

Chapter 6

Hathayoga's Early History: From Vajrayāna Sexual Restraint to Universal Somatic Soteriology¹

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In India physical methods have been used for religious ends since at least 1000 BCE.² For two millennia these methods were simple techniques of privation in which the body was mortified, usually by holding a particular posture for long periods, in order to acquire

¹ This chapter combines a revision of a paper on the Vajrayāna origins of the term *hathayoga* given twice (at the American Oriental Society's meeting on 16 March 2019 and at a conference held in honour of Professor Jim Benson at the University of Oxford, 20 June 2019) with parts of a draft article on early *hathayoga* which I first started to circulate in April 2018. The research for this chapter was carried out as part of the *Hatha Yoga Project* (hyp.soas.ac.uk). This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 647963). Other outputs of the project (together with MALLINSON 2011a and 2016, BIRCH 2011 and MALLINSON AND SINGLETON 2017), will provide much contextual information on the subject matter, in particular on the dating of texts cited. I am indebted to several scholars for helping me with this chapter, in particular Péter-Dániel Szántó, who patiently answered my questions about Vajrayāna Buddhism, provided me with many of the references to *hathayoga* in Vajrayāna texts, and contextualized and dated those texts, Francesco Sferra, who made a close reading of a late draft of the chapter and provided me with detailed feedback, in particular on the dating of Vajrayāna texts, and Jason Birch and Lubomír Ondračka, who both gave me detailed feedback on the original draft article on early *hathayoga*. Others whom I would like to thank for their help include Martin Delhey, Harunaga Isaacson, Dan Lusthaus, Karen O'Brien-Kop, Olga Serbaeva, and Somdev Vasudeva.

² *Atharvaveda* 15.3 describes Vṛātyas standing for a year.

tapas, ascetic power. The details of their performance were not transmitted in texts but, we must assume, passed on orally within ascetic lineages.³

In the early part of the second millennium CE, a somatic soteriology whose physical methods are body-affirming appears in textual sources;⁴ some of its practices are depicted soon after in the material record.⁵ In certain Sanskrit texts these methods of yoga were classified as *haṭha*, which means ‘force’; *haṭhayoga* means ‘yoga by means of force’. In this chapter I shall analyse the history of the codification of *haṭhayoga* techniques up to the composition of the c. 1400 CE *Haṭhapradīpikā*, which became *haṭhayoga*’s locus classicus. In so doing I shall show how the name *haṭhayoga* originated as a Vajrayāna (Buddhist tantric) term for the restraint of orgasm by the male practitioner in sexual ritual, and then trace its subsequent use to denote an increasing range of physical methods until its apotheosis in the Śaiva *Haṭhapradīpikā*, the first text to use it to denote complex physical postures and methods of breath control.

I *Haṭhayoga* in Buddhist texts

In an article published in 2011 Jason Birch analysed the meaning of the word *haṭha* in the context of *haṭhayoga*. The compound *haṭhayoga* was known to be used in non-Buddhist Sanskrit texts from about the twelfth century onwards to denote methods of yoga in which physical practices predominate. Birch drew attention, for the first time, to seven occurrences of the compound *haṭhayoga* in Vajrayāna texts which predate the non-Buddhist *haṭhayoga* corpus, in which it denoted a method used in sexual ritual. Birch also noted that he had not found any occurrences of the term *haṭhayoga* in tantric Śaiva works, but suggested that it may have first been used in Śaiva works which are now lost and that Vajrayāna authors took the name from those lost Śaiva texts.⁶

In the first part of this chapter I shall propose that the name *haṭhayoga* originated in a Buddhist milieu. To do so I shall (1) identify additional occurrences of the compound *haṭhayoga* in Buddhist works; (2) note how the term has still not been found in any Śaiva works and that in the few instances where practices elsewhere denoted as *haṭha* are mentioned in Śaiva texts they are categorized by names other than *haṭha*; and (3) draw on recent scholarship on texts from the *haṭha* corpus to chart how the Vajrayāna name *haṭhayoga* found its way into those texts.

The compound *haṭhayoga* is first used in the c. third-century *Bodhisattvabhūmi*,⁷ which is part of the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, a voluminous compendium on the Mahāyāna Yogācāra tradition.⁸ In Wogihara’s edition of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, the text says that he who is

³ One physical method of acquiring *tapas*, namely *prāṇāyāma*, breath-control, was codified prior to the production of the *haṭha* corpus, first in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and subsequently in several tantric works.

⁴ The earliest of these sources are the c. tenth-century *Vimānārcanākalpa*, the c. eleventh-century *Amṛtasiddhi* and Hemacandra’s twelfth-century *Yogaśāstra* together with its *Svopajñāvṛtti* auto-commentary.

⁵ The c. 1230 CE Mahudi Gate at Dabhoi, in Gujarat, depicts yogis in various balancing postures.

⁶ BIRCH 2011:539–540.

⁷ DELEANU (2013:887) notes that the compilation of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* ‘was very likely more or less finished by the end of the third century’.

⁸ *Bodhisattvabhūmi* p. 318 ll. 11–17:

dvādaśānāṃ punar bodhisattvavihārānāṃ yathā vyavasthānaṃ bhaviṣyati tathā nirdeksyāmi |
katamaś ca bodhisattvasya gotravihāraḥ | kathaṃ ca bodhisattvo gotrastho viharati | iha bo-
dhisattvo gotravihārī prakṛtibhadrasmāntānatayā prakṛtyā bodhisattvaguṇair bodhisattvārhaḥ

gotrasthabh, i.e. destined to become a *bodhisattva*, acquires the appropriate qualities through his natural excellence (*prakṛtibhadratayā*), not by *haṭhayoga* (*na haṭhayogena*). The negative particle *na* before *haṭhayogena* is not found in the Sanskrit manuscript used by Wogihara, whose text he emends to be in accordance with the Tibetan translation (the reading of which is supported by Xuanzang's Chinese translation and an eighth-century citation of the passage by a Chinese exegete).⁹ There is thus ambiguity over whether or not *haṭhayoga* is being enjoined. Irrespective of this, *haṭhayogena* here almost certainly means nothing more than 'by the application of force', i.e. 'forcefully' or 'with effort'.¹⁰

The next usages of *haṭhayoga* are in Vajrayāna (tantric Buddhist) texts dating from the eighth to twelfth centuries CE,¹¹ seventeen of which have so far been identified:¹²

