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# Love me for the Sake of the World: “Goddess Songs” in Tantric Buddhist Maṇḍala Rituals

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**Abstract:** The presence of Apabhraṃśa in tantric Buddhist texts has long been noted by scholars, overwhelmingly explained away as an example of “Twilight language” (*saṃdhā-bhāṣā*). However, when one looks closer at the vast number of Apabhraṃśa verses in this canon, one finds recurring patterns, themes, and even tropes. This begs for deeper study, as well as establishing a taxonomy of these verses based on their place and use. This paper focuses on a specific subset of Apabhraṃśa verses: “goddess songs” in maṇḍala visualization rituals. These verses are sung by *yoginīs* at specific moments in esoteric Buddhist ritual syntax; while the *sādhaka* is absorbed in enstatic emptiness, four *yoginīs* call out to him with sexually charged appeals, begging him to return to the world and honor their commitments to all sentient beings. When juxtaposed with other Apabhraṃśa verses in tantric Buddhist texts, these songs express an immediacy and intimacy that stands out in both form and content from the surrounding text. This essay argues that Apabhraṃśa is a conscious stylistic choice for signaling intimate and esoteric passages in tantric literature, and so the vast number of Apabhraṃśa verses in this corpus should be reexamined in this light.

**Keywords:** tantra; Buddhism; Apabhraṃśa; Prakrit; Old Bengali; dohās; diglossia; language register; ritual language

## 1. Introduction

Songs and other “inspired utterances” (*gītīs* and *udānas*) occur in Buddhist literature dating back to the Pāli Canon, and also appear in the tantric texts composed near the end of Buddhism in India around the thirteenth century CE. These later texts attest to numerous verses composed in Apabhraṃśa,<sup>1</sup> including *dohās* quoted from collections attributed to *mahāsiddhas*,<sup>2</sup> verses sung in offering rituals,<sup>3</sup> “password” verses,<sup>4</sup> verses sung in initiations,<sup>5</sup> and verses sung in worship.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have long noted this presence of Apabhraṃśa material in the tantric Buddhist canon, usually explaining it away as another example of *saṃdhā-bhāṣā*, “Twilight language.”<sup>7</sup> Davidson addresses the topic at length in

<sup>1</sup> Apabhraṃśa (*apa* + √*bhraś*, “degenerate language”) has two broad meanings. The first is its emic definition, used by grammarians to describe deviations from Pāṇinian Sanskrit (Bubeník 1998, pp. 27, 33–49). This paper will use the term in its etic, analytic sense to describe the stage of late Prakrit (Middle Indo-Āryan) as it evolved into the modern North Indian languages (New Indo-Āryan: Hindusthani, Bengali, etc.) (Tagare 1987, pp. 1–4).

<sup>2</sup> Many of the chapters of the *Buddhakaṇḍa Tantra* end in a capstone *dohā* encapsulating (or challenging) the chapter’s content, e.g., *Buddhakaṇḍa Tantra* 9.9 and 13.24 (Luo 2010, pp. 5, 32). Both of these verses can be found in an edition of Saraha’s *Dohakoṣa* (Bhayani 1997, p. 35; Sankrityayana 1957, p. 24).

<sup>3</sup> e.g., *Hevajra Tantra* II.4.93 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 74). These verses also appear throughout the *sādhana*s of Saroruha’s Hevajra lineage: *Vajrapradīpa* (Gerloff 2017, pp. 248, 255, 387, 391), *Hevajrasādhanaopāyikā* (Gerloff 2017, pp. 111–12, 144), *Dveṣavajrasādhana* (Gerloff 2017, pp. 428–29, 461–62), and the *Hevajraprakāśa* (Gerloff 2017, pp. 526, 675).

<sup>4</sup> e.g., *Catuṣpīṭha Tantra* 2.4.101 (Szántó 2012a, pp. 363–64).

<sup>5</sup> e.g., *Abhidhānottara* Chapter 14. (Kalf 1979, pp. 321–22).

<sup>6</sup> e.g., *Catuṣpīṭha Tantra* 2.3.108–13 (Szántó 2012b, pp. 123–28).

<sup>7</sup> e.g., (Wayman 2008, pp. 133–35).

his 2002 monograph *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*. In addition to observing Apabhraṃśa's links to coded language (*saṃdhā-bhāṣā*), he makes the crucial point that these tantric Buddhist communities were clearly diglossic.<sup>8</sup> Further, he argues that this shows a "clear statement of linguistic distance from the prior centers of power and civilization" (Davidson 2002, p. 273). On this point, Wedemeyer disagrees entirely, insisting that Buddhist tantras originated entirely within mainstream Buddhist institutions, with Apabhraṃśa being merely another instance of "contrived marginality."<sup>9</sup> Wedemeyer also notes that at this point in time, Apabhraṃśa was a "pan-Indic koine" and citing Sheldon Pollock, he proposes that this language was employed to "suggest rural simplicity and joyful vulgarity."<sup>10</sup> While Wedemeyer is correct in noting the semi-artificial and literary character of Apabhraṃśa during this time period, Davidson's remarks on diglossia<sup>11</sup> are far more acute and provide a more nuanced model for approaching the intentionality behind the use of this language. Indeed, rather than a "rural simplicity and joyful vulgarity," the Apabhraṃśa verses in tantric Buddhist texts instead seem to be reserved for particularly intimate junctures and esoteric contexts, where the speaker speaks in a different language/register and level of discourse entirely. These *dohās*, "password" verses, and offering and initiation verses, speak directly to their subjects, an intimacy that contrasts markedly with the surrounding text. Indeed, in their use they resemble *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*. This link between language register and esoteric content deserves a deeper analysis,<sup>12</sup> and this paper will consider a particular subset of these Apabhraṃśa verses: "Goddess songs" in creation-stage mandala rituals. In these rituals, a group of four *yoginīs* call out to the *sādhaka* with Apabhraṃśa verses, appealing to him sexually and pleading for him to honor his commitments and finish his ritual practice. This trope occurs in the *Hevajra Tantra*, the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*, the *Abhayapaddhati*, the *Buddhakaṇḍa sādhanā* in the *Sādhanāmālā*, the *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra*, and the *Khasama Tantra*. The pervasiveness of these verses alongside the other striking examples of Apabhraṃśa in this material (as well as tantric Śaiva works), highlight the need for a new theoretical conceptualization of the use value of Apabhraṃśa in tantric Buddhist texts.

## 2. Sanskrit Precedents: The Guhyasamāja Tantra and Kālacakra Tantra

As Harunaga Isaacson notes, the prototype for these Goddess songs is in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.<sup>13</sup> The *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is unquestionably preeminent within the "Mahāyoga" stratum of tantric Buddhist texts, and can be dated to the 8th century CE at the earliest.<sup>14</sup> The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*'s popularity is attested by the sheer number of commentaries composed in India and Tibet, and particularly in the Ārya school of exegesis the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and its commentaries can be used to interpret the tantras as a whole.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* in particular is important for introducing transgressive sexual and alimentary practices into tantric Buddhist traditions.

<sup>8</sup> Davidson notes that these tantric traditions arose within multilingual and more importantly multiglossic communities, who were able to navigate between different language registers in different contexts (Davidson 2002, pp. 269–77). In a later article, Davidson considers the historical evidence for non-sectarian magicians and sorcerers, whose traditions were appropriated by later sectarian tantric groups, which is significant in the current context for the tantalizing yet somewhat ambiguous evidence associating them with registers of Prakrit (Davidson 2017, pp. 19–20, 27).

<sup>9</sup> (Wedemeyer 2013, pp. 171, 3–5, 184).

<sup>10</sup> (Wedemeyer 2013, p. 184, Pollock 2006, p. 104).

<sup>11</sup> Diglossia differs from bilingualism in that diglossia refers to the use of different languages for different purposes, whereas bilingualism does not.

