing of the *Amṛtasiddhi*, as well as contemporaneous with it, the concept of using force to bring about physical effects is frowned upon in Vajrayāna. Jason Birch and James Mallinson have catalogued over a dozen important Vajrayāna texts that censure using *haṭhayoga*. Nearly all these texts are earlier than the 11th-century *Amṛtasiddhi*, although a few are contemporaneous with it; for example, the previously-mentioned *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga*.¹⁵

So we have a subtle physiology, that is to say a "yogic body", and there is manipulation of *vāyus* around the body, and, in the case of the *Kālacakra* and its subsequent tradition, a stoppage of the flow of seminal *amṛta*/*bindu* through the body. But even with all this, we do not have the models of life-extending *bindu*, or techniques to send the substance back up into the cranial vault. That is, we have models where *bindu* functions as a means to an end, but there are no models where *bindu* is the end itself, so to speak. However, variations of this model exist in Vajrayāna after the *Amṛtasiddhi*, in both

⁹ *ta eva lalanārasane candrasūryau prajñopāyau*—corresponding *Yogaratnamālā* comm. To *Hevajratantra* I.i.21. "So the moon corresponds with *lalanā* (the left channel) and wisdom and the sun corresponds with *rasanā* (the right channel) and means."

¹⁰ *pratyāhārādibhiḥ syāt kulīśakamalajenāmṛtenopasiddhiḥ* | *Kālacakratāntra* 4.113.i.cd "Near realization (*upāsiddhi*) [is possible] through *pratyāhāra* and so on, as well as through the *amṛta* that arises from the Vajra (*kulīśa*) lotus." The gloss of *kulīśakamalajenāmṛtena* in the *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* makes clear the identity of *amṛta* as seminal fluid. *tathā dhyānam prāṇāyāmaś ca dhāraṇā ca* | *kulīśakamalajenāmṛtenācyutenopasādhanaṃ nītārthena* | "Thus, [near-realization also concerns] contemplation, restraint of the breath and retention (of semen). "The near-realization", according to the deep meaning, is carried out "by means of the ambrosia", viz., the non-emitted [*bodhicitta*] (*acyuta*) "that rises from the adamantine lotus". Translated in (Sferra 2000, p. 256).

¹¹ *prāṇāyāmena śuddhaḥ śaśiravirahitaḥ pūjyate bodhisattvair* | *mārakleśādināṣaṃ viśati daśabalaṃ dhāraṇayā balena* | *Kālacakratāntra* 4.118.ii "Purified through restraint of the breath, and thus devoid of the moon and sun, he is honored by the Bodhisattvas. By dint of retention, he comes into conjunction with the ten forces, corresponding to the destructions of the four Māras, of the afflictions, etc." Translated in (Sferra 2000, p. 264). Corresponding *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* commentary—*prāṇāyāmena śuddha itī ha yadā raviśaśimārgarahito yogī bhavati sadā madhyamāvāhas tadā prāṇāyāmena śuddhaḥ san pūjyate bodhisattvair* | *praśasyata ity arthaḥ* | *mārakleśādināṣaṃ viśati daśabalam itī śūnyatābimbaṃ grāhyagrāhakacittam viśati* | *dhāraṇayā baleneti prāṇaysa gatāgataksayeṇaikalolībhavati* | "This means here, when the *yogin* becomes devoid of the sun and moon ways and his [breath] always flows in the central channel, then, being "purified through restraint of the breath, he is honored," viz. praise, "praised by the Bodhisattvas. He comes into conjunction when the ten forces, corresponding to the destruction of the Māras, of the affliction, etc." In other words, the mind, as both perceivable and perceiver, enters into the image of voidness. "By dint of retention," viz., by force of eliminating the coming and going of the breath, he reaches a state of complete unification (*ekalolībhavati*)." Translated in (Sferra 2000, p. 269).

¹² For a description of this process, see (Wallace 2004, pp. 57–64).

¹³ (Sferra 2000, p. 261).

¹⁴ *nādābhyāsād dhaṭhenābjagakulīśamaṇau sādhyed bindurodhāt* | *Kālacakratāntra* 4.119.ii.cd. Birch discusses this passage and its treatment in subsequent commentarial literature on (Birch 2011, p. 535) article on uses of the term "haṭha".

