

TANTRI ASPECTS OF *HAWDMĀ' AL-HAYĀT*
("The Pool of the Water of life"):
An Arabic Text Developed from Hindu Sources

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ABSTRACT

The *Amṛtakunḍa* is the Muslim reworking of an Indic text, which traces its origins back to the heartland of the tantric tradition. It has, remarkably, influenced both the Muslim and the Christian mystical traditions. This article seeks to discern its tantric elements, in particular those of the Kula tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. In doing so, it makes the point that the Muslim tradition has customarily been open to new ideas. The article studies the pre-text and the context of the *Amṛtakunḍa*. It then analyses its ten chapters, showing how it draws on *haṭh yoga* and increasingly on tantric sources, among a vast range of other sources, religious and philosophical. As its title suggests, the aim is to find the 'waters of life', proposing practices which can release these waters and lead the practitioner to the blessed state of the prophets and saints.

Key words: *Amṛtakunḍa*, Islam, Sufism, Tantra, Kashmir Shaivism, *Haṭha yoga*

INTRODUCTION: A QUESTION

It is rare to find an ancient work that has influenced both the Muslim and Christian worlds. The *Amṛtakunḍa*, an Indic text, has done just. Caterina Greppi has studied its impact on Christian Hesychasm.¹ Regarding its place in the Muslim world, C. W. Ernst states, "the different translations of The Pool of Nectar are unanimous in affirming that [it] is the most famous and respected scripture of India [in Islamic circles]."²

¹. Caterina Greppi, *L'origine del metodo psicofisico esicasta, Analisi di un anticotesto Indiano: l'Amṛtakunḍa*. (Torino: Il Leone Verde, 2011).

². Carl W. Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the *Amṛtakunda* Translations," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 13 (2003): 206.

Why is it famous and respected? What impact did it have? How does it counter the prejudices of our day? For there are indeed prejudices C.W. Ernst puts it thus: “The standard minimalist concept of Islam current in the mass media today identifies it with authoritarianism, legalism, and violent iconoclasm.”³ The *Hawdmā’ al-hayat* shows that this caricature does not represent the norm. Indeed, the middle periods of Islamic history created vast ecumenical structures, in which minorities had freedom of expression.⁴

The acceptance of “inevitable cross-influences”⁵ contrasts with a long-standing approach that affected attitudes in Europe and its eventual colonies, an approach that came to the fore during the Protestant Reformation where ‘religion’ was deemed to involve a corpus of doctrine unaffected by history. Any importation of foreign practices or ideas was a ‘borrowing’ and a weakening of the essence.⁶ This attitude could also be found Muslim circles, despite the fact that multiple ideas and practices had long been at work in the lives of the many who deemed themselves to be faithful to their tradition.⁷

Even though the typical situation in Muslim history is diversity and debate, this does not mean that the different schools of thought accepted each other as equals. On the contrary, each school considered itself to be the correct orthodoxy, each with its proofs of validity. In Islam, as in other religious traditions, there was a pluriform and not a uniform culture.⁸ It is more accurate to speak of a polythetic classification in Islam where a large number of topics have a wide range of meanings and are not reduced to one simple formula.⁹

³. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 223.

⁴. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 223.

⁵. Mostafa Vaziri, *Rumi and Shams’ Silent Rebellion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 183.

⁶. Carl W. Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 15 (2005): 15.

⁷. Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga,” 21.

⁸. Dominique-Sila Khan, *Crossing the Threshold, Understanding Religious Identities in South Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 26.

⁹. Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 7.

The question arises: can Hindu tantric aspects be found in the *Amṛtakunḍa*? To answer the question, we will outline the context in which the *Amṛtakunḍa* arises. We will then examine the ten chapters of the text, firstly giving a short presentation of the contents of the chapter and then secondly noting its tantric aspects.

PART 1: THE CONTEXT

This article uses makes use of Greppi's Italian translation¹⁰ of Yusuf Husain's edition.¹¹ The *Amṛtakunḍa* has a long and complex history whose eight stages are putatively set out by Carl W. Ernst¹² in 32 (or 84) verses of *Kamakhya*, a Sanskrit text on divination and magic.

The main temple of the tantric goddess *Kāmākhyā* is located at *Kāmarūpa* in Assam. Her name signifies 'she who is called *kāma*'. The Sanskrit term *kāma* refers to enjoyment, including sexual pleasure. *Kāmarūpa* means 'the form of *kāma*'. The tantric element is already present in the names.

