CHAPTER 18

A Sexual Ritual with Māyā in
Matsyendrasaṃhitā 40

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1 Introduction

In this short article I revisit the Matsyendrasaṃhitā (hereafter MaSaṃ), a Kubjikā-Tripurā oriented tantric yoga text of the Śaḍanvayaśāmbhava tradition, probably from thirteenth-century South India, core chapters of which I edited and translated for my PhD studies under the supervision of Professor Alexis Sanderson. My purpose there was to demonstrate that this text provides evidence for a transitional phase in the history of Śaiva Tantra, revealing aspects of a transition from Kaula practices to early Haṭhayoga. In the present essay I analyse, and partly edit, MaSaṃ chapter 40, in which a unique and somewhat ambiguous variant of a Śrīvidyā-type sexual ritual is described, and which Professor Sanderson was kind enough to read with me in Oxford in 2005. I would like to dedicate this paper to him, offering new interpretations of some key elements, and thus updating my previous analysis (Kiss 2009, 66).1

My approach is based on textual criticism: by restoring the text using four available manuscripts, I aim at giving an accurate translation and interpretation, which then enables me to draw some modest conclusions regarding the history of Śaivism around the thirteenth century.2 I would like to contribute to the contemporary research on Śaiva sexual rituals which focuses on their religio-historical importance. For although it is now generally acknowledged that sexual rituals are a distinctive feature of some of the Śaiva tantric tradi-

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1 On the Śaḍanvayaśāmbhava tradition, see Sanderson 1988, 687; 2002, 2–3; 2014, 72–73, 76–77, 80. On details concerning the MaSaṃ, see Sanderson 2014, 80, Kiss 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2020 (forthcoming). All quotations from the MaSaṃ are either from Kiss 2020 (forthcoming) or from my draft edition of the text.

2 I would definitely like to steer clear of some of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century, and contemporary approaches to the topic of tantric sexual rituals, which include, as White observes (2003, 4–5): (1) denial, (2) emphasis on the philosophical reinterpretation of these rites, “while generally denying the foundational importance of transgressivity or sexuality to the traditions themselves,” and (3) the commodification of New Age “Tantric Sex” as a commercial product.
tions, much work remains to be done on this topic.\textsuperscript{3} Alongside Sanderson's findings in many of his publications,\textsuperscript{4} as well as publications by Dupuche (2003), White (2003) and Biernacki (2007), Hatley's work, especially on the \textit{asidhārāvrata} (Hatley 2018, 195–215), a sexual ritual attested in the \textit{Picumata/Brahmayāmala} (BrāYā), chapter 40, as well as in the \textit{Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā} and the \textit{Mataṅgapārameśvara}, is fundamental and is a source of inspiration and in many respects a model for this essay. Mallinson's exploration of the hathayogic techniques of \textit{khecarīmudrā}, \textit{vajroli} and \textit{amarolī} is closely related to this field of research (Mallinson 2007, 221–223, notes 333–334 and 336–337). My own contribution so far (Kiss 2015) comprises an analysis of the BraYā's relevant teachings in BraYā 45 on sexual encounters that involve the gathering and magical use of sexual fluids.

A detailed overview of the types of sexual ritual found in tantric and haṭhayogic texts is beyond the scope of this short essay,\textsuperscript{5} but a number of their distinctive features can be listed here. This list mainly concerns the variable nature of the female and male partners, and the nature of the sexual act. Note that categorisation of a phenomenon like this is greatly complicated by that fact that many features overlap:

1. sexual rituals involving restraint or celibacy;\textsuperscript{6}
2. a sexual act at the end of which the practitioner applies the \textit{vajroli}\textsuperscript{7}muḍrā, “the practice of urethral suction [...] to draw up the combined sexual fluids”;
3. sexual rituals producing male and female sexual fluids, which are then used and consumed for magical purposes;\textsuperscript{8}
4. sexual rituals with one's own wife/partner vs. other partners;\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{3} As Shaman Hatley also remarks (2018, 195–196).
\textsuperscript{4} E.g. Sanderson 2005a, 110–114, note 63; 2007, 284–287; 2009, 132 ff., 294, note 699; and 2014, 57.
\textsuperscript{5} See a similarly non-comprehensive but more detailed list of types of tantric sexual rituals in Hatley 2018, 196–199.
\textsuperscript{6} E.g. the \textit{asidhārāvrata}, “Razor’s Edge Observance,” as taught in BraYā 43, which involves sexual contact with a beautiful woman without the sādhaka’s engaging in orgasm. (See Hatley 2018, 195–215.) See also BraYā 45.270–296ab, in which a sexual ritual involving “restraint” (\textit{avagraha}) is taught (Kiss 2015, 49).
\textsuperscript{7} See Mallinson (2007, 189 note 149). \textit{Vajroli} is described e.g. in the Vaiṣṇava \textit{Dattātreya-yogaśāstra}, vv. 299–314.
\textsuperscript{8} E.g. BraYā 45, where several variants of a basic type of sexual ritual are described (see Kiss 2015).
\textsuperscript{9} See for example BraYā 24.32cd, where one's mother, sister, daughter and wife are listed as possible partners (figuratively or otherwise): \textit{mātā ca bhaginī putrī bhāryā vai dūtayaḥ smṛtāḥ}. See also Jayaratha ad \textit{Tantrāloka} 29.102 addressing the question after citing the line \textit{svapatnī bhaginī mātā duhitā vā śubhā sakhī: ityādyuktyā svapatny api atra kasmāt na parīgātā ...} (“In
sexual rituals with one partner vs. several partners;¹⁰
sexual encounters with human or visionary Yoginīs, or other divine beings;¹¹
highly aestheticized, philosophic descriptions of Śaiva sexual rituals;¹²
sexual rituals involving the visualisation of a goddess or the mental projection of the image of a goddess onto the female partner;¹³ and so forth.¹⁴