<sup>12</sup> This pairing of language register with esoteric content also occurs in tantric Śaiva texts. In the tantric Śaiva *Siddhayogeshvarīmata*, Törzsök notes that "the more the language of the text differs from the classical Sanskrit of the orthodox, the more esoteric its teaching is" (Törzsök 1999, p. ii).

<sup>13</sup> (Isaacson 2007, p. 301).

<sup>14</sup> As Tanemura explains, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* builds off the material of the *Sarvatathāgatattvaśaṅgraha*, itself translated into Chinese in 723 CE (Tanemura 2015, p. 327).

<sup>15</sup> (Thurman 1993, p. 133).

The relevant verses in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* are located in the seventeenth chapter, which, as Matsunaga notes, was probably appended after the composition of the first twelve chapters.<sup>16</sup> These verses (17.72–5) model similar passages in later texts in terms of content as well as the broader ritual syntax and context. They occur after an extended passage of dialogue between the assembled Bodhisattvas and Buddhas concerning the secret mantra syllables, after which all of the assembled Bodhisattvas fall silent while the Buddhas “dwell in the vajra wombs of the consorts of Body, Speech, and Mind of all Buddhas.”<sup>17</sup> While the Buddhas are dwelling in emptiness in this way, a group of four goddesses call out to the Buddha Vajradhara with verse:

*tvaṃ vajracitta bhuvaneśvara sattvadhāto trāyāhi māṃ ratimanojña mahārthakāmaih |*  
*kāmāhi māṃ janaka sattvamahāgrabandho yadīcchase jīvitum adya nātha ||*

(Māmakī)

O Vajra Mind, Lord of the World, Abode of Beings, Knower of the Mind of Passion, Save me with desires for the Great Goal!

Love me now, O Father, Friend to the Great Multitude of Beings, if you want [me] to live, O Lord.

*tvaṃ vajrakāya bahusattvapriyāṅkacakra buddhārthabodhiparamārthahitānudarśi |*  
*rāgeṇa rāgasamayaṃ mama kāmayaśva yadīcchase jīvitum adya nātha ||*

(Buddhalocanā)

O Vajra Body, Host of Dear Ones to all Beings, Beholding the Welfare that is the Supreme Goal, Awakening, the Goal of Buddhas.

Passionately desire my pledge of passion now, if you want [me] to live, O Lord.

*tvaṃ vajravāca sakalasya hitānukampī lokārthakāryakaraṇe sadā sampravṛttaḥ |*  
*kāmāhi māṃ suratacarya samantabhadra yadīcchase jīvitum adya nātha ||*

(Vajranetrī)

O Vajra Speech, Compassionate for the Benefit of the World, always doing one’s duty for the Sake of the World.

O Samantabhadra, amorous in conduct, love me, if you want [me] to live, O Lord.

*tvaṃ vajrakāya samayāgra mahāhitārtha sambuddhavaṃśatilakaḥ samatānukampī |*  
*kāmāhi māṃ guṇanidhiḥ bahuratnabhūtaḥ yadīcchase jīvitum adya nātha || (17.72-5)<sup>18</sup>*

(Vajradayitā)

O Vajra Body, Foremost in Pledges, Whose Goal is Great Welfare, Ornament of the Assembly of Perfect Buddhas, Equitably Compassionate.

Love me, the Reservoir of Virtues, Containing Endless Jewels, if you want [me] to live, O Lord.

<sup>16</sup> (Matsunaga 1978, p. xxix).

<sup>17</sup> *atha te sarve bodhisattvāḥ tūṣṇīm vyavasthitā abhūvan | atha bhagavantaḥ sarvatathāgatāḥ sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittavajrayoṣidbhageṣu vijahāra |* (Matsunaga 1978, p. 109). Translations mine.

<sup>18</sup> (Matsunaga 1978, p. 110). Translations mine.

Immediately after these verses, the tathāgata Vajrapāṇi enters a *samādhi*, and then enters into union with the consort of all Buddhas. The entire universe becomes permeated with the seed of the Vajra pledges (*samaya*); the body, speech, and mind of all Buddhas. Ultimately, all beings are consecrated as Samantabhadra (Samantabhadra being the primordial Buddha in this esoteric tradition).<sup>19</sup> It is significant that this passage resembles a visionary *sādhana*, particularly when compared to a similar passage in the *Kālacakra Tantra* and its commentary, the *Vimalaprabhā*. The *Kālacakra Tantra* is particularly significant for being the last Buddhist tantra of its class composed in India (early 11th century).<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the *Vimalaprabhā* was so influential that it “served as the basis for all subsequent commentarial literature of that literary corpus.”<sup>21</sup> The relevant verses appear in the fourth chapter, on *sādhana*. The *Vimalaprabhā* divides this chapter into five “subchapters” (Skt: *uddeśa*, “explanation”), and we will focus on the third *uddeśa*, “The Origination of the Deities of Prāṇa.”<sup>22</sup> The section begins with a quotation from the *Kālacakra Tantra*:

*hoḥkārādyantaḡarbhe samasukhaphalade kāyavākcittavajraṃ  
prajñārāgādrutaṃ tacchaśinam iva vibhuṃ vajriṇaṃ cekṣayitvā |  
gītaṃ kurvanti devyas tvam api hi bhagavan sarvasattvopakārī  
asmān rakṣā hi vajrin tridaśanaraguro kāmakāmārthinīs ca || 50 ||<sup>23</sup>*

“The *vajras* of the body, speech, and mind are in the beginning, end, and middle of the syllable *hoḥ*, which brings forth immutable bliss as a result. Having considered the lord *vajrī* as the moon, melted by passion for the wisdom [being], the goddesses sing, “Bhagavan, you are the benefactor of all sentient beings. O *vajrin*, the spiritual mentor of gods, protect us, desirous of pleasure.”<sup>24</sup>

This verse has many of the motifs we will see in the following texts, particularly where the goddesses sing out to the *vajrin* after seeing him “melted.” In response, these lustful goddesses attempt to draw him out of his enstatic dissolution, by appealing to his Buddhist “ego.” Furthermore, the *Vimalaprabhā* contextualizes this verse by citing other explicit verses from the “*mūla tantra*”, which illustrate the themes from the *Guhyasamāja* verses, as well as the other texts, discussed below:

*locanā 'haṃ jaganmātā niṣyande yogināṃ sthitā |  
me maṇḍalasvabhāvena kālacakrottha kāma mām ||  
I am Locanā, the mother of the world, present in the yogīs' emission.  
Kālacakra, arise with the nature of my maṇḍala and desire me.  
māmakī bhaginī cāhaṃ vipāke yogināṃ sthitā |  
me maṇḍalasvabhāvena kālacakrottha kāma mām ||*

<sup>19</sup> *atha bhagavān vajrapāṇis tathāgataḡ sarvakāmopabhogavajrasriyaṃ nāma samādhim samāpannas tāṃ sarvatathāgatadayitāṃ samayacakreṇa kāmayaṃ tūṣṇīm abhūt | athāyam sarvākāśadhātulī sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittavajrasamayaśukreṇa paripūrṇo vajrodakaparipūrṇakumbha iva saṃsthito 'bhūt | athāsmīn vajrākāśadhātāu ye sattvās trikāyasamayāsambhūtās trivajrasriyā saṃsprṣṭāḡ sarve te tathāgataḡ arhantaḡ samyaksambuddhās trivajrajñānino 'bhūvan | tataḡ prabhṛti sarvasattvāḡ samantabhadrasamantabhadra iti sarvatathāgatakāyavākcittavajrenābhīṣiktā abhūvan || “Then the Blessed Tathāgata Vajrapāṇi entered the samādhi called ‘Vajra glory of the enjoyment of all desires,’ and along with the Samaya circle, enjoyed the Consort of all the Tathāgatas and fell silent. Then the entire spatial realm was permeated with the seed of the samayas of Vajra Body, Speech, and Mind of all Tathāgatas, like a jar filled with Vajra water. At that moment all sentient beings who arise from the samayas of the Three Bodies in the Vajra realm of Space were all touched by the glory of the Triple Vajra and become Buddhas, Arhats, and Perfect Buddhas. From that moment on all sentient beings were consecrated as Samantabhadra by the Vajra of the Body, Speech, and Mind of all Tathāgatas” (Matsunaga 1978, p. 110. Translations mine).*

<sup>20</sup> (Wallace 2001, p. 3).

