

THERIANTHROPIC *YOGINĪS* IN EARLY ŚAIVA TRADITION*

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The depiction of *yoginīs* in therianthrope form, with animal faces, or, more rarely, with complete animal appearances, in texts and images, is one of the most striking characteristics of this class of deities. Several questions arise. Why are the *yoginīs* often represented with animal traits? What is the origin of this form and what meanings and implications lie behind these portrayals? How does this form relate to their functions?

The discussion presented below highlights the main issues raised by this crucial and multifaceted subject, which has previously been given little scholarly attention in its own right. Adducing illustrative rather than exhaustive evidence, the present essay is an initial attempt to unravel the various threads related to therianthrope *yoginīs*. Every line of inquiry outlined here is a fitting topic for more detailed analysis, which I hope to present in future contributions.

After first introducing the themes of therianthropism and theriomorphism, I shall briefly present the main *yoginīs*' antecedents – *gaṇas*, *yakṣinīs* and *mātrīs*. In the subsequent section therianthrope – and in one case theriomorphic – *yoginīs* in the early Śaiva tradition are the protagonists: after a few observations on the iconographic sources, exemplary textual passages will be discussed. In the concluding section, some working hypotheses, and further questions, are posited.

1. A WORD ON THERIANTHROPISM AND THERIOMORPHISM

A basic survey shows that in Hindu religion a considerable number of deities are depicted in hybrid form, partly theriomorphic, partly anthropomorphic. Therianthrope *yoginīs* thus partake in a broader phenomenon, where animal forms appear both as components of some deities' anatomy and as *vāhanas*, vehicles, of most of the deities.¹

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¹ An exhaustive discourse is not possible in a brief essay such as the present one, whose focus is on a particular case of the therianthrope phenomenon. Remarkably, no scientific, systematic study on the full extent of therianthropism in Hindu religion has been made. The wide and complex usage of animal features in the depiction of Hindu deities certainly deserves a more thorough examination. As is well known, while figures such as Gaṇeśa, Narasiṃha, and Hanuman emerge as prominent in Hinduism, others such as Naigameśa and Hayagrīva maintain a minor or sectarian relevance, some such as *nāgas* have a different cultic status, and numerous others are local peculiarities. With the

In the narrower sense, the term therianthropism merely designates the anatomical combination of human and animal traits, but scholars have also included under its rubric deities who, mostly depicted as anthropomorphic, are however able to transform themselves into animals, such as Zeus and Dionysos.² As we shall see, composite appearances can have a close connection with metamorphosis, but in what follows I will use the term therianthropism merely to refer to hybrid figures, and theriomorphism for purely animal forms, devoting a separate discourse to the shapeshifting ability. From the ensuing discussion it will emerge that the therianthropism of *yoginīs* always occurs as theriocephalism, which seems not without significance, and that the ability to change form is one of the distinctive characteristics of this class of deities.

The scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has frequently posited theriomorphism as one of the major phases of the earliest religious systems. However, as subsequent and more recent studies demonstrate,³ such theories of increasing anthropomorphisation of divinity rely on an unscientific level of retrospective extrapolation: they consider as an axiom the fact that we have at our disposal the tail end of a development process, and assume that from the end we can reconstruct a reliable picture of the whole. In addition to these teleological fallacies, closer inspections of specific religious contexts indicate that a straightforward progression from animal to human in the conception of the divinity is not demonstrated by the body of evidence. The cases of the *yoginīs* and of the therianthrope Hindu deities show that animal elements are powerfully placed within the ancient and medieval Hindu religious discourse, and they are not dismissed in modern times.

Moreover, deities and animals appear to be inextricably intertwined in the concept of *vāhana*. For the purpose of the present paper I shall resist the appeal to involve this category in the investigation of therianthrope *yoginīs*, insofar as the origins and the significance of the concept of *vāhana*,⁴ its expressions in the domain of the *yoginīs*, and its relation with the *yoginī* therianthropism reveal a degree of complexity which can be better addressed in a specifically dedicated essay.

2. THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE *YOGINĪS*

The analysis of the *yoginīs*' distinctive features reveals that a few Hindu non-tantric or pre-tantric deities can be considered their antecedents. Some of the possible prototypes of the *yoginīs* are as follows:

awareness that every deity represents a specific case and that probably no single overarching theory can be claimed, a comprehensive approach would definitely bring new insights.

² See Walens 2005.

³ See Walens 2005, Buxton 2009: 187-189, and Aston 2014.

⁴ While the scholarship quite unanimously assumes that the vehicle connotes the sphere of the god's influence, there are different hypotheses concerning the origins of the concept: it would come from the Mesopotamian area according to Zimmer, while it would have Vedic roots according to Gonda; see the analysis of the different theories in Pelissero 1996.

a. The *gaṇas*, a countless, multiform horde, which forms part of the Śiva retinue. They frequently sport animal faces and may have extraordinary powers.⁵

b. The *yakṣīs* or *yakṣiṇīs*, non-Brahmanical demi-goddesses having close connection to trees and the natural world. In textual sources they can be regarded as bestowers of *siddhis*, but also as spirits of possessing nature.⁶ The case of the horse-headed *yakṣiṇī* Assamukhi, featuring in the *Padakusalamāṇava Jātaka* and portrayed in several Buddhist sites, is of great interest.⁷

c. *Grāhas* and *mātr̥s*, deities strictly connected to birth and childhood, fertility and life, sickness and death. Characterised by an ambivalent nature, they are helpful if propitiated, baneful if angered. In both textual and iconographic sources they are frequently depicted with bird and animal heads, and we can assume with Hatley (2012) that they represent the most immediate precursors of the *yoginīs*.

The historical and conceptual continuity between these classes of beings and the *yoginīs* finds confirmation in the lists of names of *yoginīs*, where several appellatives are names of *gaṇas* in the feminine form, and numerous others correspond to *yakṣiṇīs*' and *mātr̥s*' names.⁸

3. YOGINĪS AND THERIANTHROPISM

In the history of Indian religions the term “*yoginī*” appears in different scenarios, designating various female sacred figures. In the Śaiva context, the word encompasses a “scale of beings,”⁹ extending from cult goddesses to female adepts who, through perfection in tantric ritual, become *yoginīs*.¹⁰

Only by combining the art-historical and textual perspectives can we hope to derive an overall picture of the *yoginī* cult, and in particular of the theriomorphic facet of the phenomenon.

3.1 ICONOGRAPHIC SOURCES: A FEW OBSERVATIONS

The way in which therianthropic *yoginīs* come most strikingly to one's attention is through visual means. The groundbreaking research of Vidya Dehejia (1986) has documented the majority of the extant material evidence, providing a survey of

⁵ See Serbaeva 2006: 71-73, and Hatley 2007: 14.

⁶ See Serbaeva 2006: 65-67.

⁷ This horse-headed figure appears at Sāñcī, Bodh Gayā, Patna, and Ajañṭā. See Marshall-Foucher 1983: 1.181-182.

⁸ See Serbaeva 2006: 65-67, 83-108.

⁹ Hatley 2007: 13.

¹⁰ For a detailed analysis of the category of *yoginīs* I refer the reader to Törzsök 2009, who identifies three subcategories of *yoginīs* (divine, semi-divine, and human *yoginīs* – with not clearly fixed boundaries), to Serbaeva 2006 (7-9, 184-187), and Hatley 2013b, who adopt a polythetic approach to the concept of *yoginī*.

approximately fifteen temples and collections of sculptures no longer in situ, most of which probably involved sets of sixty-four *yoginīs*.

The temples dedicated to the *yoginīs* were erected from the tenth through to the thirteenth century over a wide area – from Orissa to the Madhya Pradesh – Rajasthan border, and with attestations in Tamilnadu. Prevalently circular and invariably hypaethral, these shrines stand out as unique structures in the architectural panorama of medieval India. The entire interior perimeter of the circular walls is sectioned by a series of niches that house the goddesses' images, which are usually characterised by beautiful feminine bodies. Some of them have finely delineated, gentle faces to correspond with their proportioned body forms, others have terrifying expressions, while several others have clearly non-human, animal heads.

Each temple enshrines a group of *yoginīs* whose composition differs from the others: the types of figures – graceful, terrifying, and animal-faced, and their positioning along the circumference vary distinctly from one temple to another. Only the well-known group of the seven Mothers (*saptamātrīs*) and the *dinmātrīs*, goddess counterparts of the guardians of the directions (*dikpatis*), feature as a quite constant presence. On the basis of this and a few other elements, Dehejia (1986: 5, 93-94) and Donaldson (2002: 2.658) argue that every *yoginī* temple reflects a different, localised, and independent tradition. However, the role of local, non-tantric cults in the development of the *yoginī* phenomenon represents a complex matter. As Hatley (2014: 209) observes, the incorporation of local deities into *yoginī* temples' iconic programs, although in theory possible and plausible, does not find direct attestation; furthermore, since the tantric cult of *yoginīs* was a significant phenomenon at least two centuries before the temples, the influence of local traditions should be investigated in the earliest textual sources on *yoginīs*. As we shall see *infra*, just like the different temples, the texts contain diverse ranges of names and identities, every scriptural tradition attesting its "own pantheon of this malleable category of divinity."¹¹

Most likely, therianthropism informed pervasively the iconic program of the *yoginī* temple in Lokhari, Uttar Pradesh. Dehejia (1986: 156-162) documents twenty sculptures that were once part of a hilltop shrine of which only some stone blocks of the walls remain, making it impossible to establish the original number of the deities or the plan of the structure. It is, however, interesting to note the proportion of the animal-faced *yoginīs* out of the extant sculptures: twenty figures have been identified, and among these only Cāmuṇḍā and other two *mātrīs* have entirely human appearances. The other sculptures are characterised by theriomorphic heads or faces: the cobra-headed (figure 1) and the rabbit-faced *yoginī* (figure 2) are two exemplary images.¹² Therefore, the original set of *yoginīs* – whatever their number was – presented in all likelihood a predominance of the animal-faced type.

¹¹ Hatley 2014: 210.

¹² The remaining sculptures have faces of a goat, a cow, a bear, an elephant, a lion, a monkey, a dog, a ram, a buffalo; horse and deer faces occur twice. No inscription has been found at Lokhari, hence ascribing to the *yoginīs* names taken from one or other textual list appears quite arbitrary.

The Lokhari *yoginīs* have a minimal character, both in the very modelling of the sculptures and in the figurative formula: only the figure of the *yoginī* and her *vāhana* are sculpted against a plain slab of coarse-grained sandstone rounded in the upper extremity, devoid of additional elements such as a throne and attendant figures, and without a halo over the deity's head. On the basis of these absences Dehejia (1986: 156) ascribes the sculptures to the first half of the tenth century; hence Lokhari probably represents one of the earliest *yoginī* temple sites.¹³

Belonging to the same period, but separated by several miles from Lokhari, are two *yoginī* temples in Orissa, the best preserved being the one situated at the outskirts of the village of Hīrāpur, near Bhuvaneśvar. This is the smallest of the *yoginī* temples, and the only one with an entranceway protruding out from the circular walls, lending to the ground plan the shape of the *yonī*-pedestal of a Śiva-*liṅga*, as observed by Thomsen (1980: 53). The temple enshrines exactly sixty-four *yoginīs*, and has a central pavilion, recently restored, once housing an image of Śiva.¹⁴

While the enclosing walls consist of coarse sandstone, the sculptures are carved from fine-grained dark chlorite, which allows a high degree of artistic refinement. The elegant, standing figures of Hīrāpur *yoginīs*, displaying an exquisite attention to detail, form a variegated symphony, which varies from joyful and dancing notes to warrior and fearsome tones. Dehejia (1986: 91) argues that the two Orissan temples do not feature *mātrīs*, and supposes that the importance of the seven or eight Mothers in the region, worshipped in several independent shrines, is the reason for not including them among the *yoginīs*. However, other scholars (among whom Das 1981: 42-45, further supported by Donaldson 2002: 2.658, 665) have identified the *mātrīs* among the Hīrāpur *yoginīs*. In the absence of inscriptional evidence it is difficult to ascribe an identity to the figures, and Orissan texts are not directly helpful in this task.¹⁵

At least twelve Hīrāpur *yoginīs* are theriocephalic, the animals which can be individuated with relative certainty being the boar (no. 9), the monkey (no. 11), the

¹³ For centuries, the Lokhari *yoginīs* have remained on the hilltop exposed to the weather and vandals. In the 1980s Dehejia found twenty sculptures lying among scattered stones. The traveller who visits Lokhari more than twenty years later finds only a few pieces of the figures remaining. Some of them, and some broken pieces – for example, only the snake-head of figure 1 – are now found in a storage area in the Garhwa fort (60 km from Allahabad), which is quite difficult to access (personal communication by travellers). Moreover, symptomatic are the stories of two Lokhari sculptures. The ram-headed *yoginī*, whose picture is published by Dehejia (1986: 162), was at a later time smuggled to France, despite weighing four hundred kilograms, and acquired by an art collector. The heir donated the sculpture to the Indian Embassy, and so the sculpture came back to India: since August 2013 it is displayed in the New Delhi National Museum. The bear-headed *yoginī* (picture in Dehejia 1986: 161), instead, retrieved from smugglers, has been transformed into the tutelary goddess of the local police station in the town of Raipura (Madhya Pradesh), where she receives a daily *pūjā* (personal communication by travellers).