The passages from MaSaṃ 40 analyzed and presented below seem to represent a variety of the last type listed above, but they are somewhat ambivalent: after mentioning sexual encounters with (human) Yoginīs (verses 38 and 40–41), the text focuses on a somewhat ambiguous sexual ritual which could be read either as involving an exclusively visualised goddess as partner or as prescribing the projection of an image of the goddess onto a human sexual partner. It also teaches the magical use of male sexual fluid (real or imaginary). MaSaṃ 40 is somewhat ambiguous in other aspects as well, and it seems that it is through the analysis of this ambiguity that we may gather clues concerning the history of late Śaiva traditions and the transition between Śaiva Tantra and early Haṭhayoga.

2 Details and Ambiguities

The beginning of the chapter in question, MaSaṃ 40.1–28, stands somewhat apart from the rest of the chapter and does not discuss sexual rituals. Nevertheless, a short analysis of it may be useful here. The text starts (1–6ab) with the proclamation of its topic: the rituals of Kula/Kaula conduct (kulācāravidhi) characterised by “the great non-dualist practice” (mahādvaita) and “freedom

these kind of statements, why is one's own wife not enumerated?) See also Dupuche 2003, 249 ff.
¹⁰ E.g. BraYā 45,574cd–557ab, where sexual rituals with four to eight women are taught. See also Jayadrathayāmala, Śaṭka 4, National Archives, Kathmandu, MS 1–1468, ff. 206v3–207v5 and Kṣemarāja’s Daśāvatāracarita 10.26. For these references, see Sanderson 2007, 284–287; and 2009, 294 note 699.
¹¹ E.g. the sādhaka engages in “great amusement” with Nāga girls and Āsurīs (demonesses) in BraYā 59,107cd (f. 254r): nāgakanyaiś mahākrīḍā āsurībhiś ca jāyate.
¹² E.g. Tantrāloka 29 (see Dupuche 2003).
¹³ E.g. Nityotsava, p. 60: atha tām devarūpāṃ vibhāvyam ... (“And visualising her [the sexual partner] in a godly form ...”).
¹⁴ This list could easily be expanded by using more variables, as Shaman Hatley has suggested (personal communication): partners; place/space/circumstances; roles of mantra, visualization, accoutrements; kinds of meaning given to the practice; aims/goals; fluids; etc.
from conventional practices” (nirācāra), both familiar terms from earlier Śaiva tantras such as the BraYā. Verses 6cd–16 praise and recommend ritual bathing at a special sīvatīrtha, in “Śiva’s water” or “water embodying Śiva” (śīvamaye jale). In the context of the MaSaṃ, it is very probable that what is meant here is bathing in or with, and consuming, urine or other bodily fluids. Mallinson (2007, 221–223, notes 333–334, 336–337) has shown convincingly that the practice of bathing with urine was not unknown in Kāpālika and haṭhayogic traditions. On the other hand, in light of the second half of the chapter, it is not inconceivable that semen is what is hinted at here. In either case, the application of this magical fluid involves transgression and thus should be carried out in a secret place (16cd). Verse 18 names the miraculous fluid as amarī, a term echoed in MaSaṃ 27.5 as amarīrasa. That chapter, MaSaṃ 27, teaches concoctions of herbs and physical secrations such as fæces, urine, menstrual blood, phlegm (?) and semen (?) (vīn-mūtra-rajo-recaka-sārakāḥ) associated with Lokeśa, Keśava, Rudra, Īśa and Sadeśvara, respectively (27.2, see Mallinson [2007, 220 note 328]). In MaSaṃ 27.5a Sadāśiva (i.e. probably Sadeśvara, or rather the substance associated with him, probably semen) is said to be the best among them (sadāśivavo jāneyas). This may indicate that the meaning of amarī (and sudhā, amṛta etc.) is flexible; it may refer not only to urine, but to other bodily fluids as well. Amarī should be drunk after reciting the appropriate mantra and should be massaged on one’s body (27.21–26ab), similarly to what is taught in MaSaṃ 40.64–65, where it is clearly semen.

The second part of our chapter, MaSaṃ 40.29 ff., commences to further describe kulācāra, and claims that sexual rituals should be performed either with Yoginis or with Māyā-type women (verse 38). Here follows an edition and translation of verses 29–38:

[kulācāraniṁrṇayam]

ataḥ paraṁ śṛṇu śive kulācārasya nīṁrṇayam |
samprāpya siddhaśaṁtanaṁ gurum daivaṁ sadā yajet ||40.29||
gurupūjārato yogi parāṃ siddhim avāpnyāt
| guruh khaṭvāṃ thāth āṣayāṃ vastram abharanāṇi ca ||40.30||
pādukāṃ chatram ajināṃ pātram anyad athāpi vā |
pādena sprāte yas tu śire dhṛtvāṣṭakaṃ japet ||40.31||
gurunindāparam drṣṭvā ghātayed athavā śapet |
sthānaṃ vā tat parityajya gacched yady akśamo bhavet ||40.32||
kulapūjāṃ na nindeta yoginam yoginīm api |
unmattāṃ puṣṭītāṃ nārīṃ surākumbham śivaṃ gurum ||40.33||
nindaṇāḥ bhrāṣyaṭe sadyaḥ paratreḥa ca pārvati |
pāsunāṃ prāmaṇaḥ na seveta paśūcchitaṃ na kāmayet ||40.34||
yoginīmelanaṃ kārayam na seveta paśuṣtriyaṃ |
nocchiṣām paśave dadyāt na nārīṃ nindayet kvacit ||40.35||
ekbhāvaṃ prakurvita prthagbhāvaṃ na kārayet |
vrthā pānaṃ na kurvita na vṛthā māṃsabhākaṇāṃ ||40.36||
asāṃskṛtaṃ na kuryām mantraṃ mahāṣṭakam āgraset |
na kuryān mantragosṭhiṣu saucam ācrāmādikam |
yadi kuryāt pramādena yoginiśāpa āpatet ||40.37||
bhuṇḍyād yat striyaṃ devi śivasaktyātmabhāvayā |
yoginīṃ sevayen nityaṃ māyāṃ vā pāśavīṃ na ca ||40.38||
After this, O Śivā, hear the exposition of the Kula Conduct (kulācāra). After he has joined the tradition of the Siddhas, he should worship his guru as divine. (40.29)