This was developed into text with the title *Kamrubijaksa* (The *Kāmarūpa* Seed Syllables). A *haṭha yoga* treatise was composed in Sanskrit or Hindi with the title *Amṛtakunḍa*. The *Kamrubijaksa* was translated into Persian.

Both the *Kamrubijaksa* and the *Amṛtakunḍa* were combined into one text, under the title *Amṛtakunḍa*, adapted and translated into Persian by Muhammad Gwaliari with the title *Bahr al-Hayat* ("Ocean of Life")¹³ and then in about 1212 C.E. into Arabic with the title *Hawdmā' al-hayat* ("The Pool of the Water of Life") in Bengal.

This was not unusual, for there had long been an interest in Indic texts. As early as the 8th century, Indian works were being translated in Baghdad,

¹⁰. *Amṛtakunḍa*, in Greppi, *L'origine del metodo psicofisico esicasta*, 143-194.

¹¹. Yusuf Husain, "Ḥauḍ al hayāt. La version arabe de l'Amratkund," *Journal Asiatique* CCXIII (1928): 291-344. He reconstructs his edition from five manuscripts in Paris and Leiden. So far, some 88 manuscripts have become available in libraries in Europe and the Middle East.

¹². Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga," 206

¹³. Husain, "Ḥauḍ al hayāt," 294.

and in the tenth century the *Kitâb al-Fihrist* devotes an entire chapter to the religions of India.¹⁴ When the Muslims entered north India in the 13th century they set about translating the major works of the Hindu tradition into Persian and Arabic in order better to understand and govern the people they had conquered.¹⁵ The Muslim penetration into Kashmir took place in the 14th century.¹⁶

A second Arabic recession was made. It consisted of a revision with additions from the Acts of Thomas (3rd cent.), the Treatises of the Brethren of Purity (composed in Basra 10th cent.) and Treatise on the Reality of Love, (Aleppo, 1191). This later recession is the subject of this article. There were a third and fourth Arabic recessions.

Further additions were made from various sources – the Qur’an, Hadith, Islamic law, theology and cosmology, as well as pious phrases and Sufi terms – which means that more than one third of Arabic version of the *Amṛtakunḍa* consists of addition.¹⁷ There are also elements from Aristotelian philosophy and the writing of Ibn Sīna, such as the doctrine of the four humours (*Amṛtakunḍa* ch. VI), the five elements (II, VI), the four qualities (VI, X) of the ‘rational soul’ (IV, V, VI), the universal intellect (I).¹⁸ C. W. Ernst lists further Persian, Turkish and Urdu translations. He notes that a Judeo-Arabic version has recently been discovered in Yemen.¹⁹

PART 2: THE TEXT

Considerations

¹⁴. Flavio Poli, *Yoga ed Esicasmò* (Bologna: Editrice Missionaria Italiana, 1981), 169.

¹⁵. Husain, “Ḥauḍ al hayât,” 291.

¹⁶. Alexis Sanderson, “The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir,” in *Melanges tantriques à la mémoire d’Hélène Brunner*, ed. Dominic Goodall and André Padoux (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2007), 431.

¹⁷. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 209-210.

¹⁸. Greppi, *L’origine del metodo psicofisico esicasta*, 142.

¹⁹. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 202.

Husain's edition starts with some ten considerations taken from the *Hadith*, making the basic point that he who knows himself knows God. These need not detain us.

INTRODUCTION

The first Arabic translation of *Amṛtakunḍa* adds a fictitious introduction, which mentions the town *Kābr*, which probably refers to *Kāmarūpa*.²⁰ It goes on to speak of a debate between *Bhūgar*, *abrahmin* and *yogin*, and the learned *īmām*, Qadi Rukn al-Dīn Samarqandī who lived during the reign of Sultān Alī Mardanī (1207-1212).²¹ *Bhūgar* is defeated and converts to Islam. He then shows the *Amṛtakunḍa* to the *īmām* who admires it and practices it and translates it into Persian and then into Arabic.

The second Arabic version has an equally fictitious but very different introduction. The writer says that when he found this book he was impressed by its "wonderful content" but could find no one to explain it till he discovered, in *Kābr*, a *yogin* called *Ambhūabanah*, a convert to Islam.

These introductions seek to assure the Muslim readership that the *Amṛtakunḍa* is orthodox, and at the same time show its Indic origins, and name its source as *Kābr* (*Kāmarūpa*) – the one name mentioned in both introductions.

A NOTE ON TANTRA

Kāmarūpa was the chief seat of a new branch of the *Kaula*, school founded by *Matsyendranātha*,²² who is also held to be at the origins of *haṭha-yoga*. By establishing the *Kaula* School, *Matsyendra* shifted the emphasis away from the shocking *Kula* practices that made use of cremation grounds to the *Kaula* practices that were acceptable in the home.²³ This shift was taken to

²⁰. Greppi, *L'origine del metodopsicofisicoesicasta*, 128.