¹⁵ The word *haṭha* does not appear in either the *Samvaraodayatantra* or *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra*—we see *balena* rather than *haṭhena*, and we see *balena* regularly in the context of forcing *vāyu* through the channels.

the SUT and the CMT. That is to say, this model of an ever-dripping, life-extending seminal *bindu* that can lengthen life and empower the *yogin* if he manages to get it back into his cranium, through some means.

Yet, there is no smoking gun, an “*ity amṛtasiddhiḥ*” or obvious direct quotation. But I believe the accumulation of the uncanny connections is enough to make the case that, even if the texts were not drawing directly from the *Amṛtasiddhi* itself, they were likely drawing from the same socio-religious paradigm from which the *Amṛtasiddhi* was produced. Francesco Sferra tells us that the *Śaḍaṅgayoga* is actually a “collage of quotations”¹⁶ drawn from a number of works, giving us the impression that this text, and by extension possibly the *Amṛtasiddhi* (as well as the *Kālacakra*), are products of a larger movement within late, esoteric, Sanskritic Buddhism.¹⁷

3. The Saṃvarodaya and Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantras

Circumstantial evidence links the *Saṃvarodaya* and *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa* tantras to the overall movement towards physical *yoga* in Vajrayāna, as reflected in the *Kālacakra* tradition, but none of it ties either *tantra* specifically to the *Amṛtasiddhi*.

3.1. Subtle Physiology Similarities with Amṛtasiddhi

In both the SUT and CMT, we see discussions detailing moving *vāyu* around the body, with the fifth chapter of the SUT and the 22nd chapter of the CMT devoted to the subject, but as mentioned before, *prāṇāyāma* is integral to *Kālacakra* literature as well. There is also an association in the SUT and CMT of the sun and moon with various *nāḍīs*,¹⁸ but this idea is also found in *Kālacakra* literature, as is the concept of these internal celestial bodies eclipsing one another.

But there are similarities in the two *tantras* that do not seem to be found anywhere in Vajrayāna prior to the period of the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s creation. We find a development of a *kuṇḍalinī* analog in the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s 13th chapter. Here the wind itself ascends the body of the *yogin* through the female central channel (*madhyamā*) and pierces (*vedha*) its way to the top through a series of knots (*granthi*), culminating in breaking through the door of Brahmā (*brahmādvāram*). This makes *yoga* successful (*yogaḥ prasidhyati*), along with the completion of the Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*) and the Great Lock (*mahābandha*).¹⁹ In the SUT’s 31st chapter there is a similar scenario, where a dormant female energy that lies at a knot around the base of the spine, is moved to action and ultimately ascends the body of the *yogin*. However, this female energy in the SUT is identified as “*yoginī*”,²⁰ which is neither the name given in the *Amṛtasiddhi* for the central channel itself, which is *madhyamā*, nor the *kuṇḍalinī* of *haṭhayoga*.

¹⁶ “Anupamarakṣita, who is quoted by Nāropā (956–1040), lived between the end of the X and the beginning of the XI century. His main work, the ŚY, cannot be considered original. Apart from the nine initial stanzas composed by the author, this text consists of a well arranged collage of quotations drawn from other works and connected sporadically through short sentences. Furthermore, the central corpus of these quotations is also present in a later work, the SUT by Nāropā, who quotes one of the introductory verses by Anupamarakṣita.” (Sferra 2000, p. 43).

¹⁷ This particular physiological model, that is, of the manipulation of winds through channels in the body into the central channel and then upwards to propel *bindu* to the cranium (and sometimes beyond) has been related to me by a number of Newar Vajracārya and Buddhacārya (a subdivision of Śākyas who are caretakers of the Svayambhū Mahācaitya) informants as the means by which a person both stays alive and potentially extends one’s own life. Newar Buddhism is, of course, the only remaining Sanskritic Buddhism.

¹⁸ The equating of the sun and moon with semen and menstrual blood respectively also pervades the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra*, since the co-mingling of the two leads to the production of a fetus in a way paralleling that in the *Kālacakratāntra*. The mixture of these two fluids (or vaginal fluid rather than menses) is the standard biological explanation for the generation of a fetus in premodern Sanskrit texts.