The yogin who is engaged in the worship of his guru can obtain the highest Power (siddhi). The guru’s bedstead, his bedding, clothes, ornaments, sandals, parasol, antelope-skin, bowl or anything else: if he touches any of these with his feet, he should place them on his head and recite [mantras] eight times. (40.30–31)

If he sees anybody who is abusing the guru or at least curse him. Or, if he is unable [to do so], he should leave the place. (40.32)

He should not ridicule the worship of the [Yoginī] clans (kulapūjā), or despise yogins or yoginis, women when they are intoxicated, or nourished,18 or the wine-pot, or Śiva, or the guru. (40.33)

Contempt [for these] will make him fall immediately here in this world and in the other world, O Pārvatī. He should not follow the path of the paśus [i.e. that of the uninitiated] and he should not long for the leftover of paśus. (40.34)

He should strive for an encounter (melana) with the Yoginis. He should not have sex (na seveta) with uninitiated women (paśustrī).19 He

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18 Perhaps: “pregnant.” Alternatively, some kind of sexual interpretation is needed here.

19 See 40.38.
should not give leftovers to the uninitiated (paśu). He should never abuse women. (40.35)

He should treat [all phenomena] as one, not as separate. He should not drink [alcohol] or eat meat idly [with no ritual purpose]. (40.36)

He should not drink wine without first purifying it [with mantras], and he should consume meat after he has purified it with that [wine]. He should not answer the call of nature, should not sip water, etc., while reciting mantras or in an assembly. If he does so out of folly, the curse of the Yoginīs will fall on him. (40.37)

When (yat) [the yogin] wants to enjoy (bhuṇjīyāt) a woman, O Goddess, visualising himself as Śiva [and her as] Śakti, he should always have sex with a Yoginī or with a Māyā [type of woman], and never with a Pāśavī [i.e. a paśu-natured woman, or more precisely someone who has not been initiated]. (40.38)

Noteworthy among the above are verse 31, which is more or less parallel with Kubjikāmatatantra 3.133cd–134ab, reconfirming that the cult of the MaSaṃ draws heavily on the Paścimāmnāya; verse 33, which warns against the abuse of women; and verse 35, which seems to mention only Yoginīs (recommended for sexual encounters) and uninitiated women (not recommended), and seems to be silent on any other category, in contrast to verse 38, in which the third type, Māyā, first appears.

The subsequent verses, 40 and 41, define a Yoginī: she follows the Kula path, is initiated, uses alcohol in her rituals, and generally gives the impression of being a human female practitioner. Rather awkwardly, the text does not give any other detail, but goes on defining her antithesis, the Pāśavī: an uninitiated woman, who is hostile to Śaivism and who should be avoided (41cd–42).

A sexual ritual with the third type, Māyā, is what the rest of the text focuses on. It is here that major ambiguities come into the picture. The key aspects mentioned in the description of the Māyā-type woman are: she has all the...
auspicious characteristics required (sarvalakṣaṇasampannā), has neither rūpa nor kula (kularūpavivarjitā),24 and is to be approached by bhāva (bhāvagamyā, 40.43).25 All of these terms remain rather ambiguous without the help of clarification based upon other passages. Here follows the text and translation of this section:

[yoginī māyā pāśavī ca]

devy uvāca |
kā nārī yoginī deva kā māyā kā ca pāśavī |
etāsāṁ saṁgame doṣam guṇam ca vada bhairava ||40.39||

[yoginī]
bhairava uvāca |
kulamārgagatā nārī paśumārgavivarjitā |
mādhvimadasamādhmātā paśupāśavivarjitā ||40.40||

[pāśavī]
vikalpakuṭilā pāpā kulācāraparāṁmukhi ||40.41||
śivanindāparā devi tatsaparyāvirodhini |
pāśavī sā mayākhyātā māyākhyām śṛṇu suvrate ||40.42||

24 That kula and rūpa are to be understood as a dvandva compound is confirmed in 40.44ab: yā māyā rūparahitā kulahīnā maheśvara.