²¹. Husain, "Ḥauḍ al hayāt," 292.

²². *Kaulajñana-nirnaya of the School of Matsyendranatha*, ed. P. C. Bagchi, trans. Michael Magee (Varanasi: PrachyaPrakashan, 1968), 41.

²³. The terms *kula* and *kaula* are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the *Kula* and *Kaula* traditions are porous.

even higher levels of abstraction in Kashmiri Shaivism whose greatest author, Abhinavagupta (c. 975-1025 CE), pays tribute to Matsyendra as the mythical founder of the Kula tradition. Jayaratha (c. 1225-1275 CE), the learned commentator of Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*, notes in his comments on *Tantrāloka*^{1.7} that Matsyendra, aka Minanatha, founded the school in *Kāmarūpa*.²⁴ There are many forms of *tantra*. This article focuses on the Kula tantric tradition of Kashmir Shaivism.

The influence of *tantra* on Muslim thinkers, noted in the 'introductions', was not unusual. The Nizārī branch of Isma'īlism, a form of Shi'a Islam that appeared in India in the eighth century²⁵ was deeply influenced by tantric forms of yoga and by the literature and ritual of the disciples of Gorakhnāth, himself a disciple of Matsyendranātha.²⁶ Satpanth, the syncretic form of Isma'īlism that arises from this meeting, did not cease to be Muslim but was considered to be a 'super-yoga' encompassing and complementing the traditional *tantra*.²⁷ Muhammad al-Misrī, a Sufi of the Ilhāmiya school, in his exposition of the principles of Sufism esteems the *Amṛtakunḍa* as a significant book for the study of Hindu yogic techniques that became an integral part of Sufism in India.²⁸ These few comments concerning the influence of *tantra* on Islam must suffice in this short article.

The text of *Amṛtakunḍa* is divided into ten chapters, which become increasingly 'tantric' and significant for our discussion.

Chapter 1

This chapter describes the macrocosm / microcosm relationship which is basic to the whole text.

²⁴. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka, with the Commentary of Jayaratha* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 24.

²⁵. Dominique-Sila Khan, "Conversation between Guru Hasan Kabiruddīn and JogīKāniphā: Tantra Revisited by the Isma'īli Preachers," in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 284.

²⁶. Khan, "Conversation between Guru Hasan Kabiruddīn and JogīKāniphā," 286.

²⁷. Khan, "Conversation between Guru Hasan Kabiruddīn and JogīKāniphā," 290.

²⁸. Husain, "*Ḥauḍ al hayāt*," 294.

“The human being is a microcosm; everything that exists in the macrocosm in its entirety exists also in a reduced form in the [human] microcosm. The Sun and the Moon in the microcosm are the nostrils: that on the right has the function of the Sun and that on the left the function of the Moon.”²⁹

Ernst provides a list of these microcosmic / macrocosmic correspondences 30 – for example: head / sky, body / earth, waking / day etc. – and suggests that they derive from purely Arabic sources, perhaps from the Treatises of the Brethren of Purity.³¹

The relationship macrocosm / microcosm is a constant in Indic thought. In the *tantra* of Kashmir, each level of the human body is linked to a vast network of worlds, a complex of parallel universes. The Kula initiation ceremony bestows mastery over all the worlds tied to the level of the body – stomach, the throat, the eye-brow – that has been impacted by the ceremony. In this way the initiate, who is a microcosm, has power over the macrocosm.

The re-writer of the *Amṛtakunḍa* does not pursue this tantric path of identification and its corresponding empowerment. Did he wish to prevent any sense of infringement on the absolute lordship of Allah? He allows a connection between macrocosm and microcosm, but a comparison only, a linkage, an association.

Chapter 2 The Breath

The role of breath is a major theme throughout the *Amṛtakunḍa*. The text discusses the health benefits of bringing the ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ breaths into balance. “If these phases are joined, no pain will touch them, no suffering.... They will remain young, strong, they will not grow old.”³²

²⁹. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 144.

³⁰. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 213-214.

³¹. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 215.

³². *Amṛtakunḍa*, 150.

The text then mentions the five breaths – upwards, downwards etc.,–which are associated with the five elements, fire, water, air, earth and ether, but does not elaborate.