¹⁹ See *Amṛtasiddhi* 13.5–12.

²⁰ This *yoginī* is of four types according to the SUT—*pādmīnī*, *hastinī*, *śaikhinī*, or *citrinī*. These names are found in a number of lists ranging from Vajrayāna *yoginīs* (four female members of the *jñānacakra* in the 12th-or-13th-century *Ḍākṛṇavatāntra* chapter 15), to kinds of women in *kāmaśāstra* (the first chapter of the *Anaṅgarāṅga* is devoted to detailing these four types of women). A few *haṭhayoga* texts include members of this list as names of channels (*śaikhinī* appears in the list of the 14 channels in the 13th-century *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* 2.21–23, the 14th-century *Śivasamhitā* 2.14–15 and the 17th century *Haṭharatnāvalī* 4.34–35. *Śaivasamhitā* 2.18 also names *citrā* as a channel.

A unique similarity with the *Amṛtasiddhi* is found in the 22nd chapter of the CMT, the *vāyuyogapaṭala*. Here we see a placement of the five winds that mirrors the *Amṛtasiddhi*, with *prāṇa* at the heart, *apāna* in the anus, *samāna* around the navel, *udāna* around the throat, and *vyāna* pervading the body.²¹ The only other place we see this particular organization of the five *vāyus* predating the *Amṛtasiddhi* is in the 6th-century Śaiva *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā Nayasūtra*;²² however, it is possible that such an organization has been overlooked elsewhere. The CMT could have taken this organization from the earliest *mantramārga* text, although it seems that a tradition within Vajrayāna, one which the *Amṛtasiddhi* may be connected to, is a more probable source. The *Padmāvatī* commentary of the CMT links a breathing yoga to obtainment of five *abhijñānas*, or superknowledges of a Buddha, but there is nothing regarding life-extension.

3.2. Storage of Bindu in the Cranial Vault

We also find mention in both the SUT and CMT of a store of *amṛta*²³ above the *ghaṇṭikārandhra*, that is, the hole just behind and above the uvula. The model in the SUT is clear. “In the *Sambhogacakra* [which is situated] in the throat, there is a red lotus of sixteen petals; in the middle of the lotus is the character OM; above the character, *amṛta* flows incessantly through the way of the “hole in the uvula”;²⁴ that is, the *ghaṇṭikārandhra*. This model, of an endless flow of *amṛta* is certainly prevalent later on in *haṭhayoga*, such as in the *khecarīmudrā* where the *yogin* bends his tongue back to catch the dripping liquid.²⁵

The CMT presents this model of a store of *amṛta* in the cranium above the *ghaṇṭikārandhra* in a peculiar way. Following coitus, the *yogin* is told he “should inhale [his ejaculate] through a pipe in his nose to increase his power.”²⁶ The *Padmāvatī* commentary of the CMT tells us “sometimes he should draw [male and female sexual fluids] from the Lotus (i.e., a female sexual organ) with his mouth, place them in a vessel, insert a straw (*nālikāṃ*), take note of his breath, and ingest it through his nostril, that is to say the aperture [beyond] the uvula”; the *ghaṇṭikārandhra*.²⁷ After giving an alternate way

²¹ *hr̥di prāṇo vasen nityamapāno gudamaṇḍale | samāno nābhideśe tu samodānaśca kaṇṭhake || vyāno vyāpi śarīre ca pradhānāḥ pañca vāyavaḥ | Amṛtasiddhi 6.7–6.8ab.* “*Prāṇa* always resides in the heart, *apāna* in the anus, *samāna* in the region of the navel, and *udāna* is always in the throat, and *vyāna* pervades the body. These are the five main winds.” *hr̥di prāṇo gude 'pānaḥ samāno nābhideśake | udānaḥ kaṇṭhadeśe tu vyānaḥ sarvaśarīragaḥ || Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra 22.1* “*Prāṇa* is in the heart, *apāna* is in the anus, *samāna* is in the region of the navel, *udāna* is in the area of the throat, and *vyāna* is in the all the body.”