25 Elsewhere I have argued (Kiss 2009, 57–60) that while bhāva in the MaSaṃ is mostly to be interpreted as “visualisation,” which is a rather common meaning for this word, an additional specification may be required: bhāva refers to a particularly emotive process of creating mental images. I suspect that bhāva is preferred in the MaSaṃ to dhyāna (although dhyāna, dhyāyet etc. also abound) for its extremely wide range of meanings. One of the basic meanings of bhāva is “being, becoming.” Another is “emotion, sentiment” or even “passion, love.” I think that all these rather different senses of the word are condensed in the yogic key term of bhāva in the MaSaṃ. It is a creation of something in the mind by the yogin, towards which he should also create a feeling, an empathic attitude, perhaps passionate devotion, which will result in the ultimate condition, the desired state of mind: the union with the object, with the deity, with Śiva, or in our case, with a visualised goddess.
Yoginī, Māyā and Pāśavī

Devī spoke:
O God, what kind of a woman is a Yoginī? Who is Māyā and who is Pāśavī? Tell me, O Bhairava, the pros and cons of having sex with them. (40.39)

Bhairava spoke:
A woman who is on the Kula Path [of the Yoginī clans] (kulamārga), who avoids the path of bound souls (paśumārga) [i.e. the path of the uninitiated], who is elevated by intoxication induced by liquor, and is free of the bonds that fetter the soul (paśupāśa), and whose mind is filled with the bliss of wine (madirā), is [called] a Yoginī in Śiva's teaching. (40.40–41ab)

[Pāśavī:] her mental attitude is dishonest, she is wicked, hostile to Kaula Practice (kulācāra). She tends to abuse Śiva, O Goddess, and to obstruct his worship. This [type], the Pāśavī, has been [now] taught by me. O Suvratā, hear the one that is called Māyā. (40.41cd–42)

A woman who possesses all favourable characteristics (lakṣaṇa) [but] has neither a [Yoginī] Clan/noble family (kula) nor a [human/material] form/beauty (rūpa), and who is to be approached by empathic imagination (bhāva), O Maheśānī, is called Māyā. (40.43)

The term rūpa in 43b may refer to “material form” and a lack of rūpa would then indicate that Māyā, the preferred sexual partner, is solely imaginary. In this case sarvalakṣaṇasampannā indicates that she is to be visualised as a divine being with great beauty. But how to interpret “devoid of kula” then? The term kula is
often used in the sense of “a clan of Yoginis.” Is she then not a member of any Yogini clan? Does she transcend the clans of Yoginis, being the supreme Goddess? This interpretation is supported and at the same time refuted by MaSaṃ 22.24 (which in fact is a citation of Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, alias Vāmakeśvarīmata, 4.14):

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\begin{align*}
kulayoṣit kulam tyaktvā param puruṣam eti sā |
nirlaksyaṃ nirguṇaṃ caiva kularūpaṇavivarjitaṃ ||22.24||
\end{align*}
\]

That noble lady abandons her family (kula) and goes to the highest man, who is invisible, who lacks qualities, and is devoid of kula and form.

Here, in the MaSaṃ as well as the Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava, the supreme soul (param puruṣam) is described as having neither kula nor rūpa: as being immaterial and formless. But the word kula is used in a double sense in the case of the female subject of the sentence (kuṇḍalinī in fact): she leaves her/the body to unite with the Supreme Soul as a noble lady (kulayoṣit) leaves her family (kulam tyaktvā) to unite with her husband. This does not make it easier to interpret MaSaṃ 40.43b (kularūpaṇavivarjita): the sexual partner might be a woman who was not born in an eminent family, i.e. is of low birth (kula-vivarjita), and who lacks beauty (rūpaṇavivarjita), “beauty” being a natural way...

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26 See e.g. Sanderson (1988, 671–672): “All Yoginis belong to the family (kula) or lineage (gotra) of one or other of a number of ‘higher’ maternal powers, and in any instance this parentage is ascribed on the evidence of certain physical and behavioural characteristics. An adept in the cult of Yoginis can identify members of as many as sixty-three of these occult sisterhoods, but is most vitally concerned with the eight major families of the Mothers (mātṛ) Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Indrāṇī, Vārāhī, Cāmuṇḍā and Mahālakṣmī.” See also Hatley (2007, 13–23, 33, 392, etc.).

27 Cf. Tāntrikābhidhanakośa, vol. I, sv. akula: “Dans les traditions (āmnāya*) du Kula, c’est la Réalité lumineuse suprême, l’absolu inconditionné: anuttarataṃ param dhāma tad evākulaṃ ucyate (Tāntrāloka 3.143ab),” etc.

28 em.; nirākulaṃ Cod.

29 Cf. Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava 4.14: kulayoṣit kulam tyaktvā param puruṣam eti sā | nirlaksyaṃ nirguṇaṃ ca kularūpaṇavivarjitaṃ ||

30 Cf. Jayaratha ad Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava 4.14: tadā kulam sārīram apahāya akulapadāvasthitam param piṛṇam […] kulena sārīraṇa tadādharmane rūpeṇa ca vivarjitaṃ nirāvaranasa-bhāvam, ata eva nirguṇaṃ puruṣaṃ, param pramāṭāram, eti tadaikātmyam asādayatīty arthaḥ (“Then leaving behind the kula, i.e. the body, she goes to the one who is in the realm of akula, the supreme, i.e. full […] Person, the highest authority, who is without a body and without bodily form, with his innate nature manifest and therefore lacking qualities, i.e. she reaches oneness with Him. This is the meaning [of this verse].”)
of translating rūpa. In this case, sarvalakṣaṇasampannā (40.43a) refers to the form she assumes during the yogin’s visualisation, and bhāvagamyā (40.43) may suggest that a sexual ritual with her requires this visualisation. Alternatively, the ideal sexual partner might be one who is immaterial and formless (kularūpavivarjitā): a visualised goddess, or, as a matter of fact, kuṇḍalini. As we have seen, in the context of the yogin’s sexual rituals, first two, then three types of partners are enumerated: one, who is hostile to Śaivism, is to be avoided; initiated human Yoginis are ideal, but are not dwelt upon in the text, perhaps because they were less and less available at the time of the composition of the MaSaṃ; and as a third alternative, the text either suggests pure visualisation or an uninitiated woman of low birth, without any particular charm, as the locus of visualisation of the Goddess.