<sup>21</sup> (Wallace 2001, p. 3).

<sup>22</sup> Skt: *prāṇadevatotpādamahoddeśa*. Translation from Wallace (2010, p. 79).

<sup>23</sup> Sanskrit text from Rinpoche and Bahulkar (1994, p. 178).

<sup>24</sup> Translation from Wallace (2010, p. 73).

I am Māmākī, a sister, present in the *yogīs'* maturation.

Kālacakra, arise with the nature of my *maṇḍala* and desire me.

*pāṇḍarā duhitā cāhaṃ puruṣe yogināṃ sthitā |*

*me maṇḍalāsvabhāvena kālacakrottha kāma mām ||*

I am Pāṇḍarā, a daughter, present in the spirit of *yogīs*.

Kālacakra, arise with the nature of my *maṇḍala* and desire me.

*tāriṇī bhāgineyāhaṃ vaimalye yogināṃ sthitā |*

*me maṇḍalāsvabhāvena kālacakrottha kāma mām ||*

I am Tāriṇī, a wife, present in the *yogīs'* purity.

Kālacakra, arise with the nature of my *maṇḍala* and desire me.

*śūnyamaṇḍalam ādāya kāyavākcittamaṇḍalam |*

*spharayasva jagannātha jagad uddharaṇāśaya ||<sup>25</sup>*

O Protector of the world, whose intention is to deliver the world, perceiving an empty *maṇḍala*,

expand the *maṇḍalas* of the body, speech, and mind.<sup>26</sup>

In these latter verses, there are numerous similarities with the verses from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. However, the sexual appeals of the *yoginīs* are supplemented with pleas for the Buddha Kālacakra, to emit the *maṇḍalas* and thus finish the *sādhana*. In the following texts, these appeals also include an appeal for the *sādhaka* to remember his vows of compassion for all sentient beings. Both of these texts, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and *Kālacakra Tantra*, bracket in both dating and content late Indian *anuttarayoga*<sup>27</sup> tantric Buddhist textual production. While the verses from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* serve as the prototype for the Apabhraṃśa verses discussed in the remainder of this paper, the *Kālacakra Tantra* (and *Vimalaprabhā*) explicitly contextualizes them within the context of *sādhana*. Specifically, these verses occur in the “creation stage” (Skt: *utpattikrama*) *sadhana*, where the practitioner recreates himself in the image of the text’s tutelary deity. After the practitioner dissolves into emptiness, the four goddesses call out to the *sādhaka* to arise out of this slumber, desire them, and complete the *sādhana*. This ritual syntactic trope is underscored throughout the balance of this paper, with similar themes and vocabulary in the Apabhraṃśa verses. This begs the question: if this motif is commonplace in tantric Buddhist ritual syntax with Sanskrit exemplars, why are the verses in the following texts composed in Apabhraṃśa? This question will be revisited at the end of this paper.

### 3. The Hevajra Tantra

The *Hevajra Tantra* (dated to the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century CE<sup>28</sup>), attests a great number of Apabhraṃśa verses, from verses used in offering rituals,<sup>29</sup> rich descriptions of *gaṇacakra* rituals,<sup>30</sup> encapsulations of tantric theory,<sup>31</sup> “uplifting” encouragements,<sup>32</sup> as well as a *dohā* attributed to the *mahāsiddha* Saraha.<sup>33</sup> Within doxographies of tantric Buddhist texts the *Hevajra Tantra* is commonly classed within a different

<sup>25</sup> Sanskrit text from Rinpoche and Bahulkar (1994, p. 179).

<sup>26</sup> Translation from Wallace (2010, pp. 75–76).

<sup>27</sup> As Dalton argues, this term is an incorrect Western back-translation from the Tibetan *rnal 'byor bla na med pa* (Dalton 2005, pp. 160–61). In most scholarship, this is ‘anuttarayoga’.

(Davidson 2005, p. 41).

<sup>29</sup> HT II.4.93 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 74).

<sup>30</sup> HT II.4.2-5 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 62).

<sup>31</sup> HT II.4.71 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 70).

<sup>32</sup> HT II.4.67 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 70).

<sup>33</sup> HT II.5.68 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 84).

strata than the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, i.e., Yoginī tantras as opposed to Mahāyoga tantras.<sup>34</sup> As their name implies, the *maṇḍalas* of these tantras are overwhelmingly populated by goddesses and *yoginīs*, especially significant since they sing the Apabhraṃśa verses considered below. In the *Hevajra Tantra* the *maṇḍala* visualization instructions appear in the fifth chapter of the second half of the text, and model many of the key elements found in the following texts. After Buddha, Hevajra describes the structure of the *maṇḍala* (Figure 1) and how the *sādhaka* should visualize himself at its center surrounded by eight *yoginīs*, as Hevajra and his consort “dissolve out of great passion.” Thereupon, a subgrouping of four *yoginīs* urge<sup>35</sup> him, with various songs, to return to the world out of his meditative state (*samādhi*):<sup>36</sup>

*uṭṭha bharāḍo karuṇamaṇḍa Pukkasī mahu paritāhiṃ |*

*mahāsuaJoe kāma mahum chaḍḍahiṃ sunṇasamāhi ||*

Arise, O Bhagavān, whose nature is Compassion! Save me, Pukkasī.

I desire the union of Great Bliss, so abandon the Samādhi of Emptiness.

*tohyā vihuṇṇe marami hahum uṭṭehiṃ tuhum Hevajja |*

*chaḍḍahi sunnasabhāvaḍā Śavaria sihyāu kajja ||<sup>37</sup>*

Without you I die, arise O Hevajra!

Abandon the state of emptiness and fulfill Śavarī’s desires.

*loa nimantia suraapahu sunṇe acchasi kīsa |*

*haum Caṇḍālī viṇṇanami tai viṇṇa ḍahami na dīsa ||*

Summon forth the world, O Amorous Lord! Why do you dwell within emptiness?

I, Caṇḍālī, beg you, for without you I cannot perceive the world.

*indālī uṭṭha tuhum haum jānāmi ttuha cittah |*

*ambhe Ḍombī cheamaṇḍa mā kara karuṇavicchittah ||<sup>38</sup>*

O Sorcerer, arise! I know your mind.

We Ḍombīs are cunning women, do not cut off your compassion.<sup>39</sup>

After these verses, the practitioner concludes the remainder of the ritual. These verses are clearly modelled on the verses sung by *yoginīs* in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*; they both consist of four *yoginīs* or goddesses making sexual appeals to the tantric Buddha; however they also share with the *Kālacakra Tantra* the additional appeals to the Buddha to finish their practice. Furthermore, these verses all appear in various Hevajra *sāadhanās*. In all five surviving *sāadhanās* of Saroruha’s (Saraha’s) Hevajra lineage, these Goddess’ songs are all included or mentioned, along with other important Apabhraṃśa verses, in the

<sup>34</sup> As Dalton has shown, the common four-fold doxography of tantric Buddhist texts is best understood as a Tibetan innovation, which crystallized and formalized the looser Indian classification systems (Dalton 2005, pp. 118, 158–62). In particular, Dalton shows that, within India, the category “Yoginī/Niruttarayoga” tantras became a distinct class of tantras distinct from Mahāyoga in the eleventh century (156). However, while many of the texts classified under this label don’t attest the term “yoginītantra” in their chapter colophons (including the Cakrasamvara, Hevajra, etc.), this is not true of the *Buddhakapāla Tantra* (Yang 2016, pp. 107–8; Luo 2010, pp. 5, 14, 17–18, 27, 33, 39). This is significant, as the *Buddhakapāla Tantra* is dated to the ninth or tenth centuries CE, and so predates the classification scheme by one or two centuries (Luo 2010, p. xxxi).