²² *hr̥dgude nābhikaṇṭhau ca sarvasandhau tathāiva ca | prāṇādyās saṃsthitā hyete rūpaṃ śabdaṃ ca me śṛṇu || Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā Nayasūtra 4.119.* “Beginning with *prāṇa*, these are situated [with *prāṇa*] in the heart, [*apāna*] in the anus, [*samāna*] in the navel, [*udāna*] in the throat, and [*vyāna*] in every joint.” The *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* shared several similarities with early Vajrayāna (Cf. Goodall 2015, pp. 31–32). In fact, the verse just preceding *Nayasutra* 4.119 prescribes the use of *dhāraṇīs* along with *pratyāhāra* and *prāṇāyāma*, among other techniques. The issue at stake here is the particular arrangement of the winds, that is, which corporeal location each corresponds to. The five (*prāṇa*, *apāna*, *udāna*, *samāna*, and *vyāna*) also find the pattern of corresponding to the wind names *Nāga*, *Kurma*, *Kṛkara*, *Devadatta*, and *Dhanāñjaya* before the *Amṛtasiddhi* (for example, the pre-10th-century Śaiva *Svacchandatantra* 7.17) and after the *Amṛtasiddhi* (for example, the 18th-century *haṭhayogic Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 5.61). The *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* also has the arrangement of the five winds found in the *Amṛtasiddhi* (GhS 5.62), but this is a direct quotation of the *Amṛtasiddhi*, and within a tradition locating authority in the older text. For more arrangements of the five winds (although not the model found in the *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā*, *Amṛtasiddhi*, and *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* detailed above) see Zysk, Kenneth G. “The Bodily Winds in Ancient India Revisited.” In *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13, pp. S105–15. 2007. For a further description of the record of the five winds in the *Niśvāsattattvasaṃhitā* and yoga texts in general see (Mallinson and Singleton 2017, pp. 187–98).

²³ Mallinson notes a handful of Śaiva texts with the model of a store of *amṛta* in the cranial vault in (Mallinson 2007, p. 28, n. 123). These texts are *Siddhayogeśvarīmata paṭala* 11, *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* 16.53–54, *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 5.5–13, and *Netratantra paṭala* 7. All these texts predate the *Amṛtasiddhi*.

²⁴ *kaṇṭhe sambhogacakre śoḍaśadalaṃ raktaṃ tanmadhye omkāraṃ | tasyordhve ghaṇṭikārandhramārgenāmṛtaṃ sravati niranantaram || Samvavarodayatantra 31.24*, Translated in (Tsuda 1974, p. 326).

²⁵ For a detailed description of this practice see (Mallinson 2007).

²⁶ *nāsayā nālikāyogāt pibet sāmārthyavarddhaye | Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra 6.75 ab.*

²⁷ *kadācit padmān mukhenākṛṣṭaṃ bhājane saṃsthitāpya nālikāṃ prakṣipya śvāsam jñātva nāsikayābhyavaharet | ghaṇṭikārandhreneṭy arthaḥ | [...] ayam arthaḥ | satataprayogakaraṇād valipalitavyādhimṛtyunāśanād yogino mahāsāmārthyavarddhir bhavati | Padmāvatī commentary on Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra 6.75.* “Sometimes he should draw [the male and female sexual fluids] out from the Lotus with his mouth, place them in a vessel, insert a straw, take note of his breath, and ingest it through his nostril, that is to the aperture [beyond] the uvula (*ghaṇṭikārandhra*). [...] The meaning is this: by constantly performing [these] procedure[s], there will be a great increase in the *yogī*’s strength, inasmuch as he will stop wrinkling, greying, and [even] death.” Translation (Grimes and Szántó 2018, p. 686). The practice may be intellectually connected to the idea of circulation

to nasally ingest these substances, the commentary tells us why one should do this—“by constantly performing these procedures, there will be a great increase in the *yogī*’s strength, inasmuch as he will stop wrinkling, greying, and [even] death.”²⁸ When considering the model we find in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, this procedure suddenly seems less strange. Bearing in mind the model of a store of life-extending *amṛta* above the aperture behind the uvula, I suggest the technique the CMT prescribes is alchemical, performed, as it says, to stop aging and even death. The *Kālacakratantra* itself details a number of elixirs to eliminate wrinkles and gray hair; however, there is no mention anywhere of sending seminal fluid into the cranial vault by nasal means for the purpose of death-prevention.