¹⁴ See Dehejia 1986: 95, and Donaldson 2002: 2.663.

¹⁵ See the observations by Dehejia (1986: 91-92) about the *Caṇḍipurāṇa*.

buffalo (no. 18), the lion (no. 26), the snake (no. 34), and the elephant (no. 38).¹⁶ The *yoginī* no. 51 might be boar-faced (Donaldson 2002: 2.665 and Das 1981: 45) or horse-faced (Dehejia 1986: 99). While, according to Dehejia (1986: 99), the sculpture no. 25 – reproduced in figure 3 – has the physiognomy of a donkey, in my view she has more likely the snout of a bear (so deems also Das 1981: 43): although the partial damage inevitably leaves a degree of uncertainty, significant hints are the rounded ears and the treatment of the hair resembling a very thick fur. The faces of the remaining four sculptures are for the most part broken, and so whereas the facial features are clearly non-human, the specific animal portrayed cannot be established indisputably.¹⁷ The boar-headed and lion-headed *yoginīs* might be *Vārāhī* and *Nārasimhī*, but this is not beyond doubt; similarly, the elephant-headed *yoginī* could be a version of *Vaināyakī*, the female form of *Gaṇeśa*, but while the pot-bellied body is in favour of such identification, the donkey-*vāhana* appears unusual and opens up more possibilities about her identity.¹⁸

The theriocephalic iconographic type is not dismissed when the sculptural style becomes more sophisticated and exuberant, such as in the *Bherāghāt* temple, near Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh). This shrine, built under the auspices of the Kalacuri monarchs, is the largest and most imposing *yoginī* temple, once encompassing probably eighty-one *yoginīs*. Arrayed in cells along the circular inner perimeter, the seated images are slightly larger than life-size in dimension, and are characterised by sensuous bodies and elaborated details, evoking a mature beauty. Each figure is identified by a label inscribed on the base: through paleographical comparison Dehejia (1986: 137-139) suggests that the temple dates from the late tenth or early eleventh century.

Six *Bherāghāt yoginīs* have animal faces, but we can plausibly suppose that the original iconic program comprised more, since only twenty-four of the eighty-one faces are in such a condition to be recognised as human or animal: several sculptures are missing and numerous images are extensively damaged, their head being broken or their upper part, from waist upwards, being entirely lost.¹⁹ Ex-

¹⁶ The numbers are assigned clockwise from the left side of the entrance passageway (see Das 1981: 41-47). Surprisingly, Donaldson (2002: 2.665) claims that only six sculptures have animal faces, but then in the comprehensive chart (2002: 2.666-667), which lists the features of the *Hirāpur* figures, interprets nine *yoginīs* as theriocephalic.

¹⁷ The figure no. 28's protruding face might suggest a bird's beak; the no. 32's face is damaged, but a cat's snout might be an hypothesis; the no. 36 is characterised by an unusual face with bulging eyes and has two apparently heavy and curled horns under a clearly human hairstyle – we might suppose she is buffalo or antelope-faced; according to Das (1981: 45) the no. 55's "hair-do looks like the hood of a snake", but the traits are too heavily damaged to claim anything with certainty. Other *yoginīs* whose face is completely broken (as, for example, the no. 52, identified as *Āgneyī* by Das 1981: 45) might have had theriomorphic lineaments.

¹⁸ See Das 1981: 44, and Dehejia 1986: 92.

¹⁹ Dehejia (1986: 125, 129) emphasises the significance of the number eighty-one, in the *Śrīmatottaratantra* the worship of *ekāśīti yoginīs* being "specially intended for royalty", but, due to the heavy damage, the iconic program of the *Bherāghāt* temple is not totally legible.

tant animal-headed *yoginīs* are: Śrī Eruḍi (figure 4), probably boar-faced;²⁰ Śrī Vārāhī, boar-faced;²¹ Śrī Aiṅgiṇī, elephant-faced;²² Śrī Jāmvavī, boar-faced;²³ Śrī Piṅgalā, maybe bird-faced;²⁴ and a uninscribed *yoginī*, in my view jackal-faced (figure 5).²⁵ In addition, although the face of Śrī Simhasimhā is heavily damaged, the name and the lion-headed attendant let us suppose that it was a theriomorphic, leonine face.²⁶

This very brief survey of a sculptural collection and two temples, chosen as exemplary material evidence belonging to different geographical locations, and in the case of Bherāghāt slightly distant chronological periods, shows that in the temples' iconic program the theriocephalic *yoginī* is an invariably represented, and thus significant, iconographic type.

The endurance of the animal-headed *yoginī* imagery is attested by a Vārāṇasī pictorial map painted on cloth, from the early nineteenth century.²⁷ Titled by Gengnagel (2011: 106-148) "*Pilgrims in Banaras*", this is a vivid and colorful illustration of the sacred territory: hundreds of pilgrims populate the four processional routes, and numerous gods and goddesses "inhabit" the space delineated by the processions. The *yoginīs* are represented as a series of figures mostly characterised by animal heads: centuries after the main period of the cult, the theriocephalism remains as a sort of hallmark of this class of deities, to the extent that the animal traits are the main visual component that identifies the *yoginīs* among the several other characters represented on the map. Six of the thirty-eight figures of *yoginīs* individuated by Gengnagel bear legible inscribed names, which find correspondence in the list of sixty-four *yoginīs* in *Kāśikhanda* 45.²⁸ Interestingly, at Vārāṇasī a temple related to the sixty-four *yoginīs* still exists: it is dedicated to Caumsaṭhī Mā, and is located in the area of Bangali Tola, close to the Ganges *ghāt* of the same name as the temple (Caumsaṭhī Ghāt). This shrine has a rectangular ground-plan, does not house any *yoginī* image, and is of recent construction.²⁹

²⁰ While according to Cunningham and Das (1981: 53, no. 52) she is cow-faced and according to Dehejia (1986: 128) horse-faced, in my view she is more likely boar-faced, as deemed by Banerji (1931: 89, no. 74) and Sharma (1978: 60, no. 8).

²¹ Banerji 1931: 89, no. 71; Sharma 1978: 63, no. 11; Das 1981: 53, no. 46.

²² Banerji 1931: 85, no. 41; Sharma 1978: 103, no. 41; Das 1981: 53, no. 54.

²³ The lower part of the face is mutilated. Banerji 1931: 88, no. 66; Sharma 1978: 69, no. 16; Das 1981: 54, no. 64.

²⁴ None of the scholars (neither Banerji nor Sharma nor Das nor Dehejia) mention the animal face, but to my eye she clearly has non-human lineaments, which, although mutilated, resemble a parrot-faced *yoginī* from Naresar now in the Gwalior Museum (picture in Dehejia 1986: 147). Banerji states that "the head which has been fitted on this figure does not belong to it." Banerji 1931: 86, no. 54; Sharma 1978: 86, no. 28; Das 1981: 55, no. 76.

²⁵ Instead, according to Banerji (1931: 90, no. 75) and Sharma (1978: 59, no. 7), she could be lion-headed.

²⁶ Banerji 1931: 90, no. 80; Sharma 1978: 50, no. 2; Das 1981: 55, no. 71.

²⁷ New Delhi, National Museum, Cat. No. 63.935; 234 x 330 cm.

²⁸ See Gengnagel 2011: 110-112.

²⁹ See Keul 2012: 386-391.

However, a recently surfaced *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* suggests that the medieval religious landscape of Vārāṇasī might have included a circular hypethral temple dedicated to the *yoginīs*.³⁰ Whether the extant shrine was built on the remains of the circular one is a hypothesis worth investigating.

The animal-faced *yoginī* images, as fascinating as enigmatic, would have remained mute sphinxes if texts were not indirectly giving voice, or at least some animation, to these silent, motionless descendants in stone (and in cloth), offering precious clues about their meanings.

3.2 TEXTUAL SOURCES

Tantric Śaiva texts teaching the cult of *yoginīs* circulated before and at the same time as the temples. However, exactly how texts and art records interacted in early-medieval India is a question which poses remarkable challenge to scholars. In the tantric terrain intersections are difficult to trace for two main reasons. The construction of temples, the iconometry and iconography, and, mainly, the rites of installation (*pratiṣṭhā*) are the concern of a specialised scriptural genre called *Pratiṣṭhātantras*, texts which are only partially edited and, in general, until now little-studied.³¹ The second, and most determining reason is that tantras consider themselves as divine, timeless revelations. The origins, and place and date of production of tantric scriptures were purposefully omitted by the authors, and thus these coordinates usually represent intricate enigmas for the scholars; a few clues come from colophons in manuscripts, but, as is known, dates and regional distributions of Indian manuscripts are largely elusive.³² Furthermore, tantric scriptures, just as most religious texts in India, are prescriptive in nature, teaching what to do and what to think,³³ which, in the earliest sources on *yoginīs*, consists largely of individual esoteric rituals, unrelated to temples. The later literature of the Kaula corpus offers detailed visual descriptions of *yoginīs*, but in regards to meditation, again in the context of private worship.

As a matter of fact, we have relatively little data not only about the construction of the *yoginī* temples and the consecration of their images, but also about the details of temple rituals and the actual meaning of the iconographies. Significantly, a text which refers to a specific *yoginī* temple represents an exception, and it is neither a tantra nor does it concern an extant temple. It is the already men-

³⁰ See Bisschop 2013 and 2016, and see *infra* 3.2.

³¹ Elizabeth Mills, in her unpublished PhD thesis (2011), has edited chapters on *prāsādalakṣaṇa*, “the characteristics of the temples”, from six different Śaiva *Pratiṣṭhātantras*. This group of texts presents the earliest account of building practice in Śaiva literature. In particular, the *Devyāmata* illustrates the circular temple structure in 88. 2-3 (see Mills 2011, and also Mills 2014). This specialised literature is generally related to the Śaivasiddhānta stream of Śaivism, insofar as Siddhāntatantras are concerned with the worship in public temples (see Sanderson 2014: 26-27).

³² See, for instance, the problems concerning the dating and the geographical location of *Brahmayāmala* in Hatley 2007: 211-236.

³³ See Sanderson 2014: 91.

tioned *Vārānasīmāhātmya*, which has recently surfaced thanks to Peter Bisschop. Attributed in the colophons to the *Bhairavaprādurbhāva* of the *Matsyapurāṇa*, the *māhātmya* narrates eight divine missions to Kāśī, and its eighth chapter refers to what appears to be a hypethral and circular *yoginī* temple, which should have been part of the Vārānasī sacred geography in the eleventh or twelfth century.³⁴

Diachronically, it is possible to recognise a continuity from the early, strictly esoteric textual tradition to the temple cults, which “mark the entry of these goddesses [the *yoginīs*] into a wider, more ‘public’ religious domain.”³⁵ I find it significant to investigate the earliest period, in the belief that if an assessment of the meaning of the *yoginī* therianthropism is at all possible, the earliest sources should be taken into consideration first.