1. <i>Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālaśaṃvara</i>	early eighth century ¹³
2. <i>Guhyasamājatāntra</i>	eighth century ¹⁴
3. * <i>Caryāmelāpakapradīpa</i>	ninth to tenth centuries ¹⁵
4. <i>Abhidhānottaratāntra</i>	mid tenth century ¹⁶
5. <i>Samputatilaka</i>	c. 1000 ¹⁷
6. <i>Sekanirdeśa</i>	1000 to 1050 ¹⁸
7. <i>Caturmudrānvaya</i>	1000 to 1050 ¹⁹

kuśalair dharmair samanvāgato bhavati | tatsamudācāre ca saṃdṛśyate | prakṛtibhadratayaiva na
haṭhayogena tasmim kuśale pravartate | api tu pratisaṃkhyānataḥ sāvagrahaḥ sambhr̥to bhavati |

⁹ I thank Martin Delhey and Dan Lusthaus for pointing out to me the variations between the various sources of this passage (email communications on 8 March 2018 and 13 December 2018 respectively). Dan Lusthaus informed me of the eighth-century Chinese citation, which is in a commentary on the *Humane King Sutra* by Liangben, a Chinese monk who lived from 717–777. Further study of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*'s witnesses, translations, citations and commentaries is likely to shed more light on how *haṭhayogena* is to be understood in this passage.

¹⁰ I thank Martin Delhey for informing me that this is *haṭhayoga*'s meaning in the Chinese and Tibetan translations of this passage (personal communication 8 March 2018).

¹¹ There have been great advances in our knowledge of the Vajrayāna textual corpus in recent years, but the majority of it remains unstudied or lost. There are about two thousand surviving tantric Buddhist texts in Sanskrit, and perhaps two thousand more in Tibetan and Chinese translations. Of these only a small proportion have been studied and far fewer critically edited (ISAACSON n.d.:3). Notwithstanding the recent major advance in our understanding of *haṭhayoga* in Vajrayāna thanks to ISAACSON AND SFERRA (2014), the remarks here are thus necessarily preliminary.

¹² Seven of these texts were noted by BIRCH (2011:535). I thank Péter-Dániel Szántó, Olga Serbaeva and Francesco Sferra for their help in identifying and dating several of the others.

¹³ SZÁNTÓ AND GRIFFITHS 2015:367.

¹⁴ MATSUNAGA 1978:xxvi.

¹⁵ SZÁNTÓ AND GRIFFITHS 2015:369. This text, better known by the unattested title **Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*, is called *Sūta* or *Sūtakamelāpaka* in its manuscripts (*loc. cit.*).

¹⁶ Durjayacandra, who dates to the late tenth century (SZÁNTÓ 2012:119), based his *Saptākṣarasādhana* (on which see SINCLAIR 2014) on a chapter of the *Abhidhānottaratāntra*.

¹⁷ The *Samputatilaka* is included as an appendix in eleventh-century manuscripts of the *Samputodbhava* (SZÁNTÓ 2016).

¹⁸ ISAACSON AND SFERRA 2014:71.

¹⁹ The *Caturmudrānvaya* is by Maitreyanātha, the author of the *Sekanirdeśa*.

8. <i>Lagbukālacakratantra</i>	c. 1025 ²⁰
9. <i>Vimalaprabhā</i>	c. 1030
10. <i>Ṣaḍaṅgayoga</i> of Anupamarakṣita	c. 1030 ²¹
11. <i>Sekoddeśaṭīkā</i>	1030 to 1040 ²²
12. <i>Sekanirdeśapañjikā</i>	mid to late eleventh century ²³
13. <i>Dākārṇavatāntra</i>	late tenth to early twelfth century ²⁴
14. <i>Gūḍhapadā</i>	1025 to 1140 ²⁵
15. <i>Guṇabharanī</i>	c. mid twelfth century ²⁶
16. <i>Amṛtakaṇikā</i>	c. mid twelfth century ²⁷
17. <i>Yogimanoharā</i>	c. 1200. ²⁸

In these texts *haṭhayoga* may mean simply ‘the application of force’, as it does in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, but some Vajrayāna works do provide information on what this means in practice. The first known mentions of *haṭhayoga* in Vajrayāna texts are in the early eighth-century *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinijālasaṃvara*.²⁹ Nothing is said about how *haṭhayoga* might be performed, but in one verse³⁰ it is associated with mastering *bodhicitta*,

²⁰ I thank Francesco Sferra for the dating of the *Lagbukālacakratantra* and its *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, which is a refinement of the 1025–1040 range proposed by NEWMAN (1998) based on Sferra’s identification of the date 1024/5 (the *mleccha* year 403, i.e. 415 AH) mentioned at *Lagbukālacakratantra* 1.27 as the likely year in which the text was completed rather than begun (personal communication 24 August 2019).

²¹ The *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* is cited by Nāropā in the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* (pp. 138–139). I thank Francesco Sferra for pointing out this citation to me and its implications for the dating of the *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* (personal communication 20 August 2019).

²² Nāropā, the author of the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*, died in 1040 or 1041 (WYLIE 1982).

²³ Rāmapāla, the author of the *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*, was a student of Maitreyaṅgā, the author of the *Sekanirdeśa*. I have inferred this dating from ISAACSON and SFERRA’s account of the few details known about Rāmapāla’s life (2014:85–89).

²⁴ SUGIKI 2017:45 n.1.

²⁵ I thank Francesco Sferra for this dating, which is a revision of the date of the *Gūḍhapadā* proposed by Péter-Dániel Szántó at <http://tibetica.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/date-of-gudhapada.html> (accessed 24 February 2020), based on a revised dating of the active period of Raviśrījñāna (see note 26), who mentions the *Gūḍhapadā* in his *Amṛtakaṇikā* (see the aforementioned blog post for details), and on the earlier lower limit for the *Lagbukālacakratantra* proposed in note 20 (personal communication 24 August 2019).

²⁶ I thank Francesco Sferra for this dating, which is a revision of the date range of 11th to 12th century he proposed for Raviśrījñāna (SFERRA 2000:48) as a result of a correction of the date of Dharmākaraśānti, Raviśrījñāna’s teacher (personal communication 24 August 2019).

²⁷ The *Amṛtakaṇikā* is by Raviśrījñāna, the author of the *Guṇabharanī*.

²⁸ ZHONGXIN AND TÖRU, *Yogimanoharā* introduction p. xv.

²⁹ The compound *haṭhayoga* is found at *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinijālasaṃvara* 5.81, 5.92, 5.93, 6.94, 9.140, 9.142 and 9.189. For an overview of this text, see SZÁNTÓ AND GRIFFITHS 2015.