Breath is also divinatory. A wise ‘judge’, on noticing the circumstances in which one of the nostrils predominates, can predict the future. For example, if breathing takes place in the right nostril during intercourse, the concept us will be male. If in the left, it will be female.³³ Breath also gives knowledge of secrets. For example, “If you wish to join the hidden world, and see that which is to be found there, focus the pupils of your eyes on the nostrils such as to see the septum of the nose”³⁴

The focus on the two breaths is a staple of *haṭha yoga* and tantric practice, for they are linked to the *idā* and *piṅgala* currents that rise from perineum and crisscross the body to join at the eye-brow centre, the *bhrūmadhya*. The two nostrils most often function alternately with a consequent lack of balance but when opened concurrently they lead to full awareness. In fact, the aim is to achieve identity with the god, Śiva, who is symbolized by HA and the goddess, Śakti, who is symbolized by ṬHA. Their union is *haṭha*. The practitioner becomes identified with them, and so achieves divinity and mastery.

The re-writer recommends balancing the breaths for the sake of health and even of secret knowledge, but does not promote identification with the Godhead.

Chapter 3 The Heart

This chapter expounds the ‘science of the heart’, which Greppi deems to be a Sufi technique.³⁵ It gives details on how to meditate on the sectors of the

³³ Husain, “*Ḥauḍ al hayāt*,” 297.

³⁴ *Amṛtakunḍa*, 152. This yogic practice is called *bhrūmadhya-dṛṣṭi*. The text also recommends other *haṭhayoga* practices such *trāṭaka* and *khecārī-mudrā*, *siṃha-āsana* and *śitalī*. Greppi, *L'origine del metodop sicofisico esicasta*, 152-153

³⁵ Greppi, *L'origine del metodo psicofisico oesicasta*, 153.

heart that are connected with the twelve signs of the zodiac – another macrocosmic / microcosmic correspondence. By calmly focusing on the heart, the practitioner begins to perceive good and evil, for an angel is located on the right and the devil on the left. The right is to be expanded so that it absorbs the left.³⁶ As a result, the practitioner will know the secret of happiness, “the state of the prophets, the saints and the pure.”³⁷

Kashmir Shaivism attaches immense importance to the heart, but in a different way. In *Tantrāloka* 3.69 Abhinavagupta identifies the Goddess and the heart, the very centre, the essence of all things. By knowing the heart, one knows the blessedness of the divine couple. The *Amṛtakunḍa* allows entry to the state of the prophets but not into the state of the Divine.

Chapter 4 Postures

The text goes on to speak of five out of eighty-four postures. The posture is to be taken up while simultaneously reciting a sacred word. The levels of benefit progress from physical healing to becoming a ‘spirit’.

1.	<i>padma-āsana</i>	good effects on the body , kidneys, limbs and spine ; it helps digestion, etc.
2.	similar to the first	heals varicose veins, leprosy, haemorrhoids etc.
3.	<i>kukkuṭāsana</i>	“lessens the element of ‘water’ and increases the elements of ‘fire’, ‘air’ and ‘earth’, and leads to “the intermediate state between men and angels” . ³⁸
4.	<i>uttānakūrmāsana</i>	“... fear and terror toward men and ġinn cease, as is necessary if there is to be harmony between heaven and earth.” ³⁹

³⁶. Husain, “Ḥauḍ al hayāt,” 298.

³⁷. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 156.

³⁸. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 162.

³⁹. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 163.

5.	unidentified, perhaps like one of the previous	“joins the mystic flight and becomes one of the many spirits.” ⁴⁰
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Yoga has eight ‘limbs,’ which lead from the outer to the inner dimensions. Many of these are observable in the *Amṛtakunḍa*. The abstinences (*yama*) and observances (*niyama*) are reflected in chapter IV

“ ... the rational soul dissipates itself through eating, drinking, sex, sleeping, chatting, through being a friend of bad people ; it asks for mundane things, vain beauty and concupiscence. If [the disciple] abandons these things and is content with what is necessary, he is in the middle path.”⁴¹

The postures (*āsana*) are treated in chapter IV, breath control (*prāṇāyāma*) in II, withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*) in X, concentration (*dhāraṇā*) in VII and VIII. The final two limbs, meditation (*dhyana*) and absorption (*samādhi*) are not so clearly treated.

The figure of Matsyendra links *haṭ ha yoga* and the *Kula tantric* ritual. So far, the *Amṛtakunḍa* has emphasized elements from *haṭha yoga* but it now shifts to themes that are more clearly tantric.

Chapter 5 The Soul

The text notes that the human soul comes from the natural heat of the body and says that “... the seat of the soul is the stomach; and [the stomach] is like a liquid mountain on which the soul, like a rope, is wrapped”.⁴² The two extremities of the rope go into the stomach, each with three strands, of which three go up and three go down to purify everything and make the blood circulate. Where these branches do not go there is no sensitivity or

⁴⁰. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 163.