3.3. *Amṛtasiddhi* as a Textual Interpretation Aid

It looks as if the *Amṛtasiddhi* may potentially help clear up textual puzzles in subsequent Vajrayāna works. In the SUT, the description of *bindu* ascending the body through a progression of corporeal locations corresponding to vowel characters reaches its climax by saying that on the day of the full moon, the *yoginī* (the apparent *kuṇḍalinī* analog who/which has presumably been travelling upwards with the *bindu*) is to the left and the right of *mada* (intoxication, intoxicating, or even semen, among other meanings).²⁹ Now this makes no sense. What is *mada* doing here? The Tibetan translator changed the meaning to *mūrdhan* (forehead or head),³⁰ which thematically makes sense, since the *bindu* is in the cranium at this point, but the Sanskrit manuscript witnesses all read *mada*. The SUT has a chapter on *mada*, devoted to spirituous liquors and their production, so there is precedent with the term in the text, but not in a way that makes sense here. We can of course guess that the meaning of *mada* is essence or seminal fluid, but the text does not give us precedence to do so.

The seventh chapter of *Amṛtasiddhi* can strengthen the case of this interpretation, however. It glosses *bindu* by equating it with several apparent synonyms. “This is *bindu*, this is *candra*, this is *bīja*, this is *mada*, this is *tattva*, this is *jīva*, this is the essence of everything.”³¹ So here we have *mada* used in the SUT as the thing in the midst of the ascended *yoginī* at the aperture of the head following a

of vital winds in the practice of *prāṇāyāma* through the nostrils into and out of the body, in addition to replenishing vital energies stored in the cranial vault. However, such a theory is entirely speculative.

²⁸ A similar practice involving a straw sending a mixture of seminal fluid and menses into a person’s nasal cavity is found in Vagīśvarakīrti’s 11th-century *Mṛtyuvañcanopadeśa* (Teaching on the Cheating of Death), although in a different context than the one found in the CMT. Whereas the purpose of the practice detailed in the CMT is for a living *yogin*, the procedure detailed in the *Mṛtyuvañcanopadeśa* is intended to revive a recently-deceased corpse. *mṛtasamjīvanam api kva cid dr̥ṣṭam upāyataḥ | rtumatkānyānarayoh śrīkhalāyāḥ samutthitaiḥ || 74 || śonitonmiśraśukrākhyadhātubhir nātiśītalaiḥ | sadyo yad vā mṛtasyaiva patitair dhātubindubhiḥ || 75 || ghr̥tāktanalikārandhranirgamena praveśitaiḥ | vāhed ātmīyanāsāgrapuññonītapuṭe kramāt || 76 || punarujjīvanam dr̥ṣṭam nirodhas cātra śasyate | pratyakṣadr̥ṣṭasāmarthyō yogo ‘yaṁ bahusammataḥ || 77 ||* “The revival of the dead is even seen by an appropriate means, through the elements which arise due to the union of a man and a menstruating young woman. Namely this occurs with the ingredients being semen mixed with uterine blood, which is not too cold (i.e., fresh), or with drops of those same substances (or “of that same substance”) which have fallen from the dead body itself. By [those drops] entering the space through a straw smeared in ghee (presumably as a lubricant to get up to the nasal cavity) he should send it in stages into the nostril [of the dead], [having already] drawn it up into the cavity of his own nose. The revival is seen, and the restraint is here detailed. The effectiveness of this practice, respected by many, is clearly observed.” *Mṛtyuvañcanopadeśa* 3.74–77. I translated *nirodha* as restraint, because it perhaps refers to the necromancing *yogin* holding the substances up his own nose, before deploying them into the nose of the deceased. Two translations have been done of this work, one in English and another in German. The English, translated by Michael Walter under the title “Cheating Death,” is not reliable (although it is useful as a summary and outline of the text), and it appears in *Tantra In Practice* (ed. David Gordon White 2000). Although he does not specify if he translated from the Sanskrit or the 11th-century Tibetan translation, Walter’s inclusion of untranslated Tibetan words suggests he translated from the latter. Johannes Schneider’s 2010 study, edition of the Sanskrit text, and German translation is recommended for further study. For biographical details on the text’s monastic author, Vagīśvarakīrti, see Tāranātha’s *Rgya gar chos ‘byung*. For the geographic range of Vagīśvarakīrti’s intellectual influence, see Péter-Dániel Szántó’s chapter in a forthcoming *festchrift* for Prof. Alexis Sanderson; and for Vagīśvarakīrti’s impact in Nepal see Iain Sinclair’s 2016 dissertation “The appearance of tantric monasticism in Nepal: A history of the public image and fasting ritual of Newar Buddhism, 980–1380” pp. 57–61. I thank Shaman Hatley for drawing my attention to the *Mṛtyuvañcanopadeśa*.