<sup>35</sup> Throughout these texts, the Sanskrit term used is always a derivative of the causative root of √*cu*, “impel, urge.”

<sup>36</sup> *tato vajrī mahārāgād drutabhūtaṃ savidyayā | codayanti tato devyo nānāgīttopahārataḥ ||* (Snellgrove 1964, p. 78).

<sup>37</sup> In his commentary, Ratnākaraśānti glosses “*sunnasabhāvaḍā*” as “*sūnyasabhāvam, dravarūpatām ity arthah,*” roughly translated as “the nature of enlightenment, being the form of reality (*drava*)” (Tripathi and Negi 2001, p. 202).

<sup>38</sup> HT II.5.20-3 (Snellgrove 1964, pp. 78–80). Translations mine, relying heavily on Ratnākaraśānti’s *Muktāvalī* (Tripathi and Negi 2001, pp. 201–2).

<sup>39</sup> This verse departs from the others, and its precise interpretation presents some issues. Ratnākaraśānti glosses *pāda c: ḍombikā vayanī chekā nāgarikāḥ | maṇḍa iti evaṃ jānīha |* (Tripathi and Negi 2001, pp. 202–3).

*Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>40</sup> These Goddess' songs also appear in Ratnākaraśānti's *Bhramaharanāma Hevajrasādhanā* and in an ancillary *sādhana* in the *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra*.<sup>41</sup> In his commentary on Ratnākaraśānti's text, Isaacson notes that the language choice for these Goddess' songs is standard in the Yoginī tantra tradition, observing that "this should probably be seen as related to the concept in the Śaiva tradition of Apabhraṃśa as the language of direct, intense, mystical revelation by the *yoginīs*, and perhaps also simply to the fact that women (and particularly women supposed to be of lower social status) would have been not normally expected to speak Sanskrit."<sup>42</sup> Isaacson is certainly correct, and is probably referring to the *Krama Mahānayaprakāśa* of Śitikaṅṭha, and perhaps also the *Mahārthamañjarī*. It is also notable that Apabhraṃśa verses appear in Abhinavagupta's *Tantrasāra* and *Parātrīśika-vivaraṇa*.<sup>43</sup> There does seem to be a connection, underscored by the persistent choice of Apabhraṃśa for these Goddess songs in the following texts.



**Figure 1.** Hevajra and *yoginīs*. Among the eight are the four who sing out to Hevajra with songs: in the upper-left is Caṅḍālī, upper-right Ḍombī, lower left Śavarī, and lower-right Pukkasī. (Himalayan Art Resource, Item 444).

<sup>40</sup> i.e., the *Hevajrasādhanopāyikā* (Gerloff 2017, pp. 103–4, 111–14); As an explanatory *sadhana*, the *Vajrapradīpā* provides a Sanskrit gloss and commentary on these verses (Gerloff 2017, pp. 217–19, 364–65). Furthermore, the *Vajrapradīpā* also contains more Apabhraṃśa verses sung by *yoginīs* (Locanā and others), unattested in the *Hevajra Tantra*, listed under a "mudraṇam" section (Gerloff 2017, pp. 234–35, 375). The verses from the *Hevajra Tantra* do not appear explicitly in the *Dveṣavajrasādhanā*; however, they are mentioned in passing (Gerloff 2017, p. 417). The *mudraṇam* verses, however, appear here (Gerloff 2017, pp. 424, 455). The verses from the *Hevajra Tantra* also appear in the *Hevajraprakāśa* (Gerloff 2017, pp. 498, 647–50), as well as the *mudraṇam* verses (Gerloff 2017, pp. 513, 665). These verses are absent from the Hevajra *sādhana* in the *Sādhanaṃālā*, however the *sādhana* includes two *dohās* from Saraha's *dohakośa* (Bhattacharyya 1928, pp. 381–84; Bhayani 1997, p. 49).

<sup>41</sup> (Isaacson 2002, pp. 162–63). For the *sādhana* in the *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra*, see Rinpoche and Dvivedī (1992, pp. 140–42).

<sup>42</sup> (Isaacson 2007, p. 301).

<sup>43</sup> These texts are particularly noteworthy, since these verses are cited as capstones at the end of the texts' chapters and passages, similar to the *Buddhakaṇṭhā Tantra*. E.g., (Shastri 1918, pp. 7, 9, 19, 20, 33, 44, 62, 68, 91 (*Tantrasāra*)). From the Sanskrit text of the *Parātrīśika-vivaraṇa* in Singh's translation and edition: e.g., (Singh 1988, pp. 7, 22–23, 32, 38, 75).

#### 4. The Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra

A similar pattern occurs in the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*. The *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* is a comparatively late Yoginī tantra composed centuries after the *Hevajra Tantra*, probably in late 13th century Nepal.<sup>44</sup> The relevant Apabhraṃśa passages in this text occur in the fourth chapter, the “deity” chapter. Here, the Buddha Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa describes the *maṇḍala* ritual, and how, after having visualized oneself as Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa (Figure 2), one should visualize eight *yoginīs* surrounding him. Then, after “[inviting] the coming forth of Wisdom,” four *yoginīs* call out to him in song:<sup>45</sup>

*pahu mairī tu vivarjia hohi mā sunnasahāva |*  
*tojju viyoe phiṭumi sarve sarve hi tāva ca ||*

(Mohavajrī)

O Pervader, do not abandon Love, and be not by nature Empty!  
Without you I perish, and each and every thing as well.

*ma karuṇācia iṭṭahi pahu mā hohi tu sunna |*  
*mā mojjū deha sudukkhia hoi hai jīva vihuna ||*

(Piśunavajrī)

Do not abandon the mind of Compassion, O Pervader, and be not Empty!  
If you do, my suffering body will be devoid of life!

*kī santu harisa vihohia sunnahi karasi paveśa |*  
*tojju nimantaṇa karia manua cchai lohāśeśa ||*

(Rāgavajrī)

Why, O Accomplished One, do you enter Emptiness to give pain to Joy?  
The entire world rests in your heart, calling upon you.

*yovanavunṭtim upekhia niṣphala sunnae ditti |*  
*sunnasahāva vigoia karahi tu mea sama ghīṭṭi ||*

(Īrṣyāvajrī)

Do not neglect youth with the fruitless view of Emptiness.  
Despise the empty nature and embrace me.<sup>46</sup>

After hearing these verses,<sup>47</sup> “as if in a dream” (*svapneneva idaṃ śrutvā*), the practitioner awakens and then runs to each *yoginī* in turn, and makes love to them while visualizing himself in different forms.

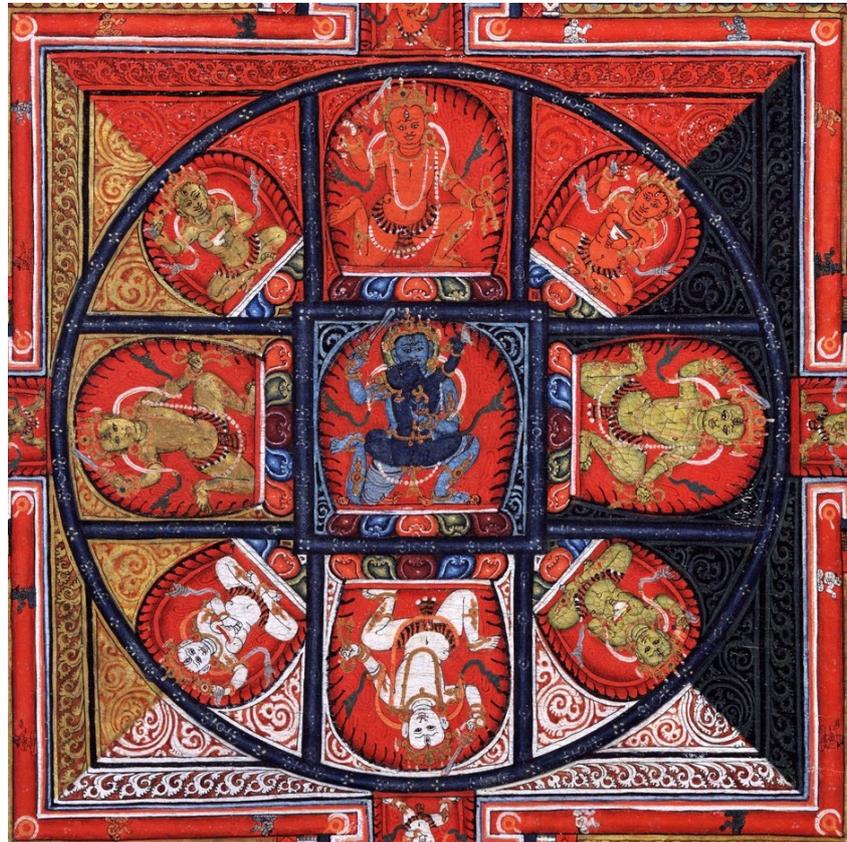
<sup>44</sup> (Grimes and Szántó 2018, p. 651).