⁴¹. Greppi, *L'origine del metodo psicofisico esicasta*, 159-160.

⁴². *Amṛtakunḍa*, 165.

movement.⁴³ Therefore, there must be no dissipation of life through the strands. Indeed, these two contrary movements must be kept in such balance⁴⁴ that the 'liquid mountain' can continue to enliven the soul.

The text then goes on to introduce three sets of three. Their role in the text is a little obscure but all three seem to involve the breath, which leads to 'the water of life'. "The movement of breath is the nourishment of life."⁴⁵

Qur'anic figures	Hindu figures	Natural figures	Natural functions
<i>Hidr</i> , who is found at the junction of the two seas (Qur'an 18.60), and who enlightens Moses whose knowledge is deficient.	Gorakh	Foetus	'breathes' in the placenta,
Jonah, who spent three days in the belly of a fish.	<i>Minanath</i> (Matsyendra) who hears the secret teaching while in the belly of a fish	Fish	'breathes' in the water,
Elijah, who is often pictured as flying in heaven like a bird and sitting in a tree.	Caurangi is restored to life under a tree by Gorakh and Matsyendra	Tree	draws water from the ground and brings it to the top

⁴³. Husain, "Ḥaḍ al hayāt," 299.

⁴⁴. Husain, "Ḥaḍ al hayāt," 300.

⁴⁵. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 165.

“They are the ones who have reached the water of life”⁴⁶the subtle energy which rises up the spinal column.⁴⁷If the practitioner follows their example he will tap into the same source and have direct vision of the invisible world.⁴⁸ The text has come to its central theme, the ‘water of life’.

The images of mountain and wrapping are found in tantric teaching also but are presented differently, for the *kundalin*, namely the spiritual energy, is wrapped like a serpent around a *ligam* of stone located in the perineum. The tantric practices awaken the serpent, who is the dormant goddess *Śakti*, so that it rises up the body to reach the crown of the head and unite with the god *Śiva*, there to enjoy the bliss of divine intercourse.

Chapter 6 The Retention of the Seminal Fluid

The text speaks about the relationship of men and women. Marriage is permitted till the age of 30 so as to maintain the human race; after that the initiate should practice chastity. To achieve this, it is recommended to travel, to adopt an ascetical mode of life, to fast, to live far from women.⁴⁹

There is more. After giving practical advice on how to forget sexual pleasure, the text goes on to introduce, ever so briefly, the practice of *vajrolī-mudrā*, which is described in the *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpika*.⁵⁰ The *Amṛtakunḍa* states,

“Your soul dwells in itself and recollects itself, sucking in the seed in the way that you suck in water through a long straw. When you have done this, you will in fact have filled your body with the water of life at all times.”⁵¹

⁴⁶. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 166.

⁴⁷. Greppi, *L'origine del metodopsicofisicoesicasta*, 165.

⁴⁸. Husain, “Ḥauḍ al hayāt,” 300.

⁴⁹. Husain, “Ḥauḍ al hayāt,” 300.

⁵⁰. Tara Michaël, *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā, Traité Sanskrit de Haṭha-yoga* (Paris: Fayard, 1974), 194-200.

⁵¹. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 171. The practice as described, which would seem to be impossible, can be done with a tube. See Richard A. Darmon, “*VajrolīMudrā*, la retention séminale chez les

The text specifically associates semen with the 'water of life'. Its retention fills the body with life. By contrast, emission has negative consequences, for a person's "... strength weakens when there is the emission of seed."⁵²

"The 'āqil⁵³ regrets the emission of seed and is sad; the wise person and all animals [know this] naturally because the soul experiences pain at this instinctive crudeness, at the violation of this substance."⁵⁴

While the *Amṛtakunḍa* warns against women, sexuality is inferred in its title. The Sanskrit word *kunḍa* refers to a sacrificial fire-pit but is also code for the *puendum muliebre*. The term *amṛta* refers more widely to ambrosia, the elixir of life, the fountain of youth, but can also refer to the seminal fluid, both of the man but especially of the woman. The title has tantric resonances.

The retention has beneficial effects, for the semen 'goes up the spine'.⁵⁵ The 'water of life', which would be dissipated in sexual emission is now redirected and is felt to go up the spine, leading to an increase of vitality and to the opening of the chakras with all their powers, and producing the fullness of being.