The text goes on to give instructions on visualisation needed for the sexual ritual. The yogin should visualise himself as Śiva in the form of Kāmeśvara, and his partner as a goddess:

[māyāyā saṃgaḥ]

devy uvāca |
yā māyā rūparahitā kulahīnā maheśvara |
yogināḥ samgamas tasyāḥ kathāṃ bhavati tad vada ||40.44||
bhairava uvāca |
śṛṇu devi pravakṣyāmi māyayā saṃgam adbhutam |
yad amoghaṃ maheśāni durvijñeyam utāparaiḥ ||40.45||
yogasiddhivihīnaiś ca yogibhiḥ suranāyaki |

44 uvāca | JaJa; u- Jb, uvā- Well |
44a yā | J; omitted in Well (pāda a is a na-vipulā) |
44b maheśvara | Well; maheśvarah J |
44c yogināḥ | JaJa; yogina Jb, omitted in Well |
44d kathāḥ |
44e vāthaḥ J, cāthaḥ Well |
45 uvāca | JaJaW; u- Jb |
46a vah | J;
46b yogibhiḥ Well |
46b suranāyaki |
JaJaW; suranāyaki Jb

[Sexual ritual with Māyā]

The Goddess spoke:
Tell me, O Maheśvara, how should the yogin sexually approach the one who is called Māyā, who has neither form/beauty (rūpa) nor a clan/noble family/body (kula)? (40.44)

Bhairava spoke:
Listen to me, O Goddess, I shall teach you the extraordinary intercourse (saṃga) with Māyā. It is fruitful, O Maheśānī, and difficult to learn...
by others and yogins without yogic Powers (siddhi), O Suranāyakī.
(40.45–46ab)

[parameśvaradhyānam]

sugupte mandire mantra mṛdvāsanapurgrahah ||40.46||
bhāvayec ca svam ātmānaṃ parameśvaravirgraham |
kāmesvaram ivādyantaṃ sūryāyutasamaprabham ||40.47||
cārumanjirākeyurakaṇḍalāṅgadabhūṣitam |
mudrikāchannahirādikirīṭamukutojvalam ||40.48||
prasantavadanaṃ kāntaṃ tāṃbūlapūritādharam |
madirānandacasketam śramānandavigraham ||40.49||
navyāmuvanasantapannam sarvalakṣanabhūṣitam |
svāmabhāgāvinyastamahājagavakārmukam ||40.50||
dakṣabhāgāvijalatapanaśaram indivaradyutinum |
nilotpalalasanmālābhūṣitoraskam iśvaram ||40.51||
madena kṣubdhāhṛdayayaṃ iṣāsmitamukhāmbujam |
evaṃ dhyāyec ciraṃ yogi svasāriṃ śivātmakam ||40.52||
candāgarukarpārakurāṅgajayakunikaṃ |
adhivāsitasavāṅgam cāruvakraṭaśūjatām ||40.53||
ratnadvīpyatayutam gehe sattalpamadhyagam |

[Visualisation of Parameśvara]

In a hidden sanctuary, the mantra master should sit on a soft cushion31
and should visualise himself as having the body of Parameśvara, as if

31 The element parigrahah in the compound mṛdvāsanapurgrahah is suspicious. A word meaning “seated” would fit the context better.
[he were transformed into] Kāmeśvara,32 having no beginning and no end, shining like millions of suns. (40.46cd–47)

He is adorned with nice anklets, armlets, rings and bracelets, and he shines with small toe rings (mudrikā),33 channahīras,34 etc., and diadems and a crown. (40.48)

His face is gracious, beautiful, his lips are smeared with betel leaves. His mind is filled with the joy of wine,35 and his body is supreme bliss [itself]. (40.49)

He is in the prime of his youth and has all the auspicious characteristics.

On his right, he has five glowing arrows. He is shining like a blue lotus.

On his chest there is a glittering garland of blue lotuses. He is the Lord. (40.51)

His face is gracious, beautiful, his lips are smeared with betel leaves. His mind is filled with the joy of wine,35 and his body is supreme bliss [itself]. (40.49)

He is in the prime of his youth and has all the auspicious characteristics.

On his right, he has five glowing arrows. He is shining like a blue lotus.

On his chest there is a glittering garland of blue lotuses. He is the Lord. (40.51)

His heart is agitated with sexual desire. His lotus face displays a faint smile.37 This is how the yogin should visualise his body for a long time, as transformed into Śiva. (40.52)

All his limbs are perfumed with sandal, aloe, camphor, musk38 and saffron. He has a beautiful face. (40.53)

He is surrounded by millions of gem islands, in a chamber on a fine bed.39 (40.54ab)
[śaktidhyānam]

tatra svavāmabhāgasthām śaktiṁ bhuvanamohinīṁ ||40.54|| sarvalaṅgaṁsamtampannāṁ navayauvanagocarām |
nilalakṣaṇasaṁbhadrāmālalolupasatpadām ||40.55||
kastūrīmālakarpursatilakāṁ kamalekṣaṇām |
kunādāṅgadakeyārakeyāravīdvibhūṣitām ||40.56||
kalakaṇānāthasadasṛṣātrīnāmukhāmbujām |
tāmbulāpūrṇavadanaṁ svargaṁbhopamastanīṁ ||40.57||
divyānulepavstrādhyāṁ vistirñajaghanāntaram |
cārurujanāgīṁ saundryasārasavasavavgrāhāṁ ||40.58||
sarvalāvaṇyasaundryasārasavasavavgrāhāṁ |
maṇjirāṅcitaśādhyāṁ divyāmālānulepanāṁ |
madāsādhamuditāṁ maddanāviṣṭavavgrāhāṁ ||40.59||
vilāsavidhramāṁ kāntāṁ dhyāyet śaktiṁ maheśvari |