<sup>45</sup> (George 1974, pp. 57–61).

<sup>46</sup> (George 1974, p. 61). George’s translations have been edited in places.

<sup>47</sup> One particularly notable element of these verses is their phonology. In contrast to the verses from the *Hevajra Tantra* and the other verses quoted in this paper, these verses from the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra* strictly adhere to the phonological rules of Śaurasenī Prakrit/Apabhraṃśa. In particular, the distinctions between sibilants are respected; the term “*sunnasahāva*” in the second *pāda* of the first verse is a clear smoking gun. In contrast, the verses from the *Hevajra Tantra* attest the term “*sunnasabhāvaḍā*” in the third *pāda* of the second verse, while the *Abhayapaddhati* and *Buddhakapāla sādhanā* have “*suṇasahāva*” in the second *pāda* of the fourth verse. This is noteworthy because all of these texts originated broadly within Northeastern India and Nepal, where Gauḍī phonological features predominate (one of the hallmarks of Gauḍī and modern-day languages from this area is non-distinction and flux between sibilants). Given the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*’s Nepali provenance, this strict adherence to the phonological rules of Śaurasenī is peculiar and distinguishes it from the other texts considered in this essay.

Ultimately, the practitioner dissolves the entire *maṇḍala* and self-affirms his accomplishment in his practice.<sup>48</sup> As in the *maṇḍala* ritual in the *Hevajra Tantra*, here the practitioner undertakes preparatory visualizations, and the *yoginīs* sing out to him to draw him out of his enstatic dream. After hearing these songs, the practitioner finishes the ritual, and by attaining the form of Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa he has finished creation-stage practice.



**Figure 2.** Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa *mandala*. This portrayal is slightly different from what is prescribed in the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*; the deities are rotated 90 degrees clockwise. Clockwise from Top left: Piśunavajrī, Rāgavajrī, Īrṣyāvajrī, Mohāvajrī. (Himalayan Art Resource, Item 90915).

### 5. The *Buddhakaṇḍāla Tantra*

The following verses occur in texts associated with the *Buddhakaṇḍāla Tantra*.<sup>49</sup> In the commentary, the *Abhayapaddhati*, these verses appear in the seventh chapter, called the “Generation of Heruka and his *maṇḍala*” (*maṇḍala-herukotpatti-bhāvanā-ākhyā*).<sup>50</sup> Furthermore the same verses also occur in a similar *maṇḍala* ritual in the *Sādhanāmālā*. The seventh chapter of the *Abhayapaddhati* is a long description and explication of this *maṇḍala* ritual (Figure 3). After an extended passage, we reach the trope and motif of dissolving into emptiness, described as a liquid. Then out of this liquid, four trembling goddesses (*sphuritās cataso devyaḥ*), observing the Lord (*prabhum apaśyantyah*), with concern for His various previous vows (*pūrvā-praṇidhi-veśeṣa-āpekṣayā*), full-throatedly (*soṭkaṅṭhya*) arouse the Lord with songs:<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> (George 1974, p. 62).

<sup>49</sup> I do not have access to the complete Sanskrit root text. Instead I am relying on the root Tantra’s commentary, the *Abhayapaddhati* in addition to a *Buddhakaṇḍāla sādhanā* in the *Sādhanāmālā*.

<sup>50</sup> (Dorje 2009, p. 48).

<sup>51</sup> (Dorje 2009, pp. 52–53).

*kicce ṇicca visāgaṇi lo nimantia kā |*

*taha vattā ṇa jaṇi sambharasi utṭhahim saala visā ||*

How can you summon forth the world while lost in despondence?

If you do not honor your commitments, the world leaps into despair.

*kajja appāṇa vi karia pia mā karasu viṇavi citta |*

*bhavabhaa paḍiā saala jaṇu utṭhahi joinimitta ||<sup>52</sup>*

Doing one's own duties, O Dearest, do not think conceptually!

Worldly beings are falling into existential angst; Arise O Friend of Yoginīs!<sup>53</sup>

*pūvvaṇṇaṇi jjaha sambharasi mā kara kājja visāu |*

*taṭi athaminne saala jaṇu pariavajja gaṇisāu ||*

If you remember your prior pledges, do not neglect your commitments!

While you're absent, worldly beings on the Buddhist path lose their resolve.

*michē māṇa vi mā karahi pia utṭhāi suṇasahāva |*

*kāmahi joini vinda tuhu phittāi ahavā bhāva ||<sup>54</sup>*

Do not think deludedly, O Dear One. Arise O Nature of Emptiness!<sup>55</sup>

Embrace the horde of yoginīs, otherwise you maim the world.<sup>56</sup>

Awakened by these songs, the practitioner then visualizes a *hūṃ* syllable transforming into Śrī Heruka, and the following lines describe his appearance in great detail.<sup>57</sup> Immediately following this visualization of Heruka, both *sāadhanās* then describe a great *maṇḍala* populated with *yoginīs*, for the practitioner to visualize, along with other mainstays of creation-stage practice.<sup>58</sup> At the end of the *sādhana* in the *Sāadhanāmālā*, the practitioner recites the Buddhakapāla mantra, and the text states that after six months of consistent Buddhakapāla practice, *yogins* attain success, "here there is no doubt."<sup>59</sup> The similarities with the verses from the *Hevajra* and *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantras* are clear, underscoring that this is a ritual syntactic trope in tantric Buddhist practice.

<sup>52</sup> Bhattacharyya's Sanskrit *chāyā* glosses "viṇavi" as "dvayam api" (Bhattacharyya 1928, p. 501). While semantically an argument can be made for this gloss, etymologically "viṇa" has a clear Prakrit pedigree as a derivation from *vi* +  $\sqrt{jñā}$ .

<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, the Tibetan translation of the *Abhayapaddhati* only includes this second verse from among the four original Apabhraṃśa verses in the Sanskrit text: *bdaḡ nyid bya ba byas nas ni | stong pa nyid la sems ma mdzad | skye kun srid pa 'jigs par lhung | rnal 'byor ma yi grogs po bzhengs ||*: "Doing one's own duties, do not dwell on emptiness. [While] the dreadful being of worldly existence falls, the darling of the *yoginī* rises" (Dorje 2009, p. 193). Translations mine.

<sup>54</sup> The version in the *Abhayapaddhati* diverges phonologically in a number of places, e.g., 3cd: *taha athaminnaṃ saala jaṇu pamiujja gaavasāu*, 4ab: *micham māṇa vi mā karahi piucchatta suṇṇahābhāva* (Dorje 2009, p. 53).