The three related forms of 'retention' – the stilling of breath, the cessation of thought, and the withholding of semen – are typically associated in the *tantra* practices of Kashmir. The more a person becomes perfect in yogic practice, the more the breath slows down to the point of almost stopping. The cessation of thought (*nirvikalpa*) is the typical state of mind in the most advanced *Kula* practitioner. The retention of semen is recommended in the *Kula* ritual. "Even while involved in sexual union he is perfectly mindful, his body utterly tranquil, ... he is fully enlightened ... he is free....and

yogis *vāmācāri*" in *Images du corps dans le monde hindou*,"(éd.),VéroniqueBouiller et Gilles Tarabout (Paris: CRNS Editions, 2002), 212-240.

⁵². *Amṛtakunḍa*, 170.

⁵³. This is a *sūfī* term for an initiate. Greppi, *L'origine del metodo psicofisico esicasta*, 171.

⁵⁴. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 171.

⁵⁵. Greppi, *L'origine del metodopsicofisico esicasta*,168.

during the performance of the ritual of the left, always retains his seed.”
 56Emission of semen is an immersion into time and space while its retention relieves from such limitations. Retention does not mean suppression; it does not involve the elimination of sexuality but its mastery.

Chapter 7 The Imagination

The microcosm exists in a potential state before becoming actual. The power of the imagination, the active element in incantation and invocation, in sacred words and magic, makes all things possible.⁵⁷ The *Amṛtakunḍa* shows how this is done.

It links planets, *cakras*, *yantras* (mystic diagrams)⁵⁸ and mantras (as best as the translator could capture them) and their Arabic substitutes.⁵⁹

Planet	Chakra	Colour of the Yantra	Mantra	Dhikr	Some of the benefits
Saturn	Seat	Reddish gold	hum	Yā Rabb O Lord	A vision of joy.
Mars	Genitals	Dark red	Āwm	Yā Qadīm O Everlasting One	“There will be no one whom he does not overcome.” 60
Jupiter	Navel	Yellow gold	Rahin	YāHaliq O Creator	“He will traverse long distances in just one hour.” ⁶¹

⁵⁶. Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka*, 3358.

⁵⁷. Husain, “Ḥauḍ al ḥayāt,” 301.

⁵⁸. Greppi draws some of these in her translation of the *Amṛtakunḍa*, pp.176-178, as does Husain in his Arabic text.

⁵⁹. Greppi, *L'origine del metodo psicofisico esicasta*, 139.

⁶⁰. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 176.

⁶¹. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 176.

Sun	Heart	Reddish yellow	Barīnsarīn	Yā Karīm, Yā Rahim O Generous One, O Merciful One	He hears the words of angels.
Venus	Throat	White	brāy	Yā Musahhir, O Instigator (of things to the service of mankind)	The ginn, men and especially women will love him.
Mercury	Eyebrows	Lightning flash	ywm	yā 'Alīm O Knowing One	He acquires fullness of knowledge.
Moon	Brain	White	hanṣāyaṣya	Ya Muhyī O Life- Giver	Poisons will have no effect.

The practitioner draws the *yantra* with the prescribed colour and focuses on it until it becomes real and its inner essence is grasped. At the same time, the practitioner recites the prescribed mantra or *dhikr*, “from the heart and not the tongue”.⁶² By the power of the imagination the *yantra* has become a live force. By drawing all these elements together and projecting them onto the chakra he awakens all the powers available in it, progressively so till he reaches the crown of the head.

The text adds further details concerning the 7th chakra. It is the place “where there is a substance comparable to seminal fluid that seems to flow from the centre of the head towards the feet.”⁶³ This is the ‘pool of nectar’ that enlivens the whole body, moving in a different direction to that described in chapter V where the focus is on the stomach.

⁶². *Amṛtakunḍa*, 175.

⁶³. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 178.

The Sanskrit term *bhāvana* has a double meaning. It means ‘imagination’ and ‘bringing into being’. The act of imagining is effective, for it brings into being that which is imagined. It forms the substance of this chapter.

If the planets and the sacred Muslim words are omitted, the practice is typically tantric. As the catch phrase puts it, ‘*tantra* is *mantra* plus *yantra*’. Typically, as in tantric texts, benefits are promised to the practitioner. In the *Amṛtakunḍa* they constitute a mixture, drawing also on Muslim themes, but all are concerned with power and success, which again is typically tantric, for one of the many purposes of tantric practice is to acquire ‘supernatural powers’ (*siddhi*).

The *Amṛtakunḍa* goes on to speak of a particular *siddhi*, namely mastery over death. The practitioner first meditates on all seven chakras and then enters another body, whether alive or dead. The dead human, for example, will revive and eat, drink and speak, as long as the practitioner stays within that body.⁶⁴ One can easily imagine the practical advantages of this power.