[Visualisation of Śakti]

On his left side, [he should visualise] Śakti, who infatuates the world. (40.54cd)

She has all the auspicious characteristics. She is in the prime of her youth. She has bees longing for the garland tied in her black locks. (40.55)

The tilaka-mark on her forehead is made with musk thickened with camphor. She has lotus-eyes. She is adorned with rings, armlets, anklets, necklaces etc. (40.56)

Her beautiful lotus face resembles the spotless moon. Her mouth is filled with betel. Her breasts are like golden jars. (40.57)
She is anointed with divine ointments and she is dressed in divine clothes, with her loins exposed. Her thighs and shanks are beautiful. Her body is the ultimate essence of gracefulness. (40.58) Her feet are embellished with anklets. She wears divine garlands and has been anointed with divine ointments. She is delighted by the wine she is enjoying. Her body is filled with passion. She is restless with wantonness. [This is how the yogin] should visualise his lover (kāntā) as Śakti, O Maheśvarī. (40.59–60ab)

The appearance of Kāmeśvara and the mention of a gem-island (ratnadvīpa) in the above verses suggest an affiliation with the Śrīvidyā tradition and with love magic, perhaps with that of the pre-Śrīvidyā Dakṣiṇāmnāya tradition. Verse 46cd (“in a hidden sanctuary”) may also be revealing: if the whole ritual were purely imaginary, it would be less important to perform it in a secret place.

Going further in our text, MaSaṃ 40.60cd–68 may also suggest that a real sexual encounter is being described by using words such as āśliṣya (“embracing”), samācaret (“he should perform”), kāhī (“outwardly”), kṣipet (“place [his hand]”), vimuñcati (“ejaculates”), by giving instructions in 40.61 to stimulate the partner, and also by avoiding words that would refer to visualisation, except dhyāne, probably hinting at the fact that the whole process is accompanied by a projection of the image of the Goddess onto the female partner. On the other hand, the formulation of verse 40.65 may cast some doubt upon the real-life presence of the female partner: the yogin should rub his semen on his body, and there is no mention of the female partner's sexual fluids or her receiving or consuming any of the magical mixture, a common practice in Śaiva sexual rituals. Here follows the end of the chapter, describing the sexual ritual:

40 Ex em. Compare Kaunḍinya’s commentary ad Pāṣupatasūtra 1.9 (p. 14): adhomukhenā-damārṇa jaghanāntaracārīnā | sarvaśāstrācikitsyena jagad daṣṭaṇ bhaqāhinā ||, which is translated by Hara (1966, 196) as “The world is bitten by a snake whose mouth is below, toothless, who has crawled between the loins and whose poison can be cured by no science. Its name is the vulva.” The passage can also interpreted as “The world is bitten by the snake of the vagina whose toothless mouth points downward, and for which there is no antidote.”
41 I have translated añcita as “embellished,” suspecting that the word may need some emendation (aṅkita/rañjita?).
42 See Sanderson 1988, 688–689 and 2009, 47 ff.
43 See e.g. BraYā 45.201–202ab (Kiss 2015, 142, 258): upaviśyopayet tatra cumbanādyōvagāha-nam | krtvā kṣobhaṃ samārabhya pavitraṃ grhyā sadhakah || prāśayitvā tu tār hṛṣṭau yāgadravyāni prokṣayet |. “The Śadhaka should make [her] sit down there. He should start kissing and embracing her and stimulating her. He should collect the purifying [substance, i.e. the sexual fluids]. Overjoyed, they should consume [the fluids] ..."
[śaṃgāḥ]

āśiṣya cumbanādini yogī samyak samācāret ||40.60||
dhāyāne bahiḥ susamsnigdham tayā samgaṃ samācāret |
gajahastam kṣipet tasyāḥ śrīmanmadanamandire ||40.61||
mantram enaṃ smared yogī madam yāvad vimuṇcati |
bhautikavyaṃ ℹ︎āṃ aimaṇḍī kevalāṅnas tu bhautike ||40.62||
aparo vahni vāmākṣi bindu yukto mahēśvari |

cālepadam calapadam citrrepidam anantaram ||40.63||
retopadam muṇcapadayugam pūrvabīja vilomagāh |
evaṃ kramena yo yogī māyāsaṃgaṃ samācāret ||40.64||
tadviryaṃ svaṇkarpūrakukumādiviloditam |
svadeḥam mardayet kānti candravat samprajayate ||40.65||
samulām brahmamaṇḍūkikīm chāyāuskām prasādhayet |
mrīdvikārasaṃsmiṃśrāṃ sārkāraghārtamēlimāṃ ||40.66||
trimāsām bhakṣayet kālātayam akṣapramāṇakam |
annapānām payāḥ pītvā nāṣya sukraḥ kṣayam vrājet ||40.67||
śatvarasaḥasahasṛāṃ yadi samgaṃ samācāret |
nāṣya prakṣiyate satyaṃ navatātyai tanoḥ priye ||40.68||
rasāyanam idaṃ guhyam anyesāṃ na prakāṣayet |
etad rahasyam vyāhyātāṃ durlabham siddhasaṃtatau |
gurukūrurasaṃlakṣyaṃ kim bhūyaḥ śrotum icchasi ||40.69||
|| iti śrīmatsyendrasaṃhitāyāṃ catvāriṃśaḥ paṭalāḥ ||
[The intercourse]

The yogin should embrace and kiss her, etc., properly. (40.60cd) [Then] he should have sex with her outwardly, very gently, while [performing] visualisation. He should apply the “elephant trunk” [method] on her divine love temple [i.e. her genitalia]. (40.61)
The yogin should recall this mantra when he ejaculates: Bhautika [A], Vyoman [H], [...], TU verbatim and Bhautika [A; i.e. HRAIM TVAIM].45 (40.62)