As previously mentioned, the earliest attested texts on Śaiva *yoginīs* predate the temples by at least two centuries. It is in the “Wisdom-mantra corpus” (*Vidyāpīṭha*), a division of the Bhairavatantras, that the *yoginī* cults rise into prominence. The term *vidyā* designates here female mantras conceived as goddesses, and, indeed, the tantras of the *Vidyāpīṭha* are characterised by a predominantly female pantheon. This literature – some texts of which may have circulated in the seventh century – appear to survive in four principal exemplars, namely the *Brahmayāmala*, *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, *Tantrasadbhāva* and *Jayadrathayāmala*.³⁶

In the religious world of the Bhairavatantras the cult of *yoginīs* is integrated within systems centered on different main deities. While *yoginīs* do not figure as the primary cultic focus, ritual practices related to them represent nonetheless a constant presence. The ritual of these early texts mainly consists of antinomian individual practices to be performed in isolated places; usually, there is no mention of temple structures. However, sections on iconometry and iconography are not absent: the extensive *Brahmayāmala* [BraYā] chapter 4 describes the cult deities images, providing instructions on measurements and installation.³⁷ Images are also the subject of the much shorter BraYā chapter 6, where the goddesses are probably meant to be visualised, and, interestingly, they are characterised by therianthropism. This chapter is partially translated below.

³⁴ Since the existence of a *Bhairavaprādurbhāva* of the *Matsyapurāṇa* is not attested, according to Bisschop (2016: 114), for a number of reasons, it is probable that the text was originally ascribed to the *Vāmanapurāṇa*. The eighth chapter of this *Vārānasīmāhātmya* is among the textual sources examined by Hatley (2014) to glean glimpses of the rituals performed in the *yoginī* temples, the others sources being the *Yasastilaka* and *Devīpurāṇa* 50.

³⁵ Hatley 2014: 196.

³⁶ Even if there is a large amount of work in progress, none of these four texts has yet been converted into a complete critical edition. The majority of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* has been edited by Törzsök (1999), while several chapters of the *Brahmayāmala* have been edited by Hatley (2007); both works are at present unpublished doctoral theses, but they are likely to appear as print editions in the near future. Kiss (2015) has recently published an edition and translation of three *Brahmayāmala* chapters.

³⁷ See Hatley 2007: 124-126. For a summary of the chapter see Kiss 2015: 318-321.

Most likely, in this earliest period sculpted icons were installed in *maṇḍalas* depicted outside on special ritual occasions;³⁸ in particular, images of *yoginīs* were probably arranged in circles based on *cakras*. The next steps that led to the building of the temples can be plausibly supposed: the *cakras* developed into shrines made from perishable materials, and, at a later stage, thanks to elite patronage, these were translated into circular stone structures.³⁹

From the tenth century onward the *yoginīs* were largely conceived as a group of sixty-four deities. As alluded to previously, most of the extant *yoginī* temples enshrine sixty-four sculptures; similarly, tantric and purāṇic accounts after the tenth century associate *yoginīs* with the number eight squared, as we shall see. However, this configuration is later and secondary: the earliest textual sources do not feature sixty-four *yoginīs*.⁴⁰ The BraYā, dated from circa the seventh-eighth century, is pervaded by groups of six *yoginīs*, and multiple groups of six constitute the largest formation, which consists of twenty-four *yoginīs*.

3.2A THERIANTHROPIC YOGINĪS IN BRAHMAYĀMALA, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BRAYĀ 6

The six *yoginīs* of the central BraYā pantheon are defined by interestingly expressive names: Kroṣṭukī (“Jackal Woman”), Vijayā (“Victoria”), Gajakarṇā (“Elephant-ears”), Mahāmukhī (“Big-mouth”), Cakravegā (“Wheel-speed”), and Mahānāsā (“Big-snout”). Three kinds of figures are suggested: Kroṣṭukī and Gajakarṇā clearly indicate animal appearances, Vijayā and Cakravegā evoke martial and auspicious features, while Mahāmukhī and Mahānāsā suggest physical disproportion.⁴¹ Whereas the extant statuary reflects the theriomorphic and warrior traits, no sculpture of *yoginī* is, to my knowledge, characterised by exaggerated body parts. Such a grotesque note might have been inherited from the *gaṇa* precursors.

Among the groups of six in BraYā another evocative name is Kharānānā, “Donkey-faced” (3.82d), a *yoginī* who belongs to the Virajā *śmaśāna*.

The third chapter of BraYā offers a list of twenty-four *yoginī* names, seven of which clearly reveal theriomorphic features:

The Mantrin should worship the twenty-four *yoginīs* around [all these] in due order, in threes, as prescribed. They are the causes of all powers (*siddhi*):

- [1] Suprabhā, [2] Devamātā, [3] Viśālā
- [4] Yogavāhinī, [5] Hayavegā, [6] Suvegā,

³⁸ See Kiss 2015: 27-30 on *devāgāra* (‘house of the deity’) in BraYā, which is to be interpreted not as a temple, but as a *maṇḍala*.

³⁹ See Dehejia 1986: 2, 85, 186; Hatley 2014: 204, 207, 216-217.

⁴⁰ The association of the *yoginīs* with the number sixty-four became so pervasive that some texts were even rewritten in order to include it (see Serbaeva 2006: 115). In the secondary literature it is often considered as a sort of distinctive trait or hallmark of the *yoginī* cult (see, for instance, the recent monograph by Roy 2015). On the formation of sixty-four *yoginīs* see Serbaeva 2006: 113-115.

⁴¹ See Hatley 2014: 207.

- [7] Manmathī, [8] Vāyavī, [9] Vānarī,
 [10] Kroṣṭukī, [11] Mṛgāṅkā, [12] Śāsinī,
 [13] Śivā, [14] Siṃhānanā, [15] Vyāghrī,
 [16] Hariṇī, [17] Kekarā, [18] Mārjārī,
 [19] Ghaṇṭā, [20] Jāmbavī, [21] Vegavāhinī,
 [22] Gaurī, [23] Rambhā, [24] Śacī.

He should venerate the *yoginīs*.⁴²

According to the names, there are *yoginīs* with the appearances of a horse (Hayavegā), a monkey (Vānarī), a jackal (Kroṣṭukī), a lion (Siṃhānanā), a tiger (Vyāghrī), an antelope (Hariṇī), and a cat (Mārjārī).

The BraYā explicitly prescribes visualising goddesses with animal faces in the eighth chapter, which deals with magical rituals (*śaṭkarman*⁴³). The *devīs* should be visualised with the faces of lions (16 ab *jvālārūpāḥ sthitā devyaḥ siṃhavaktrā vicintayet*), of jackals (22cd-23ab *ākrāntaṃ śaktibhiḥ dhyāyec chaktinā hr̥dī bheditaṃ | mryate nātra sandeho gr̥hitaṃ kroṣṭhukānanaiḥ*⁴⁴), and of camels (26 ab *hr̥tpadme samsthitā devya uṣṭrarūpaṃ vicintayet*). The terms *devī* and *śakti* are clearly used here as interchangeable, and denote female figures of the *yoginī* typology; indeed, these terms are attested in other contexts as synonyms of *yoginī*.⁴⁵

In the few excerpts of BraYā quoted above, *kroṣṭhukānanaiḥ* is a masculine used as a feminine: this is an Aiśa peculiarity.

Aiśa⁴⁶ or Ārṣa⁴⁷ is the name given to the special register of Sanskrit which characterises the majority of early tantras. This language displays numerous deviations from the Pāṇinian grammar rules – anomalies that, at first glance, an (unaware) Sanskritist would label as mistakes. However, Aiśa is not merely ‘erroneous Sanskrit’: it is possible to identify a series of recurrent features which denote a linguistic variety “with its own rules, whose basis is Sanskrit, but which shows influence from Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa”;⁴⁸ in other words there is method in the grammatical incorrectness.⁴⁹ In several cases, this non-standard language appears to

⁴² BraYā 3.57cd-3.61ab, translation Kiss 2015: 186.

⁴³ In the tantric domain, the *śaṭkarman* are six standard actions of magical prowess of an adept (see Goudriaan 1978: 251-412). For these acts as *rājasa* and *tāmasa siddhis* in the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* see Törzsök 2000: 138-139. The electronic transcription of BraYā 8 is courtesy of Shaman Hatley.

⁴⁴ The masculine °*ānanaiḥ* clearly stands for the feminine, see *infra*.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hatley 2007: 9, and Törzsök 2014: 347.

⁴⁶ “[The language] of the Lord (Īśa, i.e. Śiva)”; this is how Kṣemarāja calls the language in his commentary on the *Svacchandatantra*.

⁴⁷ “[The language] of the sages (*ṛṣi*).”

⁴⁸ Törzsök 1999: xxv.

⁴⁹ For the detailed description of the Aiśa language I refer to the three main contributions on the subject: the *Kubjikāmatatantra* critical edition by Goudriaan-Schoterman 1988 provides in the introduction (44-109) a list of the non-standard forms of the text; Törzsök 1999 (xxiv-ixx) compiles a grammar of the Aiśa language, analysing the irregular forms of the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* from the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical points of view, and establishing parallels with epic Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. The third, most recent study is Kiss 2015: 74-86,

be related to the esoteric nature of the tantra: some Śaiva texts which belong not to the earliest stratum, but to the most esoteric core of tantric literature are also characterised by Aīśa forms, such as the *Kaulajñānanirnaya* quoted *infra*.⁵⁰ Certainly, one of the main problems is determining whether an irregular form is original Aīśa or the consequence of a scribal error. In the present contribution, the footnotes to the texts discuss linguistic issues as they arise.

Similarly to chapter 8, but in a more systematic way, chapter 6 of BraYā also prescribes visualising deities with animal appearances. This *pātala* provides instructions on representing images of goddesses related to nine household items, in which the deities dwell or on which they should be visualised. This nine-fold domestic pantheon worship, named *grhayāga* or *navayāga*, is one of the important *yāgas* in the BraYā, and it also features in the *Jayadrathayāmala* [JY].

With a few differences in names and order, the nine objects correspond in all the lists (BraYā 3.1ff., 6.1ff., 13.1ff., 30.193ff. and 62.31ff.; JY 1.48.4ff.).⁵¹ Even if BraYā chapter 6 does not use the term *navayāga*, nor specifies the identities of the *devatās*, these elements can be easily inferred from the parallel passages, where the *navayāga* goddesses consist of Bhairavī, the four *guhyaśās*, and the four *dutīs*. These nine feminine figures belong to the core pantheon of the BraYā. Bhairavī, also known as Caṇḍa Kāpālīnī, and her consort Bhairava, designated also Kapālīśa, represent the two main deities in the scripture. Several groups of goddesses surround them: the four *guhyaśās* or *devīs*; the four *dutīs* (“consorts”), also called *kiṅkarīs* (“attendants”); the six *yoginīs*; and the eight Mothers (*matṛs*), “in descending order of status. [...] While possessing distinct identities and degrees of cultic importance, these goddesses belong to a common typology [...] – that of the *yoginī* or *yogeśvarī*.”⁵²

The majority of the BraYā chapter under investigation presents close parallels in a *pātala* of the **Brahmayāmalasāra* [BraYāsāra] – the short recension of the BraYā (3500 verses), whose readings, in many cases, seem to be independent of the old BraYā manuscript.⁵³ At the outset, the BraYāsāra chapter refers to the *devīs* it is going to describe as *siddhipradāyakāḥ* (12.1b), “*siddhi* granting goddesses.”

modelled on the BraYā. Kiss’s editorial policy has been to “apply the fewest emendations possible, while at the same time to note every non-Pāṇinian phenomenon in the footnotes [...]. When I correct something, I do not aim at correcting it to the Pāṇinian form. Rather, I try to come up with the most probable ‘original’ form” (Kiss 2015: 74). The mapping of the rules of the Aīśa language is still a work in progress among scholars; Sanderson has been compiling a grammar of the Aīśa language, which is unpublished for the time being.

⁵⁰ See Törzsök 1999: ii. The grammatical incorrectness is taken to the extreme in the *Catuspīṭha*, one of the earliest Buddhist Yogītantras, where the irregularities are so pervasive to be statistically improbable, suggesting an intentional, conscious effort (see Szanto 2012: 13-14).

⁵¹ However, in BraYā 6 the *mauśalī* (pestle) does not figure, *dehālī* (threshold) being repeated instead; see the text below. See Kiss 2015: 16-18 and TAK III s.v. *navayāga*, entry by Kiss and Törzsök.

⁵² Hatley 2007: 9.

⁵³ Note that the title *Brahmayāmalasāra* does not occur in the text itself (Hatley, personal communication, March 2016). Needless to say, the BraYāsāra is a potential source of good variant readings. To detail the parallel: BraYāsāra 12. 1-16 follows rather closely BraYā 6. 1-17ab.

This kind of designation frequently occurs for the *yoginīs* as well, since conferring extraordinary powers is one of the distinctive characteristics of this class of deities.⁵⁴

Therefore, even if the feminine figures illustrated in the chapter(s) do not fit into the stricter definition of *yoginīs*, I found it significant to examine this passage, for the paramount presence of the theriomorphic element.⁵⁵

ataḥ param pravakṣyāmi devatāpratimāni tu |
kharāṅgāvasthitā devyā nagnarūpāḥ kharānanāḥ || 6.1 ||
śūrpapicchakahastās tu kartavyā vardhamānake |
śvānāṅgāvasthitā devyo dhvāṅkṣarūpā mahābhujāḥ || 6.2 ||
muktakeśāsī ca nagnāsī ca pharahastāḥ sadā sthitāḥ |
adhodṛṣṭis tu kartavyā yāge sehārikātmake || 6.3 ||
uṣṭrāṅgāvasthitā devyā uṣṭravaktrāḥ subhīsanāḥ |
daṇḍahastās tu kartavyāḥ paṭāntodhṛtadehajāḥ || 6.4 ||
prasāritakarā nityaṃ kartavyā dehalītale |
śmasānamṛdayā devyo bhīmarūpāḥ bhayotkaṭāḥ || 6.5 ||
pretārūdhās tu kartavyā musalahastā mahābalāḥ |
tuṣadhūpakanībhis ca kartavyā dūkhale sadā || 6.6 ||
kūrmaprṣṭhasthitā devyāḥ picuvaktrā mahābalāḥ |
padmahastās tu kartavyā udakumbhe prayatnataḥ || 6.7 ||
śṛgālāṅgāvasthitā devyāḥ kartavyā utkaṭāsānāḥ |
pīṣamānās tu kartavyā loḍhahastās tu samsthitāḥ || 6.8 ||
udvartane sthitā devyā ūrdhvakeśāḥ mahābalāḥ |
āpibantās tu kartavyā kañjinyāṃ talasamsthitāḥ || 6.9 ||
kapāle samsthitā devyā ūrdhvarūpā bhayānakāḥ |
vyāvṛtena tu vaktreṇa bhīmarūpā mahābalāḥ || 6.10 ||
khānapānaratā nityaṃ kartavyāñjalihastikāḥ |
culliyāge prasidhyanti bhairavasya vaco yathā || 6.11 ||
hayāṅgāvasthitā devyo hayarūpās tu kārayet |

⁵⁴ For instance, in BraYā LXXIII 47cd the same locution refers to a *yoginī*: *brahmāṅkulajā devī svāmīsiddhipradāyikā* “[She is] a *yoginī* of the clan of Brahmāṅgī, O Goddess, who bestows *siddhis* upon those [*sādhakas*] of her own [Mother-goddess] *amśā*.” (See Hatley 2007: 33, n.12). Also, *devyāḥ siddhipradāyakāḥ* in BraYāsāra 1b is an example of completely different readings between BraYā and BraYāsāra: the former presents *devatāpratimāni tu* in 1b.

⁵⁵ I have provided a very basic critical apparatus to the Sanskrit text of BraYā 6.1-14, which I have analysed and translated relying on Hatley’s electronic transcription. I have intervened only when apparent scribal errors were involved, and I have silently normalised the cases of word-final *anusvāra*/bilabial nasal and of gemination/degemination, as required by standard orthography. In the Sanskrit text *loci suspecti* are identified by non-italics, while doubtful translations are framed by interrogative points. Hatley’s transcription reflects the old Nepalese MS (NAK 3-370, see final references). The other four principal surviving manuscripts of the BraYā appear to descend from this one, and are therefore of relative value (see Hatley 2007: 289, and Kiss 2015: 58). Thus, a collation of the other manuscripts and a paleographical study of the problematic points of the chapter can probably improve the text, but such a manuscript tradition clearly indicates the value of the transcription of the oldest manuscript. Hatley’s electronic transcription of BraYā 6 is reported as B in the critical apparatus, while his transcription of BraYāsāra 12 is reported as S. Due to the interpretative problems illustrated *infra*, the present translation is in no way meant to be definitive.

prasannavadanāḥ saumyā gandhadhūpapriyāḥ sadā || 6.12 ||
vastrāṅkārāgandhaiś ca pūjitavyāḥ prayatnataḥ |
kartavyā pīṭhikāgre tu nilotpālakarās tathā || 6.13 ||
prasidhyanti na saṃdeho dehalītalasaṃsthitāḥ |
yatra tatra sthitā devyas tadamaśāḥ karmasādhikāḥ || 6.14 ||

1c kharāṅgā°] *corr.*; kharāṅgā° B 1d kharānanāḥ] *corr.*; kṣarānanāḥ B 2a sūrpapicchaka°] *corr.* Hatley; sūrpapimcchaka° B 2b vardhamānake] *em.* Hatley; varttamānake B; vardhamānake S 2c śvānā°] *corr.* Hatley; svānā B 2d dhvāṅkṣa°] *conj.*; dhvaṅkṣa B mahābhujāḥ] *corr.*; mahābhujāḥ B 3d yāge] *em.* Hatley; yāga° B 5c śmasāna°] *corr.*; śmasāna° B 5d °rūpāḥ] *em.*; °rūpaḥ B bhayotkaṭāḥ] *em.*; bhayotkaṭāḥ B 7a °pṛṣṭha°] *em.*; pṛṣṭha B; pṛṣṭhe S 8d loḍha°] B; loṣṭha S 9a udvartane] B; udvarttana S 9b ūrdhvakeśāḥ] *corr.*; ūrdhakeśāḥ B 9c āpibantās] *conj.* Hatley; āpibandhas B; āpīvantī S 9d kañjinyāḥ] *corr.*; kañjinyā B 10b ūrdhva°] *corr.*; ūrdhva B 11d yathā] *em.* Hatley; yathā B 12a °āvasthitā] *em.*; °āvasthito B; āvasthitā S 13c pīṭhikāgre] B; pīṭhikā śobhā S 14d °amaśāḥ] *corr.*; amaśā B

1-2ab Next, I shall explain the images of the deities. In the platter ritual (*vardhamāna*) the goddesses⁵⁶ should be represented naked, on donkeys, with donkey faces⁵⁷ and with a winnowing basket and a peacock tail-feather in their hands.

2cd-3 In the ritual related to the broom (*sehārikā*) the goddesses should always be represented naked, on dogs, with (ḥ) a crow like (?) appearance,⁵⁸ long arms, loose hair, with a shield in their hands, looking downward.

4-5ab In the threshold-ground ritual (*dehalī*) the goddesses should always be represented as terrifying, on camels, with camel faces, with a club in their hands, (ḥ) arising from the body, extracted by the end of a cloth⁵⁹ (?), with outstretched hands.

5cd-6 In the mortar ritual (*dūkhala*), using cremation ground clay and a small quantity of incense and the chaff of grain, the goddesses should always be represented as powerful, with

⁵⁶ The form *devyā* (i.e. *devyāḥ* pre-sandhi) can be accepted since in the Aīśa language a very common phenomenon is the extension of –ī stems to –ā stems. This means that a word in –ī can have two nominative plurals: the regular *devyāḥ* and the extended *devyāḥ*. In this chapter there is an alternation of the two forms (regular *devyāḥ* in 2c, 5c, 10a, 12a, 14c, 20a, 21a, 22c; extended *devyāḥ* in 1a, 4a, 7a, 8a, 9a, 20c). A third possible Aīśa form of the nominative plural is the accusative in –īḥ, which does not occur in this chapter, but finds attestation for example in the nominative plural *yoginīḥ* in BraYā LV 100b, and in SYM 22.5a, 22.20c. This latter form is due to a general tendency of the Aīśa morphology towards having only two cases, a nominative/accusative or direct and oblique case – an erosion process that will clearly emerge in Apabhraṃśa. Cf. Törzsök 1999: xxxviii.

⁵⁷ As mentioned *supra*, Kharānanā is a name of a *yoginī* belonging to Virajā śmasāna in BraYā 3.82d.

⁵⁸ The conjecture *dhvāṅkṣa* is tentative: it would be the only case in the chapter where the animals on which the goddesses are placed and their own animal faces differ. The reading *dhvāṅkṣā*, a kind of plant, does not seem suitable for the context. Another, theoretical, possibility is that the corruption conceals an adjective (which maybe qualifies the *akṣa* of the goddesses), similarly to other compounds in the chapter having *rūpa* as second member, namely *nagnarūpāḥ* in 1d, *bhīmarūpāḥ* in 5d, *ūrdhvarūpāḥ* in 10b. However, *hayarūpāḥ* in 12b does present an animal name as first member of the compound. Unfortunately the parallel locus of the BraYāsāra (12.2d) displays a lacuna before *rūpa*.

⁵⁹ It is difficult to understand the intended meaning of the compound *paṭāntodhrtadehajāḥ*: as transmitted, it seems unintelligible. If we emend in *paṭānta°*, another optional, but equally enigmatic, translation could be “arising from the body, wearing the end of a cloth.” Either way, the actual sense still remains obscure, and so I have preferred not to introduce any changes.

a terrifying and frightful aspect, mounted on *pretas*, with a pestle in their hands.⁶⁰

7 In the ritual of the water-jar (*udakumbha*), the goddesses should be accurately represented as powerful, on tortoise-shells, with *picu*⁶¹ in their mouths, with a lotus in their hands.

8 In the ritual of the grind-stone (*pīṣaṇī*⁶²) the goddesses should be represented on jackals, in squatting posture (*utkaṭāsana*⁶³), with a pestle⁶⁴ in their hands.

9 In the ritual of the mixing bowl (*kañjini*), the goddesses should be represented as powerful, (i) in the act of grinding and drinking (?)⁶⁵, with their hair sticking up.

10-11 In the ritual of the fireplace (*culli*), it is well known, the goddesses should always be represented as powerful and dreadful, in a standing position upon skulls, with covered faces and a frightful appearance, always fond of eating and drinking, with their hands in *añjali*,⁶⁶ according to the words of Bhairava.

12 The goddesses who are on horses should be represented with a horse like appearance, as gentle, with gracious faces, always fond of perfumes and incenses.

13-14ab They should be accurately honoured with garments, ornaments and perfumes.

⁶⁰ Note that 6b is hypermetrical, and has three initial *laghu* syllables.

⁶¹ In BraYā, *picu* appears to be a liquid employed in ritual, most likely a bodily fluid. According to Hatley, it consists of blood or sexual fluids, probably both male and female sexual fluids combined; it could also refer to the “five nectars” (*pañcāmṛta*) mixture. It is noteworthy that this scripture is also known as *Picumata* “The Doctrine of Picu”: alongside “*Brahmayāmala*”, “*Picumata*” is the foremost among the titles and epithets occurring in the colophons and within the texts. (See TAK III s.v. *picu*, entry by Hatley, and Hatley 2007: 243-251). *Picuvaktrā* is the name of a *yoginī* in *Tantrasadbhāva* 13.83d, SSS 15.146a, *Mayadīpikā* cited by Hemādri 44a, *Pratiṣṭhālakṣaṇasārasamuccaya* 6.380a, and *Agnipurāṇa* 146.19ab. (See TAK III s.v. *picuvaktra*, entry by Hatley; Hatley 2007: 244; and Serbaeva 2006: App. 7.6, 59). *Picuvaktra* in Jayaratha’s commentary on *Tantrāloka*, and in Kaula scriptural sources, is a synonym of *pātālavaktra* and *adhovaktra* as well as *yoginīvaktra*, indicating a hidden, lower face of the supreme deity, source of the Kaula revelation. This sense is apparently not attested in BraYā. (See TAK III s.v. *picuvaktra*.)

⁶² Where we would rather expect a locative such as *pīṣanyām* (from *pīṣaṇī*) appears this odd form *pīṣamānās*, which, anyway, certainly points toward the grind-stone ritual.

⁶³ *Utkāṭāsanaḥ* here might be one of the earliest Sanskrit examples of the compound; it figures in various haṭhayoga texts from the 14th century onwards (e.g. *Amarauḥasāsana* 8.2, *Haṭhapradīpikā* 2.27, *Gheraṇḍasāmbhitā* 2.27). While *utkaṭāsana* is thus attested from a relatively late date, *utkaṭika* and vernacular derivations appear earlier to define a squatting posture in texts such as the Pāli Canon and the circa 4th-century CE Jaina *Sthānāṅgasūtra*. I am grateful to James Mallinson for these observations (personal communication, March 2016). Another option would have been to emend the compound in *utkaṭānanāḥ*, but there is no valid reason to intervene in this case.

⁶⁴ Turner’s *Comparative Dictionary* (11134) under the head-word *lōṭha* mentions *lōḍha* as a Prakrit term meaning “rolling pin”, and similar forms indicating a stone roller for grinding, hence my translation as “pestle.” The BraYāsāra variant *loṣṭha* does not find attestation in Turner, but it is clearly similar to *lōṭha* attested in Vopadeva.

⁶⁵ Both the readings *udvartane* and *āpibantās* are problematic: it is less than certain that two actions – grinding and drinking – are what is intended here. In place of the former we would rather expect an *ubi consistam*, since the verb *sthā* follows. The BraYāsāra reads *udvartena*: does it maybe refer to what overflows (*udvrt*) from the mixing bowl? It is not entirely clear. The Hatley’s conjecture *āpibantās* is ‘diagnostic’ or tentative. At present, the images of these *kañjini* goddesses remain sketchy for us.

⁶⁶ *kartavyāñjalihastikāḥ* is a case of double sandhi to avoid hypermetrism and hiatus, viz. *kartavyāḥ añjali°* → *kartavyā añjali°* → *kartavyāñjali°*. This is a phenomenon occurring in epic Sanskrit as well. Cf. Törzsök 1999: xxxii, and Kiss 2015: 84.

In the ritual of the threshold ground (*dehalī*)⁶⁷ they should be represented on the top of a pedestal,⁶⁸ with a blue water-lily in their hands; it is well known, there is no doubt.

14cd Wherever the goddesses are present, the female performers of the rituals are partial manifestations of them.⁶⁹

For the reader, the main problem of the chapter immediately arises. How to interpret – and therefore how to duly translate – the compound animal name-*aṅgāvasthita* (namely *kharāṅgāvasthitā* 1c, *śvānāṅgāvasthitā* 2c, *uṣṭrāṅgāvasthitā* 3c, *śṛgālāṅgāvasthitā* 8a, *hayāṅgāvasthitāḥ* 12a)? Should the goddesses be represented *in* animal bodies or *on* animals? On the one hand, at first glance *aṅga* is a clear and strong indication of a physical body, therefore it seems to point towards goddesses in animal bodies, but, on the other hand, the text states that the goddesses are naked (*nagnarūpa-*), a description which is fitting for a human body, not for an animal one. Furthermore, they hold emblems in their hands, which makes us presume upper human limbs. Another clue could perhaps be inferred on the basis of the quite consistent structure of the verses. The locution animal name-*aṅga* is invariably posited at the beginning of the verse, before the verb *sthā*, but in two cases it is replaced with an object on which the goddesses are clearly placed: *kūrmaprṣṭhasthitā* 7a “placed upon tortoise shells”, and *kapāle samsthitā* 10a “placed upon a skull.” A comparison between BraYā 6 and other passages presenting the theriomorphic ingredient also causes the reader to lean towards the hypothesis of goddesses *on* animals, not *in* animal bodies: BraYā 8, quoted above, and *Siddhayaogēśvarīmata* 13 and 25, reported below, seem to indicate that in these earliest texts the *yoginīs* appear with animal faces, not in purely theriomorphic form.

Another possibility could be to interpret *aṅga* as referring to the torso, thus the goddesses would have animal torsos and human limbs, and most of them also have animal faces. It is difficult to establish whether “naked” could be an appropriate description for such a hybrid, and, as far as I am aware, there are no comparable Indian figures attested in texts or images.

An intriguing, but maybe incautious, third hypothesis, would entirely fit with the literal description. It is possible to imagine these goddesses with the lower part of the body in animal form, the upper torso as human and, for most of them, the face of the same animal (a sort of female centaur with an equine face as well). This interpretation is compatible with the *aṅga* issue, the naked description and

⁶⁷ Here the *dehalī* (threshold) ritual is apparently repeated, while in the other *navayāga* lists the *mauṣalī* (pestle) completes the set of nine household items.

⁶⁸ As suggested by Hatley (notes to the electronic transcription), it is also possible to interpret *pīṭhikāgre* as “in front of the *liṅga* base.”

⁶⁹ The intended purport of *aṁśa*, and of the entire verse, is ambiguous. As translated, this verse would be the only explicit reference in the chapter to the performers of these rituals, connoting them as female, but this is not beyond doubt. It is also possible to interpret °*sādhikāḥ* as referring to the goddesses, meaning “wherever the goddesses are present, they accomplish ritual aims connected to their (divine) counterparts.” The brief chapter (twenty-two verses in total) continues with a list of goddesses’ attributes in *ṣaṭkarman* rituals, for which see the references in note 44.

the holding of emblems in their hands. Composite beings whose lower half is animal and upper half is human frequently feature in Indian sources.⁷⁰ To embrace this hypothesis would imply differentiating between goddesses with animal bodies from goddesses explicitly placed upon objects (namely upon *pretas* in 5cd-6, upon tortoise-shells in 7, upon skulls in 10-11); remarkably, in the latter cases the deities do not have animal faces. In short, there would be hybrid goddesses with animal lower bodies, and anthropomorphic goddesses placed on *vāhanas*.⁷¹

It is quite clear that the goddesses are meant to be visualised, that is to say the *pratimālakṣaṇas* of the goddesses are described with the aim of visualisation. BraYā 6 pervasively uses verb forms from \sqrt{kr} , but in one case BraYāsāra 12 presents the verb *vicintayet* “should be imagined” (repeated in 10b and 10d), suggesting an equivalence in meaning between the latter and the forms from \sqrt{kr} . Only in one *śloka* it seems that the deities should be physically represented, that is sculpted from the clay of the cremation ground (*śmasānamṛdayā devyo* 5c). This leads to another inevitable question.

What is the correlation, if any, between the therianthropomorphic image and the ritual or the household item? In other words, what is the significance of the animal component in this context? In BraYā 30, the nine household items are connected with nine impure *carus* (62.31c-33): the platter with the human *caru*, the threshold with the camel, the mortar with the cat, the water-jar with the jackal, the fire-place with the dog, the grind-stone with the donkey, the mixing bowl with the crow, the pestle with the horse, the broom with the elephant *caru*.⁷² As it is apparent, the associations between the kind of ritual and the species of animal are different from BraYā

⁷⁰ To mention but a few: *kiṃnaras* in Buddhist tradition are depicted with human heads and torsos, but with bird wings and, from waist down, bird form; they occur frequently in early Buddhist art (figuring at Sāñcī, Nāgārjunakoṇḍā, Bhārhut, Amarāvati, Mathurā, and Ajañṭā), and in Jātaka narrative (featuring in Jātakas no. 481, 485, 504, and 540), appearing invariably with oritomorph features. In the Hindu context, instead, they are usually conceived as half-human and half-equine. The *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* at III 42, 13-14 describes them in these terms: “The *Kiṃnaras* are said to be of two types – one with human heads and equine bodies and the other type is said to have human bodies and equine faces” (translation Mukherji 2001: 189). Interestingly, the former type is defined as *hayavighraha*, “having an equine body”: *vighraha* is a synonym of *aṅga* and is clearly used here to indicate only the lower part of the body, as would be the case for *aṅga* in BraYā 6 if we accepted the third hypothesis. Incidentally, the bird-form of the *kiṃnaras* was not unknown to the Hindu artists (see Pancamukhi 1951: 44-45; see also Krishna Murty 1985: 35-36). *Gandharvas* are represented not only with the hindquarters of a horse or a donkey but, often, also with the face of a bird (see Pancamukhi 1951). The well-known ophidian nature of *nāgas* is usually expressed in figures whose lower half is snake-like and upper half is human, with three, five or more cobra-hoods extending over the head (see Vogel 1926).

⁷¹ The interpretative conundrum of this passage will maybe be solved by the identification of parallels and by the insights of other readers. At present, the most plausible interpretation seems the one I have followed in the translation: that is to say goddesses with animal *vāhanas*, and, in three cases out of five, correspondent animal faces. It might also be possible that the ambiguity of this passage is due to imperfect adaptations of different compositional strata of the text; on the BraYā as a heterogeneous, layered text, which incorporated new material over time, see Hatley 2007: 206-211.

⁷² See TAK III s.v. *navayāga*, entry by Kiss and Törzsök.

6, therefore this passage cannot be regarded as an explanation for the correlation, but rather it complicates the picture. While no compelling interpretation emerges for the specific connection between the animal and the ritual, as discussed in the conclusive section, the animal features of the *yoginīs* appear to be related, among other aspects, with the obtainment of the superhuman abilities by the practitioner. This might be the case, since BraYā 85.107ff explicitly prescribes the use of some of these domestic items for the obtainment of several *siddhis*.

Finally, we may observe that in this passage in three cases there is a correspondence between the animal face and the *vāhana* (with *khara* in 1cd, *uṣṭra* in 4ab and *haya* in 12ab). Also in the *Ṣaṣṣāhasrasaṃhitā* and derived accounts coeval with the temples, considered *infra*, some *yoginīs* are depicted with the head of an animal and with the same animal as *vāhana*. In the *yoginī* sculptures there is not usually such a correspondence. However, as is known, the lack of an iconographic confirmation to a textual source or vice versa is a frequent case in indological studies, and therefore it cannot be regarded as a binding proof.

3.2B THERIANTHROPIC YOGINĪS IN *SIDDHAYOGĒŚVARĪMATA*

Another Vidyāpīṭha text, the *Siddhayogēśvarīmata* [SYM], roughly from the same time as BraYā, is the foundational work of the Trika (triad) tradition. In the Trika system “the cult of *yoginīs* permeates all levels,”⁷³ and the adept ascends through circuits of *yoginīs* to the core deities, which are the three mantra-goddesses Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā.⁷⁴ A glimpse on therianthropic *yoginīs* is offered by SYM chapter 13:

The eminent Hero, concentrating with appeased mind, [should do this] until *yoginīs* gather all over around him. Seeing their various frightening forms, he should not be scared, but mentally recite the [Parāparā] mantra. Then, making a terrible and very fierce, inarticulate noise, they will fall down to the ground, surrounding the best of practitioners. Some of them have their eyes wide open, others have huge, red eyes, still others are camel- tiger- or donkey-faced. Some are naked, with their hair loosened, o Beautiful-Faced One, with celestial bodies; blessed, their eyes are rolling in intoxication. Still others have large eyes and round, projecting breasts. Their limbs are adorned with divine ornaments and they fulfill every wish.⁷⁵

⁷³ Sanderson 1988: 673.

⁷⁴ See Sanderson 1988: 672-674, and Törzsök 1999: xv-xix. The doctrines of the Trika reach their definitive formulation in the works of Abhinavagupta and his pupil Kṣemarāja.

⁷⁵ SYM 13. 13-18:

ekacittasthito virah sa mahātmā prasannabhiḥ |
tāvad yāvat samāyātā yogēśvaryaḥ samantataḥ ||13.13 ||
tāsāṃ caiva tu rūpāṇi bhīṣaṇāni bahūni ca |
dṛṣtvā naiva bhayaṃ kuryād vidyām eva –m– anusmaret || 13.14 ||
tataḥ kalakalārāvaṃ kṛtvā ghoram sudāruṇam |
bhūmau nipatya tiṣṭhanti veṣṭyantya[ḥ] sādhakottamam || 13.15 ||
k[ā]ścid utphullanayanāḥ k[ā]ścid raktāyatekṣaṇāḥ |

Animal-faced *yoginīs* feature again in chapter 25:

They have extraordinary faces such as bear, tiger, elephant, demon, horse, boar and other faces. Seeing them, one should not rejoice, nor should be angry.⁷⁶

Interestingly, the SYM has no doubts about the hybrid nature of the *yoginīs*: they are decidedly theriocephalic, just like the *yoginīs* in sculpture.

3.2C THERIANTHROPIC YOGINĪS IN KAULA TEXTS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *KAULAJÑĀNANIRNAYA* 23

The cult of the *yoginīs* would probably have remained a marginal phenomenon if it was not for the Kaula movement. Developing from within the Vidyāpīṭha and maintaining a substantial connection with it, the Kaula tradition marks important transformations. Chiefly, it shifts the focus from antinomian practices and mortuary dimension to yogic and erotic rituals aimed at ecstatic experiences. If the earliest sources on *yoginīs* belong to the Vidyāpīṭha, the majority of the extant Śaiva literature related to *yoginīs* is inscribed in various Kaula traditions.⁷⁷

The *Ṣaṭsāhasrasaṃhitā* [SSS], a Kaula text belonging to the Kubjikā-tradition, contains a detailed description of the sixty-four *yoginīs*' iconography in its unpublished fifteenth chapter (SSS 15. 100-165). Albeit the purpose appears to be meditation in the context of individual practice, the text is significantly coeval with the principal *yoginī* temples.⁷⁸ The iconography of the same set is illustrated by three pre-fourteenth-century sources identified by Bühnemann (2003: 23): the *Agnipurāna* (chapters 50, 52, and 146), the *Mayadīpikā* as cited by Hemādri in the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* (II/1 92-102), and the *Pratiṣṭhālakṣaṇasārasamuccaya* [PLSS] (6. 327-400). These iconographic sections, when compared, prove to be for the most part congruent; according to Serbaeva (2006: 32), the ultimate source is to be seen in SSS 15. Such a close correspondence between tantric and purāṇic sources is a clear example of osmosis between the two realms of tantra

uṣṭravāgbrānanāḥ k[ā]ścit k[ā]ścic caiva kharānanā[h] || 13.16 ||

vivastrā muktakesās ca k[ā]ścic cānyā varānane |

kharūpīnyo mahābhāgā madavibhrāntalocanāḥ || 13.17 ||

vistīrṇanayanāḥ k[ā]ścit pīnonnatapayodharā[h] |

divyālaṅkāradīptāṅg[āḥ] sarvakāmārthasādhikāḥ || 13.18 ||

Edition and translation by Törzsök forthcoming. I am grateful to Judit Törzsök for providing me with chapters of the forthcoming critical edition.

⁷⁶ SYM 25.74cd-75:

vikṛtair ānanais cāpi rksavyāgbrānanais tathā || 25.74 ||

gajāsya rātricāśyā āvasūkarakādibhiḥ |

dr̥ṣṭvā tān tu na hr̥ṣyeta na ca kopam samācaret || 25.75 ||

Edition by Törzsök forthcoming.

⁷⁷ See Sanderson 1988: 679-690, and Hatley 2007: 153-162.

⁷⁸ Serbaeva (2006: App. 7.6, 56-71) reports Sanderson's preliminary edition of SSS 15. The manuscripts of the SSS date from the twelfth century onwards. See Hatley 2014: 209.

and purāṇa, indicating that their boundary was permeable for concepts, texts and devotees.⁷⁹

The PLSS professes to be a compendium based on several āgamas, and, interestingly, states (6.327cd) that the description of the *yoginīs* is in accordance with the BraYā. However, as alluded to previously, the *yoginīs* do not feature in that early Vidyāpīṭha text in the form of the number sixty-four.

Although much later, a sort of bridge between the textual evidence and the visual rendering of the description is provided by the line drawings of two Nepalese manuscripts of PLSS: these illustrate the deities, mostly belonging to the Śaiva pantheon, as described in chapter 6, including the sixty-four *yoginīs*; Bühnemann 2003 reproduces the two sets of illustrations.⁸⁰

In these correspondent textual descriptions ten *yoginīs* are theriocephalic. They are (the numbers refer to the tabulation's lines and to the line drawings images in Bühnemann 2003): Viśālakṣī, pig-faced, 207; Huṃkāṛā, fish-faced, 208; Vaḍavāmukhī, horse-faced, 209; Hāhāravā, donkey-faced, 210; Mahākrūrā, buffalo-faced, 211; Hayānanā, horse-faced, 218; Pralayāntikā, monkey-faced, 233; Piśācī, crow-faced, 235; Tapanī, snake-faced, 239; Vāmanī, elephant-faced, 240. It is noteworthy that five of them are depicted with the head of an animal and with the same animal as *vāhana*:⁸¹ this circumstance seems to occur in BraYā 6 as well, but not in extant material evidence, as alluded to above. The sixty-four *yoginīs* are arranged into eight groups assigned to the cardinal directions; they were probably depicted in a *yantra* with Bhairava in the centre.⁸² It might be noted that the southern group comprises the highest number of theriocephalic *yoginīs* – five out of eleven, the remaining six being scattered in different groups.

Such portrayals of *yoginīs* might have been transversal not only between tantra and purāṇa, but also, maybe, between literary and non-literary domains: while it is not possible to establish a biunivocal correspondence between written (and drawn) representations and the extant sculptures, it is clear that they are typologically congruent, both reflecting the vision of the same period.

Contrastingly, the *yoginīs* appear as purely theriomorphic, and probably as shapeshifting, in the twenty-third chapter of the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* [KJN], a Kaula text which can be dated to the eleventh century or before.⁸³ This text defines itself as *yoginīkaula*, “Kaula scripture of the *yoginīs*”: the sixty-four *yoginīs*, arranged in circle (*cakra*) or sequence (*krama*), represent its primary cult deities.

⁷⁹ Cf. Hatley 2014: 217. For the borrowings and the relationships between these different texts see Serbaeva 2006: 28-29, 32-33, 114, and the useful tabulations at 47-61 (appendixes 7.3-7.6).

⁸⁰ The oldest manuscript of the two is dated N.S. 765, that is 1645 CE.

⁸¹ The correspondence occurs for Hāhāravā, Mahākrūrā, Pralayāntikā, Piśācī, and Tapanī.

⁸² For examples of *yantra* reconstructions see Dehejia (1986: 209, 212-213), who, however, had no access to SSS.

⁸³ The text is preserved in two Nepalese manuscripts, the oldest of which can be dated on a paleographical basis to the mid-eleventh century. According to Bagchi (1934: 26) the composition of the text also belongs to the same period.

In KJN 23 the goddesses are thus described:⁸⁴

devy uvāca ||
kaulave yoginī deva saṃcaranti katham bhuvi |
tan mamācakṣva deveśa bhaktā jānanti bhūtale || 23.1 ||
bhairava uvāca ||
martye'smin devatānām tu saṃcāram śṛṇu bhāmini |
kapotikā tathā grdhṛī haṃsī caiva nakhī tathā || 23.2 ||
khaṃjanah [...] bhāṣī tu kokābhāṣī tu sundari |
ulūki pecakī vā tu sararī vāgdulī tathā || 23.3 ||
śṛgālī ajā mahiṣī uṣṭrī mārjārarūpiṇī |
vyāghrī hastī mayūri ca kurkuṭī nakulī tathā || 23.4 ||
anyāni yāni rūpāni saṃsthitāni mahītale |
tāni rūpāni saṃgrhya yoginyah kriḍante bhuvi || 23.5 ||
nīpatanti yadā bhadre abhakteṣu kulādhipa |
tad rūpaṃ kathyate bhadre bhaktiyuktāvadhāraya || 23.6 ||
hayaś ca nakharah sarpa citriko ghonasaś tathā |
vṛściko †dhyantara† śvāno mūśako dardurah priye || 23.7 ||
grahabhūtasvarūpeṇa jvālāgnīśastrasamkātāih |
vedanā ca jvaravyādhi rājānaś caiva taskarāh || 23.8 ||
vidyuttuṅgo tathā gaṇḍa vyāghra siṃho gajas tathā |
anekākārarūpeṇa bhayaṃ nānāvidham viduh || 23.9 ||
catuḥṣaṣṭhiś ca yoginyo yathā kupyanti sādhaḥ |
evam rūpaṃ samāsṛtya kṣīpraṃ grhṇanti taṃ paśum || 23.10 ||
kopaṃ tu naiva kartavyaṃ nāpamānaṃ surādhipa |
kumārikāh striyo vāpi nāpamānet kadācana || 23.11 ||
yathā śaktyā sadākālam strī caiva vratam āsthitāih |
pūjanīyā prayatnena kumāryaś ca kulāśritāih || 23.12 ||

1 The Devī said: “O Lord of the gods, please tell me how the *yoginīs* of the Kaula tradition⁸⁵ wander the earth, and how the devotees know them in the world.”

2 Bhairava said: “O splendid one, please listen. The deities wander this world of mortals in the form of [female animals] such as a dove, a vulture, a goose, a *nakhī*.⁸⁶”

⁸⁴ I am grateful to Shaman Hatley for providing me with his KJN 23 draft edition, based on a collation of the oldest manuscript (NAK 3-362 or NGMPP reel A48-13) and the *editio princeps* of Bagchi 1934. The translations of White (2006: 189) and Mukhopadhyaya (2012: 167-171) are based on the not entirely accurate transcription of Bagchi 1934, and gloss over problematic points.

⁸⁵ In 1a the phrase *kaulave yoginī* consists of two Aiśa forms. *Yoginīh* is a plural accusative used as a plural nominative (cf. the above note 57, see Törzsök 1999: xxxviii, and Kiss 2015: 82). *Kaulave* is more problematic: it is clearly a derivative from “Kaula”, and occurs also in KJN 16.24b and 16.62f; it may be interpreted as a plural nominative in *-e*, which is, however, a form attested in BraYā only for neuters (see Kiss 2015: 81), while, according to White (2006: 18, 276 n.63), it is a “vernacularized term” from *kaulavit* “one possessed of the clan-generated gnosis.”

⁸⁶ The Sanskrit term *nakha* means claw, so this term and the similar *nakhara* in 7a presumably refer to predacious birds whose hallmark are talons of great grasping power. Significantly, the similar term *nakhāṣī* designates any member of the Strigidae family (see Dave 2005: 175). Although it

3 Moreover, o beautiful one, as a wagtail [...],⁸⁷ a cuckoo, an owl, another kind of owl,⁸⁸ a peacock-pheasant,⁸⁹ a bat,⁹⁰

4 a jackal, a goat, a buffalo, a camel, a cat, a tigress, an elephant,⁹¹ a peahen, a hen, a mon-goose.

5 The *yoginīs* play in the world assuming various forms that are possible on earth.

6 O good lady of the Kula, when they come among non-devotees that form is described [as follows]. Understand this, being full of devotion.

7 O dear, [they are] a horse, a *nakhara*,⁹² a snake, a *citrika*,⁹³ a *ghonasa* snake, a scorpion, [...], a dog, a mouse, a frog.

8 [Moreover, they manifest] in the form of *grahas* and *bhūtas*, as the torments caused by weapons, fire and flames, and as pain, as fever and disease, as royals and thieves,

9 as (¿) powerful lightning (?),⁹⁴ as a rhinoceros, a tiger, a lion, an elephant. With these multiple forms they cause different types of fear.

10 The sixty-four *yoginīs*, when angered at the adept, having assumed such a form, speedily grab the *paśu*.⁹⁵

11 O queen of the gods, one should never show anger nor contempt; in particular, one should never despise maidens and women.

12 As far as possible, they who are firm in their pledge should always honour the woman, [and] they who are following the Kula tradition should honour maidens with diligent care.

This vivid repertoire of zoonyms raises several issues. The variety of *yoginī* mani-

is not easy to identify the true referent of an ancient zoonym, concerning ornithonyms the monumental study of birds in Sanskrit literature by Dave 2005 is a reliable resource.

⁸⁷ *khañjanah* is a conjecture by Hatley, not entirely compelling because it would be the only masculine term in a list of feminine names. The manuscript reads *khañja*, and a three-syllable lacuna follows. On the basis of the analogy with the following *kokabhāṣī*, a compound like *khañjarīṭaka-bhāṣī* would be more plausible, just as suggested by Hatley 2007: 122 n. 309. Less plausibly, *bhāṣī* can be interpreted as an independent term, the feminine form of *bhāsa* (needless to say, the shifting between sibilants is a frequent scribal confusion), which designates vultures of a light colour, such as the bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) and the Lammergeyer (see Dave 2005: 188-197).

⁸⁸ "The term *ulūka* has as a rule been confined to the larger hooting owls both in the *Rgveda* and later literature", while *pecaka* refers to the dark brown plumage owls (see Dave 2005: 176).

⁸⁹ The term *sararī* gives rise to two possible identifications. It can be the feminine of *sarala* (with the well-known shifting between liquid consonants), which designates the grey peacock-pheasant (see M-W); or it can be a variation of the term *śarārī*, the Sanskrit name of the Indian skimmer (see Dave 2005: 351-353).

⁹⁰ The manuscript reads *vāgdulī*, which does not seem to indicate any known animal. I think it is possible to interpret it as *valgulī*, which means both "little bat" and "bat-like bird" (see Dave 2005: 21-22), or as *vātulī*, which is similarly a kind of large bat (see M-W).

⁹¹ The correct term for the female elephant is *hastinī*, but the form *hastī* as a feminine is not surprising in an Aīśa linguistic tissue.

⁹² See above, note 88.

⁹³ *Citrika* probably designates an animal with multicoloured fur; Mukhopadhyaya translates as "stag", but, of course, the possibilities are numerous.

⁹⁴ *vidyuttuṅgo*, a form not entirely clear, has an irregular *sandhi* in *-o*, which might be interpreted as a prakritic *-o* ending. See Törzsök 1999: xxxiii.

⁹⁵ As is well-known, while *paśu* commonly designates domesticated animals, in the Śaiva context refers to non-initiates.

festations is listed in two groups. The first list appears at the beginning (2c-4) and comprises animal names invariably in the feminine gender.⁹⁶ It is interesting to note that more than half of the feminine animals mentioned are birds (twelve or thirteen out of twenty). This prevalence may have a connection with the primacy given to the Sky-traveller *yoginī* (*khecarī*), which appears as the foremost variety in taxonomies of *yoginīs*, and the power of flight (*khecaratā*) is the most important among the *siddhis* sought by devotees. Remarkably, another term to designate this class of deities is *dākinī*, which is traditionally linked to the Sanskrit root $\sqrt{dā}$, to fly. Whereas in tantric Śaiva texts *dākinī* generally denotes a harmful being, and is rarely used as a synonym of *yoginī*, elsewhere, and in particular in the *Yoginītantras* of Tantric Buddhism, *dākinī* is usually a perfect equivalent of *yoginī*.⁹⁷ Interestingly, as White (2006: 39) states, the Kuṣāṇa-age *mātrīs* are especially characterised by an avian nature, and “it is this that underlies the power of flight of later *yoginīs*.” As alluded to in section 2, these Mother goddesses are perceived at the same time as kourotrophos and disease-carrying: this ambivalent nature is another trait inherited by the *yoginīs*, and expressed in KJN 23 by the two lists of the passage translated above. While the first list enumerates the forms that the *yoginīs* assume to play (*krīd*) on earth, the second list (7-9b) includes animal names in masculine gender, and different harmful guises that the *yoginīs* take when they enter in contact with non-devotees. Significantly, in this second list *grahas* and *bhūtas* are mentioned as negative manifestations of *yoginīs*, and, rather ironically, we also find royals beside thieves.

Through the opposition between the two lists it might be possible to infer that the feminine nature of the *yoginīs*, as well as the ornithomorph manifestation, is in some sense reserved to the adepts. However, the text does not present the first list as types of esoteric forms of *yoginīs*, but as manifestations on earth, hence potentially visible to non-initiates as well. Also the statement of *śloka* 11, that is the admonishment of never despising women and girls, can be interpreted in two ways: as a generic assertion of respect towards the feminine gender, or as a warning, since women and girls might secretly be *yoginīs*. The remaining part of the chapter, not reported here, does not solve this dilemma, since it mostly lists the kinds of flowers that should be used to honour the woman – a kind of botanical repertoire, which on the mere level of chapter composition acts as a counterpart to the zoological one.

Concerning the kinds of animals listed, White (2006:189) states that

these textual accounts [KJN 23] square with the Yoginī images found at their medieval temples, or taken from the ruins thereof. [...] those [the images] who do have faces fall

⁹⁶ The unique masculine exception is the result of a tentative conjecture on a lacuna in the manuscript, see note 89. While the Sanskrit easily forms the feminine of any name, zoonyms of feminine reference do not exist for all species in English, hence the collective indication of the feminine nature inserted at the beginning of the first list.

⁹⁷ See Hatley 2007: 47.

into the following groups: one-quarter of the *Yoginīs* have benign human faces; one-quarter, terrible human faces; one-quarter, animal heads; one-quarter, bird heads.

However, according to my survey, in iconographic evidence the bird-faced *yoginīs* are not as numerous as in this KJN passage, nor do they represent one-quarter of the sculptures of a temple (see *supra* 3.1).

Moreover, the *yoginīs* of KJN 23 appear as purely theriomorphic. Is this the earliest form of *yoginīs* with animal appearances, precedent to their theriocephalic representation? Certainly, the KJN is more recent than the Vidyāpīṭha texts quoted above, but the most ancient sources do not always retain the most ancient conceptions.⁹⁸ We can assume that the animal forms in KJN 23 are the result of a transformation: the text explicitly states that the *yoginīs* take (*saṃgrah-*) these different forms.

Among the birds mentioned in the first list, five are nocturnal birds (*kokābhāṣī*, *ulūkī*, *pecakī*, and probably *nakhī* and *vāgdulī*). The vulture (*grdhri*) and the dove (*kapotikā*) can be conceptually associated to this group, since, although diurnal, are birds connected with death.⁹⁹ It does not seem out of place to note that nocturnal birds are often conceived as metamorphoses of sorcerers and witches; the antiquity of this conception in India finds attestation in the *Rgveda* (VII, 104, 22).¹⁰⁰ This is a cultural belief spread across Europe as well, where most of the Romance words for “witch” (e.g. Italian *strega*, Old and Middle French *estrie*, Portuguese *estria* etc.) derive from the Latin ornithonym *strix*, term which designates a nocturnal bird of prey, probably the barn owl.¹⁰¹ To mention just one literary suggestion, the witch Pamphile in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* transforms herself into an owl (III, 21), sparking the curiosity of Lucius, hence the well-known consequence of his metamorphosis into a donkey.

One of the *yoginīs*’ distinctive characteristics is, in fact, the ability to change form (*rūpaparivartana* or *kāmarūpatā*).¹⁰² In this they may have inherited “the mantle”¹⁰³ of the *vidyādhara* and *vidyādhari*, the flying, semi-divine sorcerers of early Indic mythology, who are characterised by a shapeshifting nature.

It seems possible, indeed, to interpret the hybrid, animal-faced appearances of the *yoginīs* in light of the ability to change form. One function of hybridism is

⁹⁸ *Mutatis mutandis*, in textual criticism this concept is a rule: *recentiores non deteriores*.

⁹⁹ The Indian perception of the dove as a bird of evil omen (see Dave 2005: 250-252) is quite different from the European vision, which is informed by the Christian association of the dove with high religious symbolism, and thus with a positive significance. Different contexts are often decisive in shaping the use and meaning of animal imagery and symbolism.

¹⁰⁰ See Ronzitti 2010: 43-44.

¹⁰¹ The existence of the term *στρι(γ)ξ* in Greek is unsure; the Indoeuropean stem is **streig*, see Ronzitti 2009: 183-185. Cf. also White 2013, who outlines parallels between South Asia *yoginī/ḍākinī*, Roman *strix*, and Persian *pairikā* traditions, supposing cultural exchanges that might need stronger grounds to be confirmed.

¹⁰² See, for instance, SYM 22.8cd: *rūpasya parivartena caranty uttamamātarāḥ*, “The Highest Mothers wander about changing their forms.” Edition and translation by Törzsök 1999: 50; 172.

¹⁰³ Hatley 2007: 17.

inevitably to represent deities or beings whose nature is not confined to a single identity. The combination of animal and human in a composite anatomy can be considered, to some extent, a way of representing the dynamic process of transformation in a static visual form, a diachronic narrative fixed in a synchronic image. Metamorphosis and therianthropism, unsurprisingly, are also conceptually associated in the wider Hindu religious landscape – the case of the *nāgas*, and their fluidity between the anthropomorphic and the ophidian form, has already been mentioned. Beings that are imagined and depicted as partly theriomorphic and partly anthropomorphic feature in the pantheon and mythology of different cultures, and in a large number of cases they imply metamorphosis.¹⁰⁴

What is the degree of separation, then, between the full theriomorphic and the therianthropic representation of *yoginīs*? It would be rather simplistic to theorise an evolutionary schema where full animal form gives way to a partly animal, partly anthropomorphic representation: as briefly discussed in section 2, developmentalist interpretations of religious history are no more sustainable.

Without evolutionary assumptions, we may suppose that in the *yoginī* cult both the conceptions of pure-animal *yoginī* and animal-faced *yoginī* existed, with the theriocephalic type being prevalent.¹⁰⁵ One might ask the reason for the preponderance of therianthropism. An answer might be found in the need to focus on the coexistence of the two natures – the animal one and the feminine one; also, composite beings have an inherent, obvious potency in expressing superhuman nature. In other words, a therianthropic depiction not only makes the juxtaposition of animal and human manifest, but at the same time, as stated above, it captures the process of metamorphosis. The interest of KJN 23 is thus also given by the fact that it preserves a little-attested vision of theriomorphic *yoginīs*.

Interestingly, in the context of the *yoginī* cult, the boundary between human and animal becomes permeable for the adepts as well: tantric sources include cases of *sādhakas* who imitate animal behaviour in ritual contexts (see *infra*, section 4), while the narrative literature contains tales of witch-like *yoginīs* who transform men into animals. In particular, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* includes several stories of *yoginīs* who are both metamorphic and causing metamorphoses: they are not only narrative devices engaging the fantastic or magic, but also reflect the popular imagery about these figures in the eleventh-century Kashmir.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ In ancient Greek culture some examples are: the river-god Achelooos, the sea-deity Proteus, Dionysus, and Pan (see Aston 2014, and Thumiger 2014: 391-392).

¹⁰⁵ I wonder if the ambiguity of BraYā 6 reflects the coexistence of the two types.

¹⁰⁶ For instance, the *yoginī* Sukhaśayā teaches a friend who is in trouble how to transform her illicit lover into a monkey, so she can keep him with her and can turn him back into a human form on demand (*Kathāsaritsāgara* VII. 3. 107-118). In another story, a woman named Somadā is a secret *yoginī* (*guptayoginī*), who, mistreated by her lover, transforms him into an ox and sells him as a beast of burden. Another *yoginī* recognises him and restores him to human form. Eventually, the two *yoginīs* transform themselves into horses and fight in a duel to the death (*Ibid.*, VII. 3. 147-169). See also Hatley 2007: 101-106.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS

While the previous sections primarily present and discuss selected data, this final part brings to the fore a series of issues kept in the background so far, sometimes as underlying questions. These are now to be formulated and, as far as possible, addressed.

The first, most immediate question is: is there a significance of species, which allows us to understand the choice of the kinds of animals appearing as *yoginīs* or as *yoginīs*' faces? Referring to both textual and iconographic evidence, and including also animals occurring as *vāhanas* of the *yoginīs*, according to Serbaeva (2006: 145) it is possible to identify some discernible typologies:

(1.) animals considered to be dangerous; (2.) traditionally auspicious animals (tiger, lion, elephant); (3.) animals especially important in Śaiva context, the *vāhanas* of the main gods and mentioned as such in the Śaiva cycles in purāṇas – serpents serving as decorations, scorpions, lions, bulls, tigers/lions, peacocks; (4.) animals from ancient times who were used to predict the future: crows, owls, dogs, jackals etc.; (5.) animals associated with death, night and the cremation ground: jackals, dogs, vultures, crows; (6.) highly impure animals (dogs and crows); (7.) mythological animals, like *makaras*.

This analysis is relevant and useful, but hardly exhaustive, since the faces and the mounts of the *yoginīs* encompass a considerable variety of species, and not all of them fall within an identifiable interpretative criterion.

The second question pertains to the way in which animal and anthropomorphic parts are combined: is it meaningful to find a key body part such as the face occurring in animal form? In other words, is there a hierarchy between human and animal parts? Since the face is usually conceived as the most important anatomical part, and the foremost signifier, it might be possible to think that an animal face in a composite being indicates a largely animal identity. The picture is, however, complicated further by the fact that in some cases the head is completely theriomorphic (as in figure 1), but in other cases only the face is animal-like, while other components such as the hair are clearly human – an interesting example is the rabbit-faced *yoginī* from Lokhari, who holds a strand of her human hair in one hand (figure 2). Also the *yoginīs* of figures 4 and 5 display apparently human hair-styles, while the hair of figure 3 can be interpreted either as human or resembling the fur of a bear. These elements might suggest the idea of a mask, which will be briefly addressed in 4.3.

The third and most crucial point is: what is the meaning of therianthrope *yoginīs*? Do the theriocephalic figures of the *yoginīs* owe more to the endurance of tradition than to any sense their compositional figures express? The answer to the latter question is, in my view, a qualified no. While the *yoginīs* owe their composite form to the continuity of tradition – they clearly inherit this feature from precedent, non-tantric figures (see *supra*, section 2) – the animal element is not a meaningless hereditary trait. Both the iconographic and textual sources show that in the tantric context the animal features are far from irrelevant. It might even be possible to interpret this as a case of “reuse” of precedent elements. According to

Freschi-Maas (forthcoming), the designation “adaptive reuse” may be applied to a case in which a text, a concept or an image preserves, at least partially, its traditional outlook, but acquires new meanings in a new context. The theriocephalic representation of *yoginīs* can be interpreted as a previous, traditional form which is partially resemantised in the tantric context. Referring to the distinction between “simple re-use” and “adaptive reuse” theorised by Freschi-Maas (forthcoming), the degree of adaptation in theriocephalic *yoginīs* is, in my view, somewhat halfway between a mere repetition of a previous use (simple re-use) and a resemantisation where “the reuser expects his or her audience to recognise the reused elements in order to achieve a well-defined purpose” (adaptive reuse).

Concerning the meanings, it is possible to determine three principal lines of inquiry, which can also be seen as working hypotheses, and are not mutually exclusive.

4.1. SUPERHUMAN ABILITIES

Jayadrathayāmala [JY] chapter 10 enumerates a series of *sādhanas* bearing the names of different animals, every one of which is identified with an animal-faced attendant of the main goddess Mantramantreśvarī. Having done the ritual, the adept obtains the *siddhis* of that particular animal.¹⁰⁷ This passage explicitly posits a close connection between the animal element and the extraordinary powers that the *yoginīs* may bestow to their votaries; in other words, among the different typologies of *yoginīs*, therianthropic *yoginīs* emerge somewhat as the most powerful and the most related to a magic dimension.

The very name of “*yoginīs*” probably refers to the conception of yoga as “numinous power.”¹⁰⁸ Although the category of yoga is usually interpreted mainly in terms of meditation and asceticism, recent research has demonstrated that in the history of yoga extraordinary powers have been an equally important component.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, Hildebeitel has argued a correlation between animal features and yoga, observing that “the gods most commonly depicted in seated yoga *āsanas* are deities with animal-heads: the elephant-faced Gaṇeśa and the lion-faced Narasiṃha”,¹¹⁰ a few pages later adding that “many of the classical yogic postures are named after animals, suggesting an affinity between yoga and the assimilation of animal powers.”¹¹¹ It might not be irrelevant that in BraYā both in chapter 6 and in 8 therianthropic *yoginīs* appear in a *śaṭkarman* context, that is, in a strong *siddhi*-oriented dimension.

¹⁰⁷ See Serbaeva 2016: 53. Though not examined in the present discussion, the JY contains further relevant material concerning therianthropism, as pointed out by Olga Serbaeva (personal communication, January 2016), and as emerges in Serbaeva 2013: 200, 202; Serbaeva 2016: 53, 57-58. See also White 2013: 16.

¹⁰⁸ Hatley 2013a. See also Serbaeva 2015.

¹⁰⁹ See the rich collection of essays centered on “yoga powers” in Jacobsen 2012.

¹¹⁰ Hildebeitel 1978: 769.

¹¹¹ Hildebeitel 1978: 775. Cf. also Chapple 2012: 229.

The obtaining of supernatural powers is one of the main results of the encounters with the *yoginīs*, visionary rendez-vous usually termed *melakas*, which produce a swift, deep, and sometimes violent transformation in the initiate, elevating him to the state of hero (*vīra*), that is conferring him the nature of Bhairava himself.¹¹²

In sum, the non-human character of these deities might express their capacity to bestow a super-human condition to adepts.

4.2. LIMINALITY, WILDERNESS AND OTHERNESS

The places where the *yoginīs* manifest themselves are liminal in nature. Jungles, mountains, rivers – that is to say, wild nature; the village limits – the boundary between a cultural and natural place; street crossings; the houses where women give birth and the cremation grounds – places connected to birth and death. As noted by Serbaeva,¹¹³ these are intermediate spaces between culture and nature, order and chaos, life and death and are therefore perceived as zones where extraordinary events may happen.

The moments in time, when, according to the texts, the *yoginīs* could manifest themselves are also characterised by liminality, namely, the passage from one state to another. For example, the transition from day to night or night to day; the darkest moment of the night after which the darkness turns into light, and the darkest night of a lunar cycle, that is to say, the fourteenth night.¹¹⁴ The ability of *yoginīs* to change their form and their dual nature, human and non-human at the same time, are also expressions of a transitional state.

The liminal character of the *yoginīs* can hardly be separated from the concept of wilderness, especially in the earliest phases of the cult. Wilderness, designated as “a necessary feature in Hindu Religion” by Qvortrup Fibiger (2012),

is both placed on the outskirts of the profane world, in the mountains and in the jungle, and it is placed within the person who seeks wilderness as the necessary opposition to tamedness within himself.¹¹⁵

In this respect, it is remarkable that the *yoginīs* intimately belong to the Śaiva domain, initially coming to the fore as counterparts of the Rudras, which are expressions of the wild, violent and uncontrollable element.¹¹⁶

Furthermore, the *yoginīs* inevitably convey the idea of “otherness.” As is well known, in Indian culture the feminine is seen as unstable, illogical, and as fear-inspiring, but at the same time as sacred: in both cases it is characterised by its “other-

¹¹² See Policardi 2014. According to Vasudeva (2012: 293): “it is not so much a transformation into a new, superhuman identity as a posthuman continuity of the present life with an expanded identity.”

¹¹³ See insightful observations about *yoginīs* and liminality in Serbaeva 2006: 140-141.

¹¹⁴ See Serbaeva 2006: 140.

¹¹⁵ Qvortrup Fibiger 2012: 152.

¹¹⁶ See Sanderson 1988: 671. About the abodes of the Rudras see Franceschini 2010: 192-195.

ness.”¹¹⁷ The animal and all the human aspects which are closer to animal instinct escape from control and normalisation, therefore they are placed on the other side of the fence. In other words, the unfettered feminine and the animality represent the “other” par excellence. By juxtaposing them in a paradoxical aspect, therianthropic *yoginīs* can be seen as a sort of “über-other”, so to say. Under this respect, it should be emphasised that the textual sources at our disposal look from a male prospective, since they were likely written by men, and thus primarily express male concerns.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the glimpses we have of a dimension not under male control are even more meaningful. In Sanderson’s words, in the encounters with the *yoginīs*

the initiate moves from the domain of male autonomy and responsibility, idealised by the Mīmāṃsakas, into a visionary world of permeable consciousness dominated by the female and the theriomorphic.¹¹⁹

4.3. IMITATION OF ANIMALS AND POSSESSION

Familiarity to, and identification with animals is a sign of the initiates’ proximity to the realm of the supernatural and divine in different religious conceptions.¹²⁰ A shift away from the human and into the animal nature is not uncommon in the Indian ascetic ideologies. The practice of imitating the behaviour of wild animals, sharing their *modus vivendi*, has been investigated by Olivelle (2006), who observes that in Indian ascetic traditions, both Brahmanical and heterodox,

the imitation of animals [...] signals that the ascetic has left human culture, society, and civilized living behind. He has freed himself from the ties that bind him to society and to repeated births, a freedom symbolized by his return to the wild state of animals.¹²¹

In the Śaiva context of the *yoginī* cult, the imitation of animals appears interwoven with the idea of possession. In the earliest sources on *yoginīs*, *āveśa* and corradical terms from the root *√āvis* define an altered state of consciousness, which manifests itself in various external signs, including the imitation of animals in both the behaviour and the calls.¹²² This might indicate that the adept is undergoing a radical change, shifting away from his ordinary identity.

It might be possible to go one step further and ask perhaps the thorniest question: whether animal-faced *yoginī* representations hint at actual women who wore

¹¹⁷ See Serbaeva 2006: 186.

¹¹⁸ See Törzsök 2014: 340, and Hatley forthcoming.

¹¹⁹ Sanderson 1985: 201.

¹²⁰ See Thumiger 2014: 388.

¹²¹ Olivelle 2006: 100.

¹²² See Serbaeva 2013: 200; 202. For an analysis of the occurrences and the significance of possession (*āveśa* and related terms, *stobha*) in early texts on *yoginīs*, I refer to the thorough papers by Törzsök (2013) and Serbaeva (2013). For possession in Śākta traditions see Sanderson 2009: 133-134. For a broader study of possession in South Asia traditions see the monograph by Smith 2006.

animal masks, presumably for ritual purposes. The idea of a “mask” could be suggested by iconography, as alluded to previously, and has been argued by Anamika Roy in a not entirely compelling chapter.¹²³ Certainly, this hypothesis of the animal mask opens up a path worth investigating, also in comparison with Nepalese and Tibetan traditions, but it would mean venturing on uneven ground, not least because in the tantric terrain actual data on historical women and social facts are extremely difficult to recover, as stressed both by Törzsök (2014: 340-341) and Hatley (forthcoming). Therefore, I defer the discussion to a future study, leaving for the time being the question about the animal mask open.

In conclusion, it is possible to sum up the working hypotheses or lines of inquiry about the meanings of *yoginī* therianthropism in few key-words: *siddhis*; liminality, wilderness and gendered otherness; animal imitation and possession.

Certainly, the animal appearances represent one of the strongest threads that connect these tantric goddesses with their antecedents, and thus, possibly, with a pre-Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical past. At the same time, it seems that in the tantric terrain this ancient root blossoms, insofar as the animal element irrupts constantly into the feminine world of the *yoginīs*, carrying multifaceted meanings.

I hope to follow the theriomorphic thread both backwards in the past that precedes the surfacing of the *yoginīs*, and forwards to the subsequent tantric Śaiva and Buddhist elaborations, in future research.



Fig. 1. Cobra-headed *yoginī*, from Lokhari (Uttar Pradesh), first half of X century circa. Photo Dehejia 1986: 158.

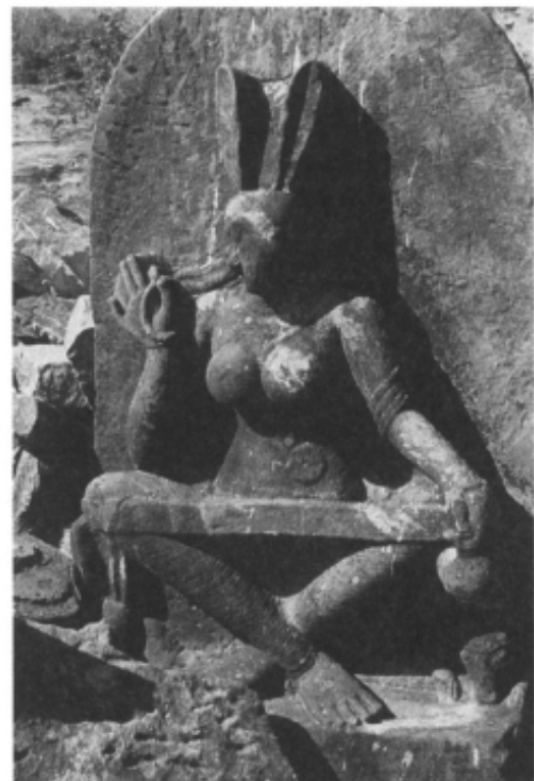


Fig. 2. Rabbit-faced *yoginī*, from Lokhari (Uttar Pradesh), first half of X century circa. Photo Dehejia 1986: 158.

¹²³ See Roy 2015: 44-48.



Fig. 3. Bear-faced (?) *yoginī*, Hirāpur temple, near Bhuvaneśvar (Orissa), middle of X century. Photo Gianluca Pistilli.



Fig. 4. Boar-faced *yoginī*, Bherāghāt temple, near Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), end of X century circa. Photo Chiara Policardi.



Fig. 5. Jackal-headed (?) *yoginī*, Bherāghāt temple, near Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), end of X century circa. Photo Chiara Policardi.

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