³⁰ *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinijālasaṃvara* 5.93cd:

bodhicittam anantāgraṃ haṭhayogena sādhayet |

i.e. semen,³¹ an association found in several subsequent texts. In a commentary on another verse of the *Sarvabuddhasamāyogadākinijālaśamvara*³² in the tenth or early eleventh-century *Samputatilaka* (which is perhaps recycling exegesis by Ānandagarbha, who dates to the late eighth or early ninth century),³³ *haṭhayoga* is to be used by those who are *atyantahīnavīryāḥ*, i.e. very lacking in *vīrya*, which may mean both ‘vigour’ and ‘semen’. Vajrasattva manifests as Hayagrīva in the yogi so that he may achieve purification by *haṭhayoga* (which is glossed as *pauruṣa*, ‘manly’, *yoga*) and thereby restore his *vīrya*. A very similar usage of *haṭhayoga* is found in the ninth- or tenth-century **Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*.³⁴

Haṭhayoga is associated with the restraint of semen during sexual ritual in its one explicit definition in a Vajrayāna text, which is by Puṇḍarīka in his c. 1030 *Vimalaprabhā*,³⁵ and in the works of Maitreya-nātha and his disciple Rāmapāla, two eleventh- to twelfth-century Buddhist exegetes. These texts’ teachings on *haṭhayoga* will be examined in more detail below.

The mid tenth-century *Abhidhānottaratantra* and the late tenth- to early twelfth-century *Ḍākārṇavatāntra* mention *haṭhayoga* but do not explain it, saying it should be learnt from

³¹ On *bodhicitta* as semen in tantric Buddhism, see WANGCHUCK 2007:218–225.

³² *Sarvabuddhasamāyogadākinijālaśamvara* 5.81:

sa eva bhagavān yogo vajrasattvas tathāgataḥ |
 haṭhayogaviśuddhyai śrīparamāśvodayo bhavet ||
 a eva] *cod.*; * va *cod.*^{ac} d °odayo] *cod.*; °odra* yo* *cod.*^{ac}

Samputatilaka commentary:

atyantahīnavīryā iti kusīdāḥ sa evetyādi | haṭhayogaḥ pauruṣayogas tena viśuddhir haṭhayoga-
 viśuddhir vīryaniyojanaṃ tadarthaṃ haṭhayogaviśuddhaye paramāśvodayo bhavet | hayagrivo-
 dayo bhaved ity arthaḥ |

³³ SZÁNTÓ AND GRIFFITHS 2015:368.

³⁴ **Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* p. 87:

atyantahīnavīryāṇāṃ paramāśvarūpeṇa haṭhayogasamādhinā parākrameṇa hīnavīryanigrahaṃ
 karoti |

³⁵ This passage is found verbatim in the *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* of Anupamarakṣita, the *Sekoddeśatikā*, and the *Amṛta-kanikā*.

a guru.³⁶ The eleventh- to twelfth-century *Gūḍhapadā*³⁷ and the c. 1200 *Yogīmanoharā* commentary on the *Pañcakrama*³⁸ identify *haṭṭhayoga* with controlling the breath and, in

³⁶ *Abhidhānottaratantra* end of Chapter 34 (CHANDRA 1981 f.209, diplomatic transcription):

haṭṭhayogottamasādhanopadeśa yathābhedād adhipatyā gurugamyatām śikṣet |

Ḍākārṇavatāntra 8.29–31:

evamādi tv anekāyām nāḍikāsandhimarmasu |
piḍayet svasvacāreṣu bodhicittaṃ mahātmanām ||29||
haṭṭhayogavidhānaṃ ca jñeyā gurusya vākyayā |

Witnesses: NGMPP A138-9 (B, f.9v), Matsunami Tokyo 145 (N, f.47r) and NAK 3-886 (S, f.21v)
(I thank Péter-Dániel Szántó for providing me with scans of these manuscripts).

29b °sandhimarmasu] *em.* ISAACSON; °sandhimamayūḥ S, °sandhimarmmayūḥ N, °sandhir
*m*armmayūḥ B
29c °cāreṣu] BN; °rāreṣu S
29d °cittaṃ] N; °citta SB

I thank Harunaga Isaacson for his emendation in 29b, which, in a personal communication on 6 March 2018, he noted is supported by the Tibetan translation of the *Ḍākārṇava* which has, in Derge, *riṣa dan tshigs kyī gnad du*.

Ḍākārṇavatāntra 41.1–4

atha unmanikaraṇaṃ prayogaṃ sarvadurlabham |
kathayāmi samāseṇa khagānanāprayogataḥ ||1||
vīryasaṃbodhyaṅgadharme himālayeṣu saṃsthitaḥ |
nābhīcakre tu madhyeṣu bhāvayec cakranāyikām ||2||
kharūpam ātmano dūtī tāluvajrābjamadhyake |
utkṣiptaṃ śaravegena vijñānaṃ vāyunā saha ||3||
gātraṃ dhunadhunāyet karaṇaṃ haṭṭhayogakam |
kārayamāṇaḥ sadā yogī sidhyate paramākṣaram ||4||

Witnesses: B (f.29r) and S (f.71v).

2c madhyeṣu] B; madhyamu S
3b tālu°] B; tāla° S
3c utkṣiptaṃ śaravegena] *em.* ISAACSON; rukṣiptaṃ sara° BS
3d vijñānaṃ] B; jñāna S (*umm.*)
4c kārayamāṇaḥ] *em.* ISAACSON; kāryāmānaṃ BS
4d °kṣaram] B; °kṣara S

I thank Olga Serbaeva for drawing my attention to the references to *haṭṭhayoga* in the *Abhidhānottaratantra* and *Ḍākārṇavatāntra*, and for providing me with her working editions of both passages, which I drew on in preparing the passages presented here.