Moreover: Vahni [R] and Vāmākṣi [Ī] with a Bindu [ṃ; i.e. ṛĪM], O Mahēśvarī, the words CALE and CALA and immediately CITRE [CITTE?], (40.63)

the word RETO, MUṆCA twice,46 and the previous seed-mantras backwards [ṚĪM TVAIM HRAIM]. The yogin who has had sex with Māyā should rub his semen mixed with gold, camphor and saffron on his own body: [his] beauty will become moon-like. (40.64–65)

He should dry brahmamaṇḍūkī together with its roots in the shade. He should mix it with grape-juice, candied sugar and ghee. (40.66)

He should have it three times [a day] for three months in portions measuring a dice as food and drink and he should drink milk. His semen will not deteriorate in millions of years if he practises sex [with Māyā]. His [semen] will never ever wane. It is for the rejuvenation of the body, O Priyā. (40.67–68)

This is the secret of alchemy. He should not reveal it to others. This secret of the Siddha tradition, which is difficult to obtain, has now been taught. It is to be revealed through the compassion of the guru. What else do you wish to hear? (40.69)

Here ends the fortieth chapter of the Matsyendrasaṃhitā.

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44 See p. 443 below.
45 If the decoding of this mantra in the marginalia in f. 64r of MS Ja (top, HRAIM TVAIM ṚĪM CATE VATA CITTE RETO MUṆCA 2 ṚĪM KLAIM HRAIM) is more or less correct, the puzzling syllables ṍĀ AIMḌI must stand for ṛ. Note the slight differences between the code in the text and the mantra given in the marginalia. The reconstruction of the mantra is somewhat tentative.
46 See Kaulāvalīnirṇaya 5.53: AMUKĪM DRĀVAYA SVĀHĀ VINYAYA TDĪHAKOTTAMAH | vāmāyā[?] CAPALACITTE RETO MUṆCA XVAYAM PATHET.
47 Clerodendrum Siphonanthus?
Rubbing one’s own semen on one’s body (verse 65) is an old custom, and was probably not considered a transgressive practice at all. *Bṛhadāranyaka-upaniṣad* 6.4.4–5 describe a practice to be followed in case one discharges semen:

bahu vā idaṁ suptasya vā jāgrato vā retaḥ skandati  || 6.4.4 ||  


tad abhimmṛśed anu vā mantrayeta—yan me ’dy astraḥ pṛthivīṃ  

askāntsād yad ośadhīr apy asarad yad apaḥ | idam aham tad reta  

ādade | punar mām aitū indriyaṃ punas tejaḥ punar bhaṅgāḥ | punar  

agnir dhīṣṇyā yathāsthaṇāṃ kalpantām | ity anāmikāṅguṭṭhābhhyām  

ādāyāntareṇa stanau vā bhruvau vā nimṛjyāt  ||6.4.5||

In Hume's translation (1921, 168–169):

“[If] even this much semen is spilled, whether of one asleep or of one  

awake, [5] then he should touch it, or [without touching] repeat:—  

‘What semen has of mine to earth been spilt now,  

Whate'er to herb has flowed, whate'er to water—  

Again to me let vigour come!  

Again, my strength; again, my glow!  

Again the altars and the fire  

Be found in their accustomed place!'

Having spoken thus, he should take it with ring-finger and thumb and  

rub it on between his breasts or his eye-brows.”

As can be seen from this passage, semen was probably never considered so impure as to forbid its magical application on the body, and this practice was recommended to regain strength—exactly as in MaSaṃ 40.68 (*navatvāptyai tanoḥ*). The question is inevitable: is the somewhat similar practice in MaSaṃ 40.65 recommended for a similar situation, namely for ejaculation in a state of mind comparable to sleep, i.e. visualisation? Does this similarity between the two instructions suggest the absence of the female partner in the MaSaṃ?

To return to 40.61cd, where stimulation of the partner is probably hinted at: this gives the instruction to “cast an ‘elephant trunk’ on the partner’s divine love temple” (*gajahastam kṣipet tasyāḥ śrīmanmadanamandire*). This again is ambiguous. *Gajahasta* could be a *mudrā* to be shown during the ritual.

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48 I find Olivelle's translation (1996, 88) slightly less accurate at this point, although the differences are minor.

49 See e.g. Kaulāvalinirṇaya 17.133–135ab: esā tu paramā mudrā sarvasaṅkṣobhaṇī matā |
but could as well be the technique mentioned in Jaśodhara’s commentary ad Kāmasūtra 7.2.2:

ratasyopakrame sambādhasya kareṇopamardanam tasyā rasaprāptikāle ca ratayojanam iti rāgapratyānayanam |

Commentary: ratasyeti | samprayogasya upakrama iti | ayam ārambhe, yady api mando rāgo rate pravartayati stabdhaṅgaṭvāt, tathāpi prathamataḥ sambādhasya bhagasya kareṇopamardanam gajahastena kṣobhaṅam kāryam ...

[When you are] about to practise sex, [first you should] rub her genitalia with your hand, and when there is dampness, the sexual act can be commenced. This is the restoration of passion.

Commentary: “about to practice sex”: at the beginning of the sexual act. This is at the start [of the sexual act]. Even if the passion is weak with regards to sex because the penis is inert, first “her genitalia,” i.e. her vulva, should be rubbed with his hand, should be stimulated with the “elephant trunk” [method] ...

The possible hint in MaSaṃ 40.61cd at a Kāmaśāstric technique again suggests that we are dealing with the description of a sexual ritual involving a human female partner. Or should this also be only visualised?