Chapter 8 The Signs of Death

This chapter continues with the topic of death, and describes ways of discerning the signs of its approach.

It also provides the way of countering death. The practitioner should meditate on the seven chakras described in chapter 7 and imagine them all as one. Then, [“from these centres] water will gush forth, like the water of the seminal fluid, over your entire body.”⁶⁵ The text, ever more clearly, links the ‘water of life’ with seminal fluid. What gave life to a child can be used to regenerate the body.

The issue in the *tantra* of Kashmir is not how to avoid death but how to be liberated from the cycle of rebirth. Indeed, it wishes to bring together the

⁶⁴. Abhinavagupta speaks of this in *Tantrāloka* 13.234b-235 and 24.13b-15.

⁶⁵. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 184.

four purposes of life, which are righteousness, possession, pleasure and liberation. Liberation from the cycle of rebirth is usually opposed to the first three and is achievable only after death. The tantric aim, by contrast, is “to place *kāma*- pleasure - (in all the meanings of that term) and the values which are associated with it, at the service of liberation,”⁶⁶ and to become ‘liberated while living’.

Chapter 9 The Spiritual ‘Energies’

The Arabic term *rūḥānīyya* is translated as ‘spiritual energy’ ‘spirit’ or ‘soul, a term which is also used in some Arabic translations for the Greek word *theos*, ‘a god’.⁶⁷

There are in the macrocosm seven categories of spirits or spiritual energies, each of which possesses seven orders except for one of them which has ten. That is true also of the human microcosm⁶⁸ where the spirits preside over the chakras of the body. The practitioner will now call on them.

Although the number of chakras is 7, and each is presided over by a *yoginī*, *Amṛtakunḍa* retains the number 64 (=8x8), “there are 64 spiritual energies and heads of spiritual energies”.⁶⁹ This inconsistency reveals the Indic background, which gives a significant place to the eight ‘Mothers’ (*mātrkā*) each of whom is surrounded by eight lesser goddesses.⁷⁰

Planet	Chakra	<i>Yoginī</i>
Saturn	Seat	<i>Kālkā</i>
Mars	Genitals	<i>Batarma</i>
Jupiter	Navel	<i>Mankal</i>

⁶⁶. Madeleine Biarreau, quoted in André Padoux, *Recherches sur la symbolique et l'énergie de la parole dans certains textes tantriques* (Paris: Institut de civilisation indienne, 1975), 5.

⁶⁷. Ernst, “The Islamization of Yoga,” 222.

⁶⁸. Husain, “Ḥauḍ al hayāt,” 302.

⁶⁹. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 186.

⁷⁰. Hypaethral temples to the 64 *Yoginīs* once widespread in India can still be found, for example at Hirapur near Bhubaneswar in Odisha State.

Sun	Heart	<i>Badata</i>
Venus	Throat	<i>Saras[ṣ]atī</i>
Mercury	Eyebrows	<i>Nārī</i>
Moon	Brain	<i>Tūtlā</i>

The practitioner should go to a room that has been thoroughly cleaned and perfumed with incense and rose water and then practice breathing, making use of the *yantra* and sacred formulas which in this chapter are far longer than in chapter VI.⁷¹ He should breathe on his body and clothing, calmly and without causing harm to any living creature.

These 'spiritual energies' are called *yoginīs*. The Arabic writer uses this term, perhaps not realizing its significance, for "The *yoginīs* of legend are fearsome apparitions who are both wildly dangerous and the source of great boons. They radiate from the heart of the deity as sources of power which govern time and space and send out further emanations of female powers which are visible in the sacred sites and cremation grounds. ... By placating these hordes ..., the devotee gained the ascendancy and so secured their powers over the cosmos etc. ... The cult of the *yoginīs* seems to have been the earliest form of what becomes the *Kula* tradition."⁷²

The *Amṛtakuṇḍa* names seven of them, one of which is clearly *Sarasvatī* the consort of the god Brahma and patroness of wisdom. The spelling '*Kālkā*' may be an attempt to transcribe *Kālī* or *Kālikā*, the black and fearsome goddess who dances on the body of her recumbent consort, the god Śiva, and who inhabits the cremation ground. The Arabic reviser uses these names, surely without realizing fully the significance of the *yoginī* /goddesses.