³⁷ The *Gūḍhapadā* quotes the otherwise lost *Mahāsamayatantra* on *haṭṭhayoga*, which is accomplished by means of the ‘bow-piercing process’ (*dhanurvedhakrama*, Royal Asiatic Society, London, Hodgson collection manuscript No. 34 f.69r⁷–f.69v³):

vajrabāṇāyudhadharam iti | vajrasattvaś ca | tac ca śrīmahāsamayatantra | ... paramārthata[h]
dhanurvedhakramenocyate | tatra
śvāsocchvāsa samaṃ kṛtvā nābhīsthāneṣu dhārayet |
avadhūtībāṇavajreṇa nāsārandhagataṃ dhanuḥ |
vedhayet sarvaśūnyabhūrū vajrasattvam anāhatam |
haṭṭhayogaṃ idaṃ vyaktaṃ bhāvaṃ bhāveṣu lakṣaṇāt |
tena vajraṃ ca sattvaṃ ca dvidhā vācyaṃ mahātmabhiḥ || iti ||
mahāsamayamantraṃ kṣaṇaikēnāpi lakṣayet |
prākṛtair manasā yojyaṃ paṇḍitair bodhim āpnuyāt || iti ||

³⁸ *Pañcakrama* 1.59

na tasya vratam ākhyātaṃ nākṣasūtraṃ na mantrakam |
dhāraṇāhomakarmāṇi varjyante ca parāparam ||

Yogīmanoharā Pañcakramaṭīpanī: kiṃ vratādīkam ācaraṇīyaṃ no vā ity āśānkāyām na tasyetyādi | na mantrakam

the *Gūḍhapadā*, moving it into the central channel, but make no mention of semen in its context.

In Vajrayāna texts *haṭhayoga* is seen as a method of last resort, or rejected altogether. Thus in the eighth-century *Guhyasamājatantra* it is prescribed (without details on its practice) as a means of achieving awakening to be turned to when the usual methods have failed.³⁹ The *Yogīmanoharā* mentions *haṭhayoga* in passing as a method of restraining the breath, adding that holding the breath and other ascetic practices are unnecessary because success may be achieved through repetition of the *vajra* mantra alone.⁴⁰

A wealth of new material on *haṭhayoga* in Vajrayāna has recently come to light thanks to Harunaga Isaacson and Francesco Sferra's monumental study of the works of Maitreyanātha and his disciple Rāmapāla, two eleventh- to twelfth-century exegetes.⁴¹ In Maitreyanātha's *Sekanirdeśa* and its *-pañjikā* commentary by Rāmapāla, *haṭhayoga* is the reversal of the third and fourth of the four blisses experienced during the tantric Buddhist sexual rite. In the usual order, the first bliss is *ānanda*, which arises during foreplay, the second is *paramānanda* ('supreme bliss'), experienced during coition, the third is *sahajānanda* ('spontaneous bliss'), experienced when semen reaches the glans of the penis, and the fourth is *viramānanda*, the 'bliss of cessation', experienced when semen falls into the consort's vagina. In *haṭhayoga*, *viramānanda* is the third bliss and understood as 'bliss of special pleasure' rather than 'bliss of cessation', semen does not fall, and the four blisses increase progressively in intensity.⁴²

Maitreyanātha and Rāmapāla reject *haṭhayoga's* ordering of the blisses because its practice is said to be *balātkrīta*, 'done by force', and therefore against reasoning;⁴³ it is also *āyāsababhūta*, 'full of effort'.⁴⁴ It is not clear from Maitreyanātha's exposition whether he identifies all those who propound the reversal of the third and fourth blisses as practitioners of *haṭhayoga* or whether *haṭhayoga* is just a particular method of experiencing the blisses in that order,⁴⁵ but several other proponents of the reversed order make no mention of *haṭhayoga*,⁴⁶ suggesting that it is not the only means of experiencing the blisses in that sequence.

The reversed order of the blisses is advocated by the renowned scholar Abhayākaragupta

pravyāhārātmakam dhāraṇā haṭhayogena yantraṇam vāyoh | nivartante cāparāpare | aparāpare [']pi vyāpārāḥ snān-abhojanādīr yā[*]pi na kartavyā api tu vajrajāpād eva sidhyantīty āha |

³⁹ *Guhyasamājatantra* 18.161a-163b:

darśanaṃ yadi śaṅmāsair yad uktaṃ naiva jāyate |
ārabheta tribhīr vārair yathoktavidhisambaraiḥ ||
darśanaṃ tu kṛte 'py evaṃ sādhakasya na jāyate |
yadā na sidhyate bodhir haṭhayogena sādhyet ||
jñānasiddhis tadā tasya yogenaivopajāyate |

⁴⁰ See footnote 38.

⁴¹ ISAACSON and SFERRA 2014. See in particular pp. 97–102 and *Sekanirdeśapañjikā ad vv. 2–4*.

⁴² ISAACSON AND SFERRA 2014:100.

⁴³ ISAACSON AND SFERRA 2014:173 l.11.

⁴⁴ ISAACSON AND SFERRA 2014:176 l.10.

⁴⁵ ISAACSON AND SFERRA 2014:101.

⁴⁶ ISAACSON AND SFERRA (2014:98) name as proponents of the *haṭhayoga* order of blisses Kamalanātha (in his *Ratnāvalī* commentary on the Hevajratāntra) and Abhayākaragupta (in his *Abhayapaddhati* commentary on the *Buddhakapālatantra* and *Āmnāyamañjarī* commentary on the *Sampuṭatantra*), neither of whom mentions *haṭhayoga*.

and in texts of the *Kālacakra* tradition.⁴⁷ The first definition of the practice of *haṭhayoga*, which does not give any details of its techniques, is found in the *Vimalaprabhā*, Puṇḍarīka's c. 1030 CE commentary on the *Laghukālacakratantra*,⁴⁸ a verse of which (4.119) says that if the *siddhi* desired by mantra-practitioners does not arise as a result of purification, yogic withdrawal, and so forth, it should be achieved by the practice of *nāda* and by forcefully (*haṭhena*) restraining *bindu*, i.e. semen, in the glans of the penis when it is in the vagina.⁴⁹ Puṇḍarīka glosses *haṭhena* with *haṭhayogena* and defines *haṭhayoga* thus:

‘Now *haṭhayoga* is taught. In this system, when the undying moment does not arise because the breath is unrestrained [even] when the image is seen by means of withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*) and the other [auxiliaries of yoga, i.e. *dhyāna*, *prāṇāyāma*, *dhāraṇā*, *anusmṛti*, and *samādhi*], then, having forcefully (*haṭhena*) made the breath flow in the central channel through the practice of *nāda*, which is about to be explained, [the yogi] should attain the undying moment by non-vibration through restraining the drops of *bodhicitta* [i.e. semen] in the *vajra* [i.e. penis] when it is in the lotus of wisdom [i.e. vagina]. This is *haṭhayoga*.’⁵⁰

Puṇḍarīka's definition of *haṭhayoga* combines for the first time two features of *haṭhayoga* mentioned separately in other Vajrayāna texts: the restraint of semen and the moving of the breath into (and up) the central channel. As noted by BIRCH,⁵¹ these and the association with *nāda*⁵² (which is absent in other Vajrayāna works apart from those which

⁴⁷ ISAACSON AND SFERRA 2014:97.