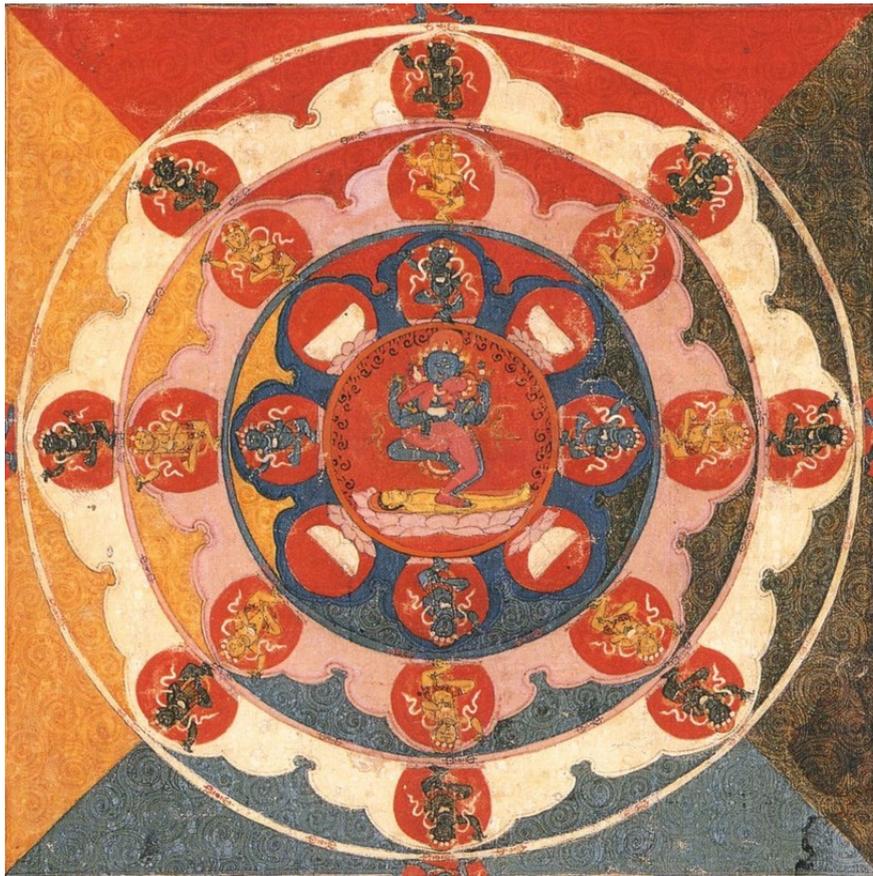
<sup>55</sup> "suṇasahāva" is undoubtedly a *bahuvrīhi* compound, meaning "One whose Nature is Emptiness." However, for the sake of clarity and aesthetics, I have chosen to translate it as "O Nature of Emptiness."

<sup>56</sup> (Bhattacharyya 1928, p. 501). Translations mine.

<sup>57</sup> (Dorje 2009, pp. 53–54. Bhattacharyya 1928, p. 501).

<sup>58</sup> (Dorje 2009, pp. 54–62. Bhattacharyya 1928, pp. 502–3).

<sup>59</sup> *sidhyanti ṣaṇmāsenaiva yogino nātra saṃśayah* (Bhattacharyya 1928, p. 503).



**Figure 3.** Buddhakapāla surrounded by *yoginīs* within a *maṇḍala*. (Himalayan Art Resource, Item 88556).

## 6. The *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra: Anuyoga* and *Mahāyoga*

The final *sādhana*s appear in a text that does not easily fit into our received classification standards for tantric Buddhist texts. The *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra* seems to straddle both canons of the Mahāyoga tantras and Yoginī tantras.<sup>60</sup> This ambiguity is made clear in its name; *Kṛṣṇayamāri* is closely related to the wrathful Buddha Yamāntaka/Vajrabhairava. As such, the *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra* would seem to be more accurately classified as a Mahāyoga tantra, a fact corroborated by its *maṇḍala*, comprising a majority of male Yamāris with four *yoginīs* (Figure 4).<sup>61</sup> This is a clear contrast with the *maṇḍalas* of the previous texts in which *yoginīs* predominate; however, here as well, *yoginīs* call out to the practitioner in Apabhraṃśa verses. In addition, while the first *sādhana* discussed here (*anuyoga*) exhibits the same ritual trope seen in the previous texts, the second *sādhana* (*mahāyoga*) significantly subverts it. These Apabhraṃśa verses appear in the root verses of the *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra*, the *anuyoga* verses in the seventeenth chapter and the *mahāyoga* verses in the twelfth chapter.<sup>62</sup> Chapter seventeen begins with the Buddha visualizing different Buddha-forms (*buddhabimbam*), and then the text declares that the practitioner becomes the *cakra*-bearer by the practice of the four [Vajra] songs (associated with the four *yoginīs*).<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, chapter twelve begins with the Buddha entering into different meditative concentrations (*samādhi*), each associated with one of the text's four *yoginīs* (Vajracarcikā, Vajravārāhī,

<sup>60</sup> Hatley groups this text as a Yoginī Tantra (thus in the same textual stratum as the previous texts), while noting that it is also more commonly considered a Mahāyoga Tantra (Hatley 2016, p. 51; Dalton 2005, p. 155 fn.90).

<sup>61</sup> Respectively: Mohavajrayamāri, Piśunavajrayamāri, Rāgavajrayamāri, Īrsyāvajrayamāri, Dvesavajrayamāri, Mudgarayamāri, Daṇḍayamāri, Padmayamāri, Khadgayamāri. The *yoginīs* are: Vajracarcikā, Vajravārāhī, Vajrasarasvatī, and Vajragaurī (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, p. 1).

<sup>62</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, pp. 122, 78–79).

<sup>63</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, p. 121).

Vajrasarasvatī, and Vajragaurī), and thereupon recites each *yoginī*'s specific verse.<sup>64</sup> However, the actual contextualization of these verses within detailed *sādhanā* instructions does not appear in the root verses. Instead, they are provided in the commentary composed by Kumāracandra.

*Anuyoga* is the second phase of the four-fold yoga, defined in the root verses as the “arising of the stream of Vajrasattva” (after the generation of Vajrasattva in the first phase, “yoga”).<sup>65</sup> *Anuyoga* begins with summoning and worshipping the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and afterwards one visualizes the *maṇḍala* and numerous Sanskrit syllables stationed throughout. After dissolving the *maṇḍala*, one sees Vajrasattva, after which the four *yoginīs* appear. An important note here is that each of these *yoginīs* (Vajracarcikā, Vajravārāhī, Vajrasarasvatī, and Vajragaurī) are associated with long-standing Buddhist meditative states: loving kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), empathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*). These *yoginīs* then sing the verses sung by the Buddha at the beginning of chapter seventeen.<sup>66</sup>

*uṭṭha bharāḍaii karuṇākoha |*  
*tihuaṇa saalaha phedahi moha ||*

(Vajracarcikā)

Arise, O Bhagavan, whose feigned wrath is compassion.  
Cut the delusion of the material world!

*e caumāra parājia rāula |*  
*uṭṭha bharāḍā citteṃ vaiiila ||*

(Vajravārāhī)

You’ve overcome the four Māras, O Royal One.  
Arise O Bhagavān, [my] mind is stricken.

*loṇimanti acchasi suṇṇe |*  
*uṭṭha bharāḍā loaha puṇṇe ||*

(Vajrasarasvatī)

Summon forth the world, you who dwells in emptiness.  
Arise O Bhagavan, by the merit of the world!

*kaī tu acchasi sunaho viṇṭti |*  
*bodhisahāva loṇimaṇṭi ||*<sup>67</sup>

(Vajragaurī)

Why do you dwell in emptiness?  
O Nature of Enlightenment, summon forth the world!<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> “*pūjāgītam udānayām āsa*” (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 38–39).

<sup>65</sup> “*tan niṣyandodayo deva anuyogaḥ pratīyate*” KYT 17.9 (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 123).

<sup>66</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 125). However, the verses in the root verses and the versions in the *sādhanā* instructions display many phonetic differences.

<sup>67</sup> As in the Buddhakapāla verse 4b, I have chosen to translate this *bahuvrīhi* term as “Nature of Enlightenment,” cf. fn 55. (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 121–22).