3 Why All These Ambiguities?

I think it is safe to say that the teaching of MaSaṃ 40 is ambiguous to an extent that makes it rather difficult to decide on one or another exclusive interpretation. The question to answer is rather: why is it so ambiguous? Is it deliberately so? Is it so due to bad writing, to sloppy composition? Are essential details left out because they were well-known to gurus and pupils at the time of composition of the text? Did revisions/insertions during the course of transmission cause the ambiguity (deliberately or accidentally)? Is the text
ambiguous because of the uncertainty of its redactors, i.e. they were rephrasing old teachings but were not sure of the details? Is this ambiguity the result of the redactors’ diffidence in expressing secret teachings on sexuality? Could this ambiguity be seen as indicative of some major change in the tradition?

The first possibility, namely that the text is ambiguous deliberately, would imply that the author(s) or redactor(s) wanted to hide their secret teaching from unauthorised eyes. This is possible but not as typical as one would think. For instance, while they are difficult for the modern reader to decipher, the BraYā’s radical teachings on sexual ritual are relatively straightforward concerning what is real and what is imaginary, and while there are technical terms which are not openly discussed in the text,50 and its language is far from being standard Pāṇinian Sanskrit, it is generally possible to understand how sexual rituals were supposed to be performed.

The next possibility hinted at above, i.e. the effect of bad writing, is possible, but the MaSaṃ is far from being a very cryptic or confused text. It would have required minimal effort and ability on behalf of the redactors to clarify details that we miss: a few lines on how to acquire or invite a Māyā woman, similar to the BraYā’s instructions on finding a partner,51 a verse on her role and position during the ritual, or a clear remark stipulating the yogin’s solitude would have been enough.

On the other hand, one should not forget that texts like the MaSaṃ were definitely not written with an outsider reader in mind who would try to understand them several hundred years later. Essential details could have been left out because they were obvious to the redactors.

As regards possible revisions and insertions, there are signs that MaSaṃ 40 is made up of at least three distinct parts. Verses 40.1–28 constitute a small chapter in themselves with weak links to the rest of the chapter. What they have in common is the mention of “Kaula conduct” and bodily fluids. 40.29–37 and the rest of the chapter are more closely related. Both mention and discuss sexual rituals, but the first section, while mentioning sex with Yoginīs, is silent on Māyā, the focus of the second part, i.e. verses 40.38–69, which seem as if they were an alternative and additional teaching. But this additional section may again be made up of passages drawn from various sources. The visualisation of Kāmeśvara and his partner (40.46cd–60ab) may come from a source different from that of the instructions on the sexual act itself, and this in itself would provide some explanation for discrepancies in the text. The text may

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50 E.g. the term avagraha (“restraint”) or pīṭha (“external genital organ of the female partner”). See Kiss 2015, 49, 47–48.
51 See BraYā 45.185cd–189ab.
have originally described a sexual ritual with a human partner, but during the transmission of the text some passages teaching new ideas (such as a visualised partner) were inserted, thus making the text ambiguous.

This may lead us to another possibility, namely that at some point the redactors of the text became uncertain of the exact details of the ritual and when they tried to solve the problem they may have ended up obscuring it even further. Finally, the possibility of diffidence may also have played some role, especially if the female partner was meant to be purely imaginary, but other details of the ritual were not.

It seems that a wider perspective may be required to see what this chapter of the MaSaṃ signifies. The ambiguity between actual sex and visualisation in chapter 40 may have its roots in the tension between sexuality and asceticism which is clearly manifest in the frame story of the text (chapters 1 and 55). The frame story contains a unique version of the legend of Matsyendra and Gorakṣa: Matsyendra occupies the body of a dead king and indulges in sensual pleasures. It is Gorakṣa, his disciple, who “rescues” Matsyendra from the trap of sexuality and power, and leads him back to an ascetic life.\(^\text{52}\) Taking into account this wider context, it is possible to discover the same tension in the teaching of MaSaṃ 40 between a sexual ritual that may have originated in an earlier tantric strata of the cult, and its probably later haṭhayogic layers.

As I suggest elsewhere,\(^\text{53}\) the MaSaṃ could provide clues about the transition of a tantric cult from Kaula practices, often involving transgressive elements, to early Haṭhayoga, often associated with brāhma-cārin practitioners. The text may be echoing or quoting old tantric texts with such descriptions of sexual rituals that aim at obtaining sexual fluids, but the redactors of the MaSaṃ were perhaps in a transition towards more ascetic or brahmacaryā-oriented teachings, and as a result, they come up with a fairly obscure variant of the figure of the tantric Yoginī: Māyā, first described as only a phantom, resembles the wholly mental visualisation of goddesses, but at the same time takes part in a human sexual ritual. The redactors may have had reservations about a sexual ritual with a low-caste woman, and tried to conceal this with instructions on visualisation to such an extent that even the presence of a human partner is now doubtful. They may also have had kuṇḍalini in their thoughts: the

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52 See Kiss 2009, 222–233 and 317–321.

53 Kiss 2009, 9: “[…] the MaSaṃ provides some clues for, among other things, the understanding of the transition from the early Indian yoga traditions (Pāṇini and Śaiva) to the late and fully developed haṭha-yogic teachings as well as of the transition from the early Kula traditions to the later Kaula teachings associated with the figure of Matsyendra.”
text as it stands now could be a metaphor for meditation on her. The manner in which they reconcile two (or three) attitudes, in this case those of explicit sexuality and of brahmacārīn yogins’ mental worship of a goddess (or of kūṇḍalinī), is, as so often in tantric texts, less than convincing. But this imperfection, this ambiguity, is exactly the feature which seems to tell us something about the history of the cult, its transition from one phase to another.

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