⁴⁸ This definition is repeated verbatim in the *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* of Anupamarakṣita, the *Sekoddeśatikā* of Nāropā, and the *Amṛtakaṇikā* of Raviśrījñāna (for details see BIRCH 2011:535). Raviśrījñāna adds that *haṭhayoga* is a method for making *samādhi* burst forth (*upāyo haṭhayogo 'pi samādhyangasphuṭibhāvārtham*).

⁴⁹ *Vimalaprabhā ad Laghukālacakratantra* 4.119:

samśuddho 'nusmṛteḥ syād vimalam api prabhāmaṇḍalam jñānabimbāt tasmāc chuddhaḥ samād-
hau katipayadivasaiḥ sidhyate jñānadehaḥ | pratyāhārādibhir vai yadi bhavati na sā mantriṇām
iṣṭasiddhir nādābhyāsād dhaṭhenābjagakulīsamāṇau sādheyed bindurodhāt |

⁵⁰ idānīm haṭhayoga ucyate | iha yadā pratyāhārādibhir bimbe dṛṣṭe saty akṣarakṣaṇam notpadyate
ayantritaprāṇatayā tadā nādābhyāsād vakṣyamāṇād haṭhena prāṇam madhyamāyām vāhayitvā prajñābjagata-
kulīsamāṇau bodhicittabindunirodhād akṣarakṣaṇam sādheyen niṣpandeneṭi haṭhayogaḥ || 119 ||

⁵¹ BIRCH 2011:536.

⁵² How this practice is performed is not stated clearly in early Buddhist treatments of *haṭhayoga*. In his commentary to 5.119 Puṇḍarīka says he is about to explain it, but when he does so in 5.120 (together with explanations of *bindu* and *kalā*) he simply says that it is [the movement of (breath as?)] *cittabindu* to the heart, which brings about deep sleep (*iha nādo hṛdaye cittabinduḥ suṣuptāvasthājanakaḥ*). In his *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* (p. 108), Anupamarakṣita says that *Laghukālacakratantra* 4.196–197 defines *nāda*. The passage cited does not use the word *nāda*, but twice mentions *haṭha*:

yā śaktir nābhimadhyād vrajati parapadaṃ dvādaśāntaṃ kalāntaṃ
sā nābhau sanniruddhā taḍḍānalānibhā daṇḍarūpothitā ca |
cakrāc cakrāntaraṃ vai mṛdulalitagaṭiś cālītā madhyānyāyām
yāvac coṣṇīśarandhraṃ spṛṣati haṭhatayā sūcivad bāhyacarma ||
apāṇam tatra kāle paramahaṭhatayā prerayed ūrdhvamārgē
uṣṇīṣam bhedayitvā vrajati parapuraṃ vāyuyugme niruddhe |
evaṃ vajraprabhedān manasi savīṣayā khecaratvaṃ prayāti
pañcābhijñāsvabhāvā bhavati punar iyaṃ yoginām viśvamātā ||

‘The goddess who extends from the middle of the navel to the great place at the end of the *kalās* twelve fingers beyond the top of the head is restrained in the navel in the form of a bolt of

repeat the *Vimalaprabhā*'s definition of *haṭhayoga*) are shared with subsequent formulations of *haṭhayoga* in non-Buddhist texts.

2 Śaiva names for *haṭhayoga*

Haṭhayoga in Vajrayāna thus denoted a secondary method of achieving *siddhi* which involved the prevention of ejaculation by making the breath flow in the central channel. The details of how it is to be performed are not taught. As will be shown in detail below, this Vajrayāna *haṭhayoga* was the source of the term's use to denote an increasing range of physical yoga methods in non-Buddhist texts composed from about the twelfth century onwards. By the time of the composition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* it encompassed posture (*āsana*), breath retention (*kumbhaka*), techniques for manipulating the vital energies (*mudrā*), and concentration upon the internal sounds (*nādānusandhāna*).⁵³

As is the case with Vajrayāna,⁵⁴ there are many lacunae in our knowledge of the texts of tantric Śaivism, but a greater proportion of its corpus has been studied. No mention of *haṭhayoga* has yet been found in it. Sheer weight of evidence thus indicates a Buddhist origin for the term *haṭhayoga*. Furthermore, in the few instances that Śaiva texts mention practices which in Vajrayāna works or the later non-Buddhist *haṭhayoga* corpus are classified as *haṭhayoga*, they are called otherwise, as we shall now see.

2.1 The restraint of ejaculation

Instructions to avoid the ejaculation of semen are rare in Śaiva texts, being found only in a power-oriented method of ascetic restraint called the *asidhārāvratā* or 'knife's edge observance', which both predates the emergence of tantra and has persisted to modern times, being famously practised by Gandhi, albeit not by that name. Shaman HATLEY has analysed its history and practice.⁵⁵ The earliest mentions of the *asidhārāvratā* date to the first half of the first millennium CE: it is mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, *Raghuvamśa*, and *Vaikhānasagrhyasūtra*. It is subsequently taught in various Śaiva texts, including the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā Guhyasūtra*, the *Matanīgapārameśvara*, the *Jayadrathayāmala*, and

lightning. Standing up straight like a staff, she is made to move along the central channel from *cakra* to *cakra* with a gentle, charming gait until she forcefully (*baṭhatayā*) touches the opening at the crown like a needle touching skin. At that moment the yogi impels the *apāna* breath with the utmost force (*paramabaṭhatayā*) into the upper channel. Having pierced the crown, with both breaths restrained, she enters the body of another (*parapuram*). As a result of this *vajra* piercing, she attains in the mind, together with sense-objects, the state of a sky-rover. With the five special faculties as her essence she then becomes the universal mother for yogis.'

In his *Guṇabharanī* commentary on Anupamarakṣita's *Śaḍaṅgayoga*, Raviśrījñāna identifies the practice of *nāda* mentioned in Puṇḍarīka's definition of *haṭhayoga* with *jñānasahajānandābhyāsa*, 'the practice of knowledge and spontaneous bliss' (cf. *Amṛtakaṇikā* p. 29, ll. 4-9). The word *haṭhena* in Puṇḍarīka's definition is glossed by Raviśrījñāna with *hūmkāranādena*, 'by making the sound (*nāda*) *hūm*'. *Guṇabharanī* p. 107:

mṛdutayā vāmadakṣiṇāvāhāvicchedād ayantritaprāṇatayā | nādābhyāsaj jñānasahajānandābhyā-
sād dhaṭhena [*corr.*, dhaṭhena Ed.] hūmkāranādena <|>

On the later *haṭhayogic* practice of *nāda*, see below, p. 16.