<sup>68</sup> The Tibetan translation also differs from the original Apabhraṃśa, but far less so. The precise meaning of *sunaho viṇṭti* is unclear, however Kumāracandra glosses the term as “emptiness,” (“*sūnyatāyām ity arthaḥ*,” Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 122).

Immediately following these verses, the practitioner visualizes more syllables and the *sāadhanā* culminates in one becoming the Buddha Dveṣayamāri.<sup>69</sup> The next phase of the four-fold *yoga* is “*atiyoga*,” after which the practitioner enters the final phase of the four-fold *yoga*, “*mahāyoga*.” While the verses in *anuyoga* display the same conventions observed in the previous texts, the *sāadhanā* of *mahāyoga* significantly subverts them. *Mahāyoga* is defined as the “entrance to the gnosis-*cakra* (*jñāna-cakra*), tasting its nectar, as well as the Great Worship and Praise.”<sup>70</sup> In this *sāadhanā* the practitioner beseeches the Buddhas for consecration, visualizes the assembly of Yamāris and *yoginīs* with their tutelary Buddhas, and engages in more subtle *yoga* within the visualized *maṇḍala*. Thereupon, the practitioner takes on the face or form (Skt. *mukhena*)<sup>71</sup> of the *maṇḍala*’s four *yoginīs* in turn, and worships the *maṇḍala* with the songs uttered by the Buddha in chapter twelve of the root text:<sup>72</sup>

*aḍeḍe kiṭṭayamāri guru raktalūva sahāva |*

*haḍe tua pekhia bhīmi guru chaḍḍahi koha sahāva ||*

(Vajracarcikā)

*A ḍe ḍe*<sup>73</sup> Black Yamāri Guru, you are wrathful in form and nature.

Seeing you I grow frightened, O Guru, abandon this wrathful nature.<sup>74</sup>

*paiṇaccamṭe kaṇvi ai saggamaccapālu |*

*kiṭṭa bhinnāñjaṇa kohamaṇu ṇaccahi tuhu ve ālu ||*<sup>75</sup>

(Vajravārāhī)

You dance and upend everything in heaven, on earth, and in the underworld.

Dark like black eyeliner, you dance like a Vetāla, O Fierce One.

*kālākhaṇva pamāṇahā bahuviha ṇimmasi rua |*

*vajjasarāssaī viṇṇamami ṇaccahi tuha mahāsuharua ||*

(Vajrasarasvatī)

You are black, short in stature, and take on various forms,

You dance and you are of the nature of great bliss, I, Vajrasarasvatī supplicate you.

<sup>69</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 124–25).

<sup>70</sup> *jñānacakrapraveśaś ca amṛtāsvādam eva ca | mahāpūjā stutiś cāpi mahāyoga iti smṛtaḥ ||* KYT 17.11 (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 123).

<sup>71</sup> The term *mukhena* here can possibly be interpreted as meaning that the *sādhaka* faces each *yoginī* while reciting the *yoginī*’s respective verse. However, based on the context from the root verses in chapter twelve where the Buddha explicitly sings these songs after entering into the respective *samādhis* of each *yoginī*, I think it is more likely that in the *sāadhanā* of *mahāyoga* the *sādhaka* takes on the form of each *yoginī* by entering it’s the *yoginī*’s respective *samādhi*.

<sup>72</sup> As with the *anuyoga* verses, here too there are many phonological divergences from the versions in the root text (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 127–28).

<sup>73</sup> The word “*aḍeḍe*” may be an elaborated Prakrit form of Skt. *ari*, “enemy” (*yamāri* = “Enemy of Death”). However, it is also perhaps untranslatable and onomatopoeic, hence in the Tibetan translation it is transliterated (*a kyi kyi*) (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 154).

<sup>74</sup> The translation of *pāda* d presents numerous issues. Kumāracandra’s commentary glosses *guru* in the accusative case (*gurum*), *chaḍḍahi* as the second person imperative singular (Skt. *tyaja*), and *koha sahāva* as *ko ’yam svabhāvaḥ*, all in the nominative singular (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 78). As such, a literal translation would be “Enlightened Nature, abandon the guru.” I have chosen to interpret *guru* in the vocative, and *koha sahāva* in the accusative. Furthermore, the Tibetan translation departs significantly from the Apabhraṃśa. *Pāda* d: “*khro ba’i rang bzhin ’de mthong mdzod*” “Behold this wrathful nature” (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 154). I followed the Tibetan in my own translation.

<sup>75</sup> Kumāracandra glosses *saggamaccapālu* as *svarga-martya-pātālāni* (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 38). I take *paiṇaccamṭe* as Apabhraṃśa for the Skt. *pratirṭyante*.

*hrīḥ śṭrīḥ manteṇa pheḍahi kehu tihuana bhānti |  
karuṇākoha bharāḍaii taha kuru jaḡu pekkhanti ||*<sup>76</sup>

(Vajragaurī)

With the mantra *hrīḥ śṭrīḥ*, cut the delusion of the three realms!

Therefore, O Great Lord, Whose Wrath is Compassion, do [your duties!], [for] the world looks on

In the root verses of chapter twelve, the Buddha recites these verses after entering the respective *samādhis* of the four *yoginīs* (i.e., the four *brahmāvihāras*), and in this *sadhana*, the practitioner does as well. Thus, the long-standing Buddhist *brahmāvihāras* are imagined as *yoginīs* in a tantric context. Afterwards, the practitioner prostrates before each of the *maṇḍala*'s Yamāris and the ritual is complete.



**Figure 4.** *Kṛṣṇayamāri maṇḍala*. In the center is the figure Yamāntaka/Dveṣavajrayamāri. Encircling him are the eight other *yamāris*: in the East Mohavajrayamāri, in the South Piśunavajrayamāri, in the West Rāgavajrayamāri, and in the North Īrsyāvajrayamāri. Between them in the intermediate directions are Mudgarayamāri, Daṇḍayamāri, Padmayamāri, and Khadgayamāri. In the corners outside of this circular array are the *yoginīs*, Vajracarcikā, Vajravārāhī, Vajrasarasvatī, and Vajragaurī, according to Kumāracandra's description (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 1–4, 8). (Himalayan Art Resource, Item 65464).

<sup>76</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 78–79).

## 7. Conclusions

“The Sanskrit in which the Tantras are written, is, as a rule, just as barbarous as their contents.”

—Maurice Winternitz (1933, p. 401)

Scholars have long observed that tantric literature has an affinity for nonstandard language. John Newman has observed that the Sanskrit in the *Kālacakra Tantra* “is not Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (Buddhist Ārṣa), nor is it simply substandard Sanskrit. It is Sanskrit into which various types of nonstandard forms have been intentionally introduced.”<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, he accepts Puṇḍarīka’s explanation for this, specifically that these linguistic variations and “mistakes” are not due to ignorance or incompetence, but rather intentionally included to counter excessive attachment to “correct language,” and teach disciples to rely on inner meaning rather than the strict grammatical form.<sup>78</sup> However, these variations and “mistakes” also became standard and expected in tantric literature; Szántó observes that the author(s) of the *Catuṣpīṭha Tantra* went out of their way to use ungrammatical forms to such an extent that the text itself is almost indecipherable, even to contemporary commentators.<sup>79</sup> This use of nonstandard Sanskrit also reflects the general Buddhist resistance to Brahmanical religion and its concomitant linguistic ideology. An affinity for nonstandard Sanskrit is also a feature of Śaiva tantric texts. Remarking on the tantric Śaiva *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, Törzsök notes that “the more the language of the text differs from the classical Sanskrit of the orthodox, the more esoteric its teaching is.”<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, in the *Buddhakaṭāla Tantra*, many of the chapters conclude with a capstone *dohā* in Apabhraṃśa. These are very direct, colloquial, and didactic verses that encapsulate (or challenge) the chapter’s content.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, in the *Abhidhānottara Tantra*, a band of assembled *ḍākinīs* delightedly sing to the practitioner in ecstatic Apabhraṃśa verse upon their successful initiation.<sup>82</sup> As such, there is a clear intentionality behind the language register in tantric texts, allusive yet direct, used for emphasis, directness, and intimacy.