⁷¹. For example, the mantra for the first chakra is *āwm, hūm, alkadhṛqi, mārā, yblah, alka, kūrka, hūm, rāk, rāk, mīn, tūrā, rās, nūt, sa'l, rahīn, hyāws, fārs, ḡūḡāhḡ, krbān, chārs, narīn, narīn, riš, riš, kāws, ānh, tānat, kryāth, ḡkārs, āy, brmā, hn, dwāds, āwm, hr, hr, hr*.

⁷². John Dupuche, *Abhinavagupta: The Kula Ritual as elaborated in chapter 29 of the Tantraloka*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003), 13-14.

They are described in detail. The first is *Kālkā*, black, big, with four hands, all-knowing and with a beauty that inspires veneration. She requires her *mantra* to be recited 3000 times a day, and on the seventh day she will appear, causing tremendous fear. The text then advises: “Tell her she is as a sister or mother to you. Then ask what you wish. And she will want it too.”⁷³ The others are visualized in much the same manner.

Texts such as the *Karpūrādi-stotra*⁷⁴ visualize seminal exchange with the goddesses. The Muslim writer avoids any such suggestion. To emphasize the point, the text recommends absolute chastity. “If you are not faithful to your renunciation, little or nothing will come to you.”⁷⁵ He speaks rather of the practitioner becoming a brother or a son to them, and so obtaining supernatural powers, which include the following: victory over enemies, wisdom and the gift of writing, the status of a prophet. The boons most frequently requested in the text are the gift of prophecy and fraternity.

The term *kula* means ‘family’ or ‘clan’. By extension it refers to the whole cosmos and since the cosmos is deemed to be born from the supreme goddess, she herself is called *Kula*. The many families of ‘goddesses’ or spiritual beings that spring from her have authority over the worlds that have been assigned to them. An aim of tantric practitioner is so to please one or other of these goddesses that she grants him all her powers. He does so by offering semen and blood.

Having commenced with *haṭha yoga*, the text has now entered a strongly tantric world although the writer has down played many elements that would be incompatible with Islam.

⁷³. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 188

⁷⁴. John Dupuche, “The “Scandalous” Tantric Hymn to Kālī *Karpūrādi-stotra*: an Unexpurgated Translation,” *International Journal of Tantric Studies* 8.1 (2012). https://repository.divinity.edu.au/1179/1/IJTS%2C_The_Scandalous_Tantric_Hymn_to_K%C4%81%C4%AB_-_Karpuradi-stotra_-_an_Unexpurgated_Translation%2C_MCDUD.pdf

⁷⁵. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 191.

Chapter 10 In Conclusion

This chapter sums up the essence of the *Amṛtakunḍa* and gives several recommendations to complete the mystic journey. "... The microcosm is like a tree that has been turned upside down."⁷⁶ What seems to be inverted down is in fact the right way up. The practitioner will seek the "waters of life" which are to be found especially in the head and in the macrocosm above the head. The 'roots' are above, not below. By withdrawing from the senses, he will join macrocosm to microcosm and drink of the waters of life without limit. He will come to know external things truly, for all his senses will be well directed.

In Kashmir Shaivism, the 'fool' does not have the mind of Śiva and therefore suffers from a false perception of reality and its *karmic* results. By acquiring the mind of Śiva and its energies, by contrast, the *tantric* practitioner enjoys life to the full and always acts justly and freely.

Note: A short appendix is added describing the form of the heart, which is like a pine cone with its point facing downwards.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

The *Amṛtakunḍa* engaged many Muslim readers who sought whatever might help them on their spiritual path. In their engagement with an Indic text they found much that was challenging. For example, where Islam proposes submission to the will of Allah, the *Kula tantra* proposes identity with the Deity and complete freedom. Where Islam enjoins a righteous conduct of life modeled on the life of Muhammad, the *Kula* disregards the rules of righteous living so as to rise above the divisive concepts of good and evil, pure and impure, divine and human. Therefore, the Muslim

⁷⁶. *Amṛtakunḍa*, 192.

⁷⁷. Husain, "Ḥauḍ al hayāt," 304.

writers were highly eclectic and selective,⁷⁸ showing both fidelity to their own tradition and open-mindedness to other traditions.

This article has sought to highlight the tantric aspects that were preserved in the *Amṛtakunḍa*. It has shown that the 'pool of nectar' is a source of vitality akin to seminal fluid. It is made to flow by the concatenation of macrocosm and microcosm, by the practice of invocation and recitation, by the power of breath and visualization. All these influences combine to make the 'water', preserved from dissipation, move in the bodily chakras so as to lead the practitioner ever upwards, bestowing vitality and supernatural powers, every joy and benefit both heavenly and earthly, and so to reach the fullness of life.

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⁷⁸. Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga," 220.

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