²⁹ *madasya vāmadakṣiṇe pūrṇamāsyām amāḥsvabhāvā | Saṁvarodayatantra* 31.34 “On the day of the full moon, there is [the goddess] who has the nature of the characters *AM* and *AḤ* left and right of *mada*.” Translated in (Tsuda 1974, p. 328).

³⁰ *spyi gtsug* in the Tibetan.

³¹ *idaṁ bindur idaṁ candram idaṁ bījam idaṁ madaḥ | idaṁ tattvam idaṁ jīvaḥ sarvasāramayaṁ tv idaṁ || Amṛtasiddhi* 7.3. Unpublished edition Mallinson & Szántó.

description of *bindu*'s ascent, and we have the *Amṛtasiddhi* telling us that *mada* can mean *bindu*. I do not think it is a stretch to interpret the SUT's mystery *mada* as *bindu*. In fact, *mada* is also mentioned at the beginning of this overall section in the SUT when we are told that a subtle, four-petalled lotus is located in the *mahāsukhacakra* in the head and that it is the place of *mada*. Again, the place of intoxication makes no sense in this context. We can see that *mada* must refer to *bindu*, and the *Amṛtasiddhi* gives us support. Just below this, *mahāsukhacakra* is said to be a 32-petalled lotus from which the syllable *HAM* flows downwards—“*haṁkāro'adhomukhaṁ sravati*.”³² We are told that this 32-petalled lotus is *bījabhūta*, made of seed. Here, again, the *Amṛtasiddhi* can potentially clear things up if we take *bījabhūta* to mean this 32-petalled lotus is made of *bindu*; however, it is also possible *bīja* refers to the downward-flowing *HAM*, since *bīja*, or more frequently *svabīja*, has the esoteric sense of referring to a seed syllable.

4. Final Remarks

Based strictly on the materials reviewed here, namely the *Samvarodaya* and *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa tantras*, it does not appear that the *Amṛtasiddhi* was important in subsequent Sanskrit³³ Vajrayāna textual traditions. While the physiology the yogic text employs does include innovations which seem to be found in these two *tantras*, the lack of any quotations or references to the text itself makes the possibility of drawing a direct connection very unlikely.

Techniques for placing *bindu* back into the cranium, whether through the circulation of wind detailed in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, or snorting it through a straw as in the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* illustrate common physiological models, but not a textual connection. The shared organization of the five winds in this *tantra* and in the *Amṛtasiddhi* is striking,³⁴ but again, this may be attributed to something wider than a single—possibly originally fringe—yogic text. The ability of the *Amṛtasiddhi* to clarify the otherwise-confusing usage of *mada* in the *Samvarodayatantra* also lends support for the existence of a shared intellectual landscape regarding subtle physiologies and how the body might be manipulated

³² *śirasi mahāsukhacakre caturdalapadmaṁ suksmaṁ | madasthānaṁ sarvasyādhararūpatvāt || 19 || bodhimaṇḍasvabhāvaṁ bījabhūtaṁ bāhye dvātriṁśaddalapadmaṁ | tanmadhye haṁkāro'dhomukhaṁ sravati || 20 || Samvarodayatantra 31.19–20* “A subtle, four-petalled lotus is [located] in the *mahāsukhacakra* in the head. It is the place of *mada* due to its being the supportive form of everything. Outside [of it] is a thirty-two petalled lotus made up of *bīja* [and] having the nature of the seat of awakening. In the middle of it is a *HAM* syllable that flows downwards.” Translated in (Tsuda 1974, p. 328). Alexis Sanderson pointed out to me that “*adhomukhaṁ*” could mean “facing downwards” here, in the sense that the imagined character of the seed syllable is turned upside down, but added either reading is possible, and an obvious one is not clear. (Personal communication on 29 September 2019) The reading of an upside-down seed syllable is supported a few lines later in the 25th verse of the same chapter—*hrdaye dharmacakraṁ aṣṭadalaṁ viśvapadmaṁ madhye hūṁkāraṁ adhomukhasthitam |* “An eight-petalled *viśva* lotus (lotus with pedals facing both up and down, recognizable from Buddhist iconography as the throne sat upon by Buddhas) is in the heart. In the middle [of the lotus] is situated a *HUM* syllable facing downwards.” The flowing from *HAM* could still be downwards, regardless of which direction the seed syllable is facing, so the ambiguity remains.