⁵³ *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.56.

⁵⁴ See footnote 11.

⁵⁵ HATLEY 2016.

the *Brahmayāmala* (also known as the *Picumata*). Its various formulations involve different degrees of union between a man and a woman, ranging from simply sleeping together to, in the c. 7th- to eighth-century *Brahmayāmala*, engaging in sexual intercourse. In the chaster varieties the man must simply cultivate dispassion; in the *Brahmayāmala* he is to avoid having an orgasm. To do so, he is instructed to practise *avagraha*, which in this context KISS and HATLEY have inferred means ‘sexual restraint’⁵⁶ and so has a meaning similar to that of *haṭhayoga* in Vajrayāna texts. Nowhere in descriptions of the *asidhārāvratā* are the terms *haṭha* or *haṭhayoga* used.

2.2 Physical yoga methods

At least five Śaiva texts use the term *kaṣṭayoga*, ‘forced’ or ‘painful’ yoga:⁵⁷ the *Tantrasadbhāva*;⁵⁸ the *Cittasamtoṣatrimśikā* of Nāga;⁵⁹ the *Devīvyardhaśatika*;⁶⁰ Śivopādhyāya’s *Vivṛti* commentary on the *Vijñānabhairava*;⁶¹ and Abhinavagupta’s *Gītārthasamgraha* commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*.⁶² With the exception of Śivopādhyāya, who grudgingly grants it efficacy, these texts reject *kaṣṭayoga*. The *Cittasamtoṣatrimśikā* and *Devīvyardhaśatika* give no indication of what it entails. The *Tantrasadbhāva* identifies *mudrā*, *maṇḍala*, *mantra*, exhalation, inhalation, and various methods of assisted meditation as types of *kaṣṭayoga*. In his commentary on the *Vijñānabhairava* Śivopādhyāya associates *kaṣṭayoga* with *prāṇāyāma*. Abhinavagupta does not make clear what he means by *kaṣṭayoga* in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, but in the *Tantrāloka* he criticizes each of the eight *aṅgas* of Pātañjalayoga in turn, singling out *prāṇāyāma* for special censure because it hurts the body, suggesting that this is what he has in mind when in his *Gītārthasamgraha* he contrasts *kaṣṭayoga* with the easy attainment of *brahman* through simple meditative yoga. Similarly, at *Pratyabhijñānāhṛdaya* 18, Kṣemarāja mentions a *sukhopāya*, an ‘easy method’ of attaining *siddhi*, so called because it omits *prāṇāyāma*, *mudrā*, *bandha* etc.

Thus in the few instances in which Śaiva texts give a generic name to practices that in later works were designated as *haṭhayoga*, they use the near synonym *kaṣṭayoga*, indicating that the later usage of the term *haṭhayoga* was not current in those traditions and supporting the argument that its use to denote physical yoga originated in the *haṭhayoga*

⁵⁶ KISS 2015:49.

⁵⁷ I thank Somdev Vasudeva for informing me of these passages at a Hatha Yoga Project workshop in September 2017.

⁵⁸ *Tantrasadbhāva* 1.37c–41b:

mudrāmaṇḍalamantraiś ca kaṣṭayogaiś tathāparaiḥ ||37||
 recakaiḥ pūrakair dhyānaiḥ sopāyair bahubhiḥ priye |
 bhrāmitāḥ karmavistāraiḥ na jñātaṃ kathitaṃ mayā ||38||
 taiś tu jñānāvālepena tac ca pṛṣṭam avajñāyā |
 brahmā viṣṇuś tathā rudra indraś candraḥ prajāpatiḥ ||39||
 skandanandigaṇāḥ sarve śukrādya ye ca yoginaḥ |
 kṛtakṛtyāś tu [te] sarve yaiś ca yac cāvadhāritam ||40||
 taṃ tathaivaṃ varārohe grhītaṃ mandabuddhibhiḥ |

⁵⁹ *Cittasamtoṣatrimśikā* 46: kṣiṣṭam yad etad abhavaj japakaṣṭayogaḥ.

⁶⁰ *Devīvyardhaśatika* 49: siddhayoginīyogaḥ kaṣṭayogaṃ parityajet.

⁶¹ Śivopādhyāya’s commentary on *Vijñānabhairava* 67: iti kaṣṭayogasyāpi nirvikalpadaśāpṛāptiḥ prayojanam ity alam.

⁶² *Gītārthasamgraha* ad 6.29: anenaiva krameṇa yogināṃ sukhena brahmāvāptiḥ na tu kaṣṭayogādineti tātparyam; ad 6.49: na ca nirīśvaraṃ kaṣṭayogamātraṃ saṃsiddhidam ity ucyate.

of Vajrayāna. In the following section I shall outline how the Vajrayāna term came to be applied to physical yoga broadly conceived.

3 *Hathayoga* as physical yoga broadly conceived

The first text to teach in detail any of the practices which came to be classified as *hathayoga* in the *haṭha* corpus is the c. eleventh-century *Amṛtasiddhi*, which was composed in a Vajrayāna milieu⁶³ but is unorthodox insofar as it rejects sexual ritual and teaches a yoga for celibate ascetics. The *Amṛtasiddhi* does not use the name *hathayoga* for its yoga method, whose three core techniques, *mahāmudrā*, *mahābandha*, and *mahāvedha*, are physical methods of locking the breath in the abdomen and then propelling it up the central channel. The first non-Buddhist text to use the term *hathayoga* to denote a specific system of yoga is the *Amaraughaprabodha*, a Nāth Śaiva work which identifies as *hathayoga* the methods of the *Amṛtasiddhi*, and places it second in importance in a hierarchy of four yogas: *mantra*, *laya*, *haṭha* and *rāja*.⁶⁴

The *Amaraughaprabodha* is likely to have been composed at Kadri in Mangalore, where Vajrayāna Buddhism flourished from at least the ninth century before being subsumed within Nāth Śaivism in perhaps the thirteenth century.⁶⁵ That the author of the *Amaraughaprabodha* knew the Buddhist *Amṛtasiddhi* is clear because he takes verses directly from it. He would also have known of the Vajrayāna concept of *hathayoga*, which is mentioned in the *Guhyasamāja*, whose cult flourished at Kadri.⁶⁶

The author of the *Amaraughaprabodha* gave the yoga method of the *Amṛtasiddhi* the name *hathayoga*, which, as a term for a secondary method of attaining success in yoga in which the breath is made to rise up the central channel in order to prevent ejaculation during sexual ritual, was a fitting name for the second yoga in a hierarchy of four in which the breath is made to rise up the central channel in order to prevent the emission of semen (albeit by celibate yogis).

It was only after the compilation of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* in about 1400 CE that the name *hathayoga* started to be widely used to denote physical yoga methods (and even then it was by no means unanimously adopted). Of the twenty texts which teach physical yoga methods and predate the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, nine use the name *hathayoga*.⁶⁷ Of those there is

⁶³ MALLINSON 2020.

⁶⁴ *Amaraughaprabodha* 2–4 and 19. The term *hathayoga* is also found in the tenth-century *Mokṣopāya* (5.54.8, 5.54.15), in the context of *prāṇāyāma*, but here, like in the *Yogācārabhūmi*, the meaning seems to be simply ‘the application of force’ with no further connotations. It is used to explain how forceful performance of *prāṇāyāma* does not bring results because it is painful (8ab and 15ab both read *babhūva na haṭhād eva haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadah*). Elsewhere in the *Mokṣopāya* *haṭha* is used in the context of yoga and/or *tapas* on its own to describe the forceful performance of a practice (5.93.36, 6.72.4, 6.72.12). See also BIRCH 2011:542 n.107.

⁶⁵ MALLINSON 2019:23–24.

⁶⁶ MALLINSON 2019:23. The brief description of *hathayoga* given in a citation from the *Mahāsamayantra* in the c. 1025–1140 CE *Gūdhapadā* (see n. 37) has some parallels with the yoga method of the *Amṛtasiddhi* and could indicate a more direct source for the name used by the author of the *Amaraughaprabodha*.

⁶⁷ These twenty texts are, in approximate chronological order, the following (those marked with an asterisk mention *hathayoga*): *Amṛtasiddhi**, *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā**, *Amaraughaprabodha**, *Dattātreyayogaśāstra**, *Vivekamāraṇḍa*, *Goraḥśasataka*, *Kbecarīvidyā*, *Yogabīja**, *Śivasamhitā**, *Aparokṣānubhūti**, *Yogatānūvali**, *Tirumantiram*, *Pampāmāhātmya*, *Goraḥśayogaśāstra*, *Jñāneśvarī*, *Śārngadharapaddhati**, *Ānandakanda*, *Śivayogapradīpikā**, Hemacandra’s *Yogaśāstra*, *Amaraughasāsana*. I have not included here the Vaiṣṇava source texts for the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*’s non-seated postures, on which see p. 14 and MALLINSON 2014:227–8.

a core group of four which teach the methods of the *Amṛtasiddhi* as part of their *haṭhayogas*: the *Amarauḡhaprabodha*, *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra*, *Śivasamhitā* and *Haṭhapradīpikā*.

These four are also the only texts of this period to teach, or at least mention, *vajrolīmudrā*, a technique of urethral suction which is enjoined for the retention of semen and explicitly said to allow the yogi to enjoy sexual intercourse without ejaculating.⁶⁸ The meaning of the name *vajrolī* was soon forgotten in the *haṭha* tradition, but it originated as a compound of *vajra* and *olī*, a vernacular word from western India which Hemacandra in his *Deśināmamālā* defines as *kula-paripāṭi*, ‘lineage’. *Vajrolī* thus means ‘Vajra lineage’, i.e. the lineage of Vajrayāna (tantric Buddhism). This is confirmed by a legend found in the late thirteenth-century Marathi *Līlācaritra* in which the Nāth Śaiva *siddha* Gorakṣa is said to convert the Buddhist *siddha* Virūpa (to whom the teachings of the *Amṛtasiddhi* are attributed) from *vajrolī* to *amarolī*, i.e. from Vajrayāna to the Śaiva Amara lineage of celibate ascetics (whose teachings are found in the *Amarauḡhaprabodha*, the “Awakening in the Amara lineage”, which is attributed to Gorakṣa himself).⁶⁹

In *haṭhayoga* a *mudrā* is a technique for manipulating the vital energies, so *vajrolīmudrā* is a Vajrayāna method of doing so; indeed it does not seem overly speculative to conjecture that it was the technique, or one of a group of techniques, by which tantric Buddhists practised *haṭhayoga* as taught in their texts, i.e. the non-emission of semen during sexual ritual.⁷⁰ (Meanwhile, in most *haṭha* texts *amarolī*, the *mudrā* of the Amara lineage, is a method of mastering the ejaculatory impulse for which the celibate yogi trains by restraining the flow of urine.)⁷¹ The close association of *haṭhayoga* with *vajrolīmudrā* further supports Vajrayāna origins for the name *haṭhayoga*.

4 The methods of *haṭhayoga*

The practice of *haṭhayoga* has been well documented in numerous publications and I shall not explain its various methods in detail here.⁷² Instead I shall chart their textual codification up to the composition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* brings together the teachings on physical yoga in almost all texts which precede it, including several which do not use the name *haṭhayoga*. I shall restrict myself here to texts which do use that name; by including the *Haṭhapradīpikā* I shall survey all methods of physical yoga taught in texts which precede it.

4.1 *Mudrā*

The *Amṛtasiddhi*’s three core practices, *mahāmudrā*, *mahābandha*, and *mahāvedha*, were identified with *haṭhayoga* in the *Amarauḡhaprabodha*.⁷³ The teachings of the *Amarauḡhaprabodha* were then drawn on by the composer of the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* in his analysis of

⁶⁸ On *vajrolīmudrā*, see MALLINSON 2018.

⁶⁹ MALLINSON 2019:5.

⁷⁰ *Vajrolīmudrā* is used to prevent ejaculation during sexual ritual by current Tibetan Vajrayāna practitioners, who claim scriptural authority for the practice in the *Yutok Nyinḡrik* cycle, which has origins in the twelfth century (JOFFE 2019:266-282).

⁷¹ MALLINSON 2018:189 n.21.

⁷² See MALLINSON AND SINGLETON 2017 for a survey and analysis of yoga methods including all those of *haṭhayoga*.

⁷³ *Amarauḡhaprabodha* 19-41.

haṭhayoga, which he says is of two kinds (both of which achieve the same ends): one which was first practised by Yājñavalkya and consists of the same eight *aṅgas* as Patañjali's yoga; and another which was first practised by Kapila. The *haṭhayoga* of Kapila is the three methods of the *Amarauḡhaprabodha* together with six other techniques of manipulating the vital energies.⁷⁴ These include the three *bandhas* or locks probably first taught in the *Gorakṣaśataka* (*mahābandha*, *jālandharabandha*, and *uddiyāṇabandha*).⁷⁵ That the author of the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* is compiling teachings from earlier texts when he describes Kapila's yoga is supported by the overlaps between the techniques of the *Amarauḡhaprabodha* and *Gorakṣaśataka*: the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra's mahāmudrā* includes the positions to be adopted for *jālandharabandha* and *mūlabandha*.⁷⁶ In addition to these six practices, the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* teaches *khecariṃudrā*, in which the tongue is turned back and above the soft palate,⁷⁷ *vīparītakaraṇī*, in which the body is inverted, and *vajrolīṃudrā*, the method of urethral suction mentioned above.

In the *Śivasamhitā* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* these nine practices are all classified as *mudrās* and included among the practices of *haṭha*.⁷⁸ A tenth *mudrā* is added, *śakticālana*, which involves pulling on the tongue in order to stimulate Kuṇḍalinī.⁷⁹ In these and subsequent *haṭhayoga* texts, a *mudrā* is thus a method of manipulating the vital energy, variously conceived as the breath, Kuṇḍalinī, and/or semen, in order to make it rise up the body's central channel.

Until the composition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, textual treatments of *haṭhayoga* identified it with only the practices classified as *mudrās* in the *Śivasamhitā* and *Haṭhapradīpikā*. As noted above, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* added three more categories of *haṭha* technique: *āsana*, posture, *kumbhaka*, breath retention, and *nādānusandhāna*, listening to the internal sounds. *Āsana* and *kumbhaka* are practised in preparation for *mudrā*, while *nādānusandhāna* is a method of attaining *samādhi*.

4.2 *Āsana*

In most forms of contemporary yoga practice, *āsana* is central, but it has a secondary role in early *haṭhayoga*. The *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Amarauḡhaprabodha* do not teach *āsana* as a specific practice. In the *Amṛtasiddhi* the word *āsana* is used to refer both to the seat or mat on which the yogi carries out his practice,⁸⁰ and, when it is said that in the second stage of practice his *āsana* becomes firm,⁸¹ to an unspecified seated position for meditation and breath control. The *Amarauḡhaprabodha* repeats this claim⁸² and says no more about

⁷⁴ *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* 132–158.

⁷⁵ *Gorakṣaśataka* 49–63.

⁷⁶ Compare *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* 132 and 133 with 144 and 138 respectively. The author of the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* is unusual for the *haṭha* genre in that he draws on the teachings of earlier texts but never incorporates them verbatim, preferring to compose his own verses.

⁷⁷ On *khecariṃudrā*, see MALLINSON 2007.

⁷⁸ *Śivasamhitā* 4.23–24, *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.6–7.

⁷⁹ *Śivasamhitā* 4.106–110, *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.100–116. Like *mahābandha*, *jālandharabandha*, and *uddiyāṇabandha*, *śakticālana* is first taught in the *Gorakṣaśataka* (vv. 16–28).

⁸⁰ *Amṛtasiddhi* 11.4.

⁸¹ *Amṛtasiddhi* 20.1.

⁸² *Amarauḡhaprabodha* 37.

āsana.

The *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* does not include *āsana* in its treatment of *haṭhayoga* as practised by Kapila, but it is the third of the eight *aṅga*'s of Yājñavalkya's *haṭhayoga*.⁸³ There are said to be 8,400,000 *āsanas*, but only one is taught, *padmāsana*, the lotus position.⁸⁴

The *Śivasamhitā* (which does not explicitly identify the components of *haṭhayoga* practice) says that there are eighty-four postures and teaches four: *siddhāsana*, *padmāsana*, *paścimottānāsana*, and *svastikāsana*.⁸⁵ These are all seated postures for meditation and breath control. *Paścimottānāsana*, a forward bend, is not taught as such in earlier works, but is similar to the *daṇḍāsana* taught at *Pātanjālayogaśāstra* 2.46, with the difference that in *paścimottānāsana* the toes are to be held by the hands, and the head put on the knees. Additionally, unlike the other three postures, which are simply taught as suitable positions for meditation and breath control, *paścimottānāsana* is said to make the breath enter the central channel.⁸⁶

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* is the first text to name *āsana* as a component practice of *haṭha-yoga*, which it says brings stability and suppleness to the body, and keeps away disease.⁸⁷ The *Haṭhapradīpikā* teaches fifteen postures, of which ten are seated or lying positions for meditation and five are more complex twisted or balanced postures.⁸⁸ Of the former, six are taken from the section on *āsana* in the *Vasiṣṭhasamhitā*,⁸⁹ two from that in the *Viveka-mārtaṇḍa*,⁹⁰ and one is probably drawn from the *Śivasamhitā*,⁹¹ while the "corpse pose" (*śavāsana*) taught in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* is a reformulation of a method of *layayoga* ("the yoga of dissolution [of the mind]") taught in the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra*.⁹² This is the first example of a subsequently common phenomenon in which physical postures originally taught as techniques other than *āsanas* are included under the *āsana* rubric.⁹³

Source texts for three of the five complex postures taught in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, *ut-tānakūrmāsana*, *dhanurāsana*, and *matsyendrāsana*, have not been identified. No specific benefits are given for the first two, but *matsyendrāsana* is said to kindle the digestive fire, remove disease, awaken Kuṇḍalinī, and stabilize semen.⁹⁴ The verses describing *mayūrāsana*

⁸³ *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* 27.

⁸⁴ *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* 34–38.

⁸⁵ *Śivasamhitā* 3.96–115.

⁸⁶ Elsewhere the *Śivasamhitā*, a layered text, mentions in passing other postures which it does not describe: *vajrāsana* (4.51), *muktāsana* (4.110), *gomukhāsana* (5.10).

⁸⁷ *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.17. *Āsana* is also said to get rid of disease in the c. thirteenth-century *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, a text which was used to compile the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* includes *āsana* among the six *aṅgas* of yoga and says there are 8,400,000 postures (as many as there are varieties of living beings), of which it teaches two, *siddhāsana* and *padmāsana* (*Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 3–8).

⁸⁸ *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.17–54. In contrast to earlier publications, I am here categorizing *paścimottānāsana* as a seated posture.

⁸⁹ These are the *svastika*, *gomukha*, *vira*, *kūrma*, *siṃha* and *bhadra* *āsanas*: *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.19–22, 50–54 = *Vasiṣṭhasamhitā* 1.68, 70, 72, 80, 81, 73–75 