Within the context of these *maṇḍala* visualization rituals, these “Goddess songs” take on an extremely intimate register, expressing mingled sexual and altruistic passion on the part of the *yoginīs*. Within the liminal space of the *maṇḍala*, these *yoginīs* call out to the practitioner to embrace them and work for the benefit of all sentient beings, both sine qua non in tantric Buddhism (wisdom and compassion). This intentional language choice may reflect their social position, as Isaacson notes, however it also recalls the sociolinguistics of Sanskrit drama. In Sanskrit drama, one’s social positionality is indexed by their language register, with high class men speaking Sanskrit and women and social inferiors speaking varieties of Prakrit.<sup>83</sup> The link between Prakrit and women in Sanskrit drama is clear, yet when juxtaposed with the other Apabhraṃśa verses in tantric Buddhist texts, this link is problematized. For example, in the *Hevajra Tantra*, the male Buddha Hevajra speaks directly to the assembled *yoginīs* in an Apabhraṃśa verse, to soothe and revive them after they are dumbstruck by his profound teachings.<sup>84</sup> This diglossic<sup>85</sup> shift between different languages and registers illustrates this intentionality acutely, yet while Wedemeyer is correct in noting the semi-artificial nature of

<sup>77</sup> (Newman 1988, p. 132).

<sup>78</sup> (Newman 1988, pp. 126–30).

<sup>79</sup> “... the nearly total deconstruction of the language may have resulted from competition. Very coarsely put, the author was seeking to create a super-Aiśa form of the language to outdo his rivals. ... we must also consider the somewhat disturbing but not implausible scenario that the more important role of a scripture is simply to exist rather than to make sense” (Szántó 2012a, p. 13).

<sup>80</sup> (Törzsök 1999, p. ii).

<sup>81</sup> e.g., *Buddhakaṭāla Tantra* 9.9 and 13.24 (Luo 2010, pp. 5, 32).

<sup>82</sup> (Kalf 1979, pp. 321–22).

<sup>83</sup> E.g., the anguished reunion of King Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā in Act V of the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. Here, the King Duṣyanta speaks consistently in Sanskrit, while Śakuntalā speaks in Mahārāṣṭrī Prakrit (Kale 2017, pp. 178–87). However, Prakrits are not reserved exclusively for women; at the beginning of Act VI the lowly fisherman speaks Māgadhī Prakrit to the two guardsmen (Kale 2017, pp. 196–98).

<sup>84</sup> *khīti jala pavana hūtāsānaha tumhe bhāñi devī | sunaha pavañcami tatum ahu jo ṇa jānāi kovi || HT II.4.67 (Snellgrove 1964, p. 70).*

<sup>85</sup> See (Davidson 2002, pp. 269–77).

Apabhraṃśa, it can hardly be dismissed as “contrived marginality” as he would insist.<sup>86</sup> Instead it communicates an intimacy and directness, similar to the didactic (if allusive) *dohās* of Saraha and other *mahāsiddhas*. However, these verses are far more diverse and numerous throughout tantric Buddhist literature than these *dohās*, and they possess their own linguistic currency, similar to, but distinct from, mantras or *dhāraṇīs*.<sup>87</sup> These verses and the use of Apabhraṃśa in tantric texts deserves a deeper dedicated study,<sup>88</sup> but for the moment we can observe that in this literature Apabhraṃśa is reserved for particularly esoteric or direct intimate contexts.<sup>89</sup>

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## Appendix A

The *Kṛṣṇayamāri Tantra*'s seventeenth chapter ends with the text's four *yoginīs* singing another Apabhraṃśa song. After the root text defines the four-fold yoga (KYT 17.8-11), Vajrasattva recites the intermediary verses of the chapter, which preach a variety of fairly common tantric Buddhist injunctions (e.g., maintaining loving kindness to all beings (13), not disrespecting the guru (12), respecting women (16), etc.). After hearing Vajrasattva's speech, “all the assembled Buddhas whose forms were great supreme bliss” became silent and then burst forth with an upsurge of song (*udāna*).<sup>90</sup> These seven verses are an apophatic description of the state of consciousness that arises from the practice of Vajrasattva (*vajrasattvaprayogena*): astonishing (*suvismayam*), eternal (*śāsvataḥ*), and devoid of material elements and bodily experience.<sup>91</sup> Inspired by this Sanskrit *udāna*, Mahācarikā and the other *yoginīs* respond with an *udāna* in Apabhraṃśa.<sup>92</sup>

*ṇimmala śuddhadeho paramānaṃda |*

*puṇṇassāvego sambandha ||*

This Supreme Joy is Stainless and Pure in Body,

It is divorced from both Merit and Sin.<sup>93</sup>

*karuṇācittaṃ acchāi savva |*

*eku mahādhani tathatā davva ||*

All that exists is the Mind of Compassion,

One great treasury of suchness and substance.

*paramānanda saī asahāva |*

*mahāsuha bhāveṃ dhamma sahāva ||*

<sup>86</sup> (Wedemeyer 2013, p. 184).

<sup>87</sup> With the crucial distinction that proper pronunciation and phonetic reproduction is not valued or necessary, as seen in the numerous versions of these verses through Tantric Buddhist literature.

<sup>88</sup> In the interests of time I could not consult the verses from the *Khasama Tantra*. However I will address them in my dissertation, which will focus on Apabhraṃśa verses throughout Tantric Buddhist literature.

<sup>89</sup> In the Appendix A this link particularly to *yoginīs* is emphasized.

<sup>90</sup> *atha bhāgavantaḥ sarvatathāgatā mahāparamānandarūpiṇo vajrasattvasya vavanam upaśrutya tuṣṇīṃbhāvaṃ gatā idam udānam udānāyām āsu* (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 132).

<sup>91</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, pp. 132–34).

<sup>92</sup> *atha bhāgavatyō mahācarikādyā idam udānam udānāyām āsu* (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 135)

<sup>93</sup> *Pāda c* of this verse is extremely corrupt and difficult to translate. Here I am relying on the Tibetan: “*bsod nams sdiḡ pa dag dang ma 'brel bas*” “Merit and sin are divorced from [this state]” (Rinpoche and Dvivedī 1992, p. 279).

Supreme Joy lacks inherent essence,  
 The nature of Dharma is Great Bliss.<sup>94</sup>  
*ṇaitahi bhaṇa du pūrṇayāu |*  
*palaaii attīṇaiva sabhāu ||*<sup>95</sup>

Therefore there is neither form, merit, nor sin.

And also neither arising nor pure release.<sup>96</sup>

These verses do not follow the pattern of the songs from the rest of the texts cited so far, and Bhayani notes are considerably corrupt,<sup>97</sup> making them very difficult to translate. These verses also likely presented issues for Kumāracandra, who glosses over only the two most obvious terms from verses twenty-nine and thirty (*ṇimmala*→*nirmala*, *śuddha*), and whose running commentary on verses thirty-one and thirty-two is extremely loose and boilerplate in content.<sup>98</sup> These issues aside, these verses are significant for underscoring the connection between Apabhraṃśa verses and *yoginīs* in this text, and also serve as a capstone for the chapter as a whole. Furthermore, they stand out in the text like a *mantra* or *dhāraṇī*, highlighting the significance of this language in tantric Buddhist texts.

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<sup>94</sup> Given the corruption in this verse I am relying on the Tibetan: “chos rnam gno bo bde da chen po'i dngos | mchog tu dga'i ba 'di yi ngo bo nyid” (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, p. 281).

<sup>95</sup> KYT 17.29-32 (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, p. 135).

<sup>96</sup> Given the difficulty of translating this corrupt and opaque verse, I am following the Tibetan: “de la gzugs med bsod rnam med cing sdig ba med | skye ba dang ni 'gag pa dag ni yod ma yin” (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, p. 279).

<sup>97</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, p. 151).

<sup>98</sup> (Rinpoche and Dvivedi 1992, pp. 135–36).

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