³³ Since they are recorded entirely in Tibetan, and not translations from Sanskrit or any Sanskrit tradition, I have not included mention of the biographies of Śāriputra (1335–1426 CE), the East Indian abbot of Mahābodhi temple in Bodh Gayā during a period typically viewed as being after Buddhism had disappeared from within the borders of modern India. His life is detailed in-depth in Arthur McKeown's 2019 *Guardian of a Dying Flame*, Harvard Oriental Series 89. At a point within Śāriputra's exoteric biography, recorded in the margins of the manuscript McKeown examined, are details of practices similar to those in the *Amṛtasiddhi* intended to extend life, taught to the abbot by his teacher Gholenāth (whom he wrote a biography of). Coincidentally, it is today the position of the Nāth *sampradāya* that *haṭhayoga* originated with their order. By extension, due to its being a foundational text for *haṭhayoga*, there would be teachings of the Nāths originating in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, meaning that if Śāriputra had a Nāth *guru*, it is possible he received teachings from, or at the very least, connected with a tradition placing authority on the *Amṛtasiddhi*. Śāriputra also reportedly authored a biography of Gorakhnāth (Gorakṣa), one of the nine Nāths of the Nāth *sampradāya* who is credited with founding the order. There is another possible connection between Śāriputra and the *Amṛtasiddhi*—the Mahābodhi temple abbot also penned a biography of Virūpakṣa, the *mahāsiddha* praised in the opening of the *Amṛtasiddhi*. In this biography Śāriputra details a *sādhana* taught to Virūpakṣa by Chinnamastā herself, the Buddhist goddess praised in the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s opening *maṅgala* verse. For more on Śāriputra's life see the translations and editions of the various biographies and autobiographies recorded in Tibetan and attributed to him in the appendices of McKeown's 2019 book, and McKeown's explanations of what is recorded in the primary sources in the corresponding chapters. For a detailed examination of the possible Buddhist connections of the early Nāth *sampradāya* see Mallinson, James. “Kālavaṇcana in the Konkan: How a Vajrayāna Haṭhayoga Tradition Cheated Buddhism's Death in India.” *Religions*, 10, 273: 1–33. 2019.

³⁴ Since its only chronologically antecedent location is an early Śaiva text!

for longevity. As mentioned in the opening, Mallinson has made clear the importance of the *Amṛtasiddhi* on subsequent *haṭhayoga* traditions. The present inquiry could be expanded to ask, not only why the text did not gain traction within Sanskritic Vajrayāna traditions, but also why it was nevertheless so successful in the so-called “Hindu” *haṭhayoga* ones.

Far more study needs to be done on the milieu from which all these ideas were generated. For example, the *Samvarodayatantra* has a chapter on “*rasāyana*” that is as yet unedited. There is a project underway by a group of Japanese scholars to slowly edit the *Padminī* commentary of the *Samvarodayatantra* and I am myself in the process of editing and translating the *Padmāvatī* commentary of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra*. The *Ḍākaraṇatantra*, which is contemporaneous with the *Samvarodaya* and *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa tantras*, apparently has lengthy discussions of physical manipulation of the subtle body, however, with the exception of its *apabhraṃśa* songs, it remains unedited. David Grey and others are in the process of editing and translating the Sanskrit text. There is also a need for a comprehensive collation of materials preserved in Tibetan, Javanese, Khmer, and other translations, as the Buddhist yogic tradition was never confined to India and it continues to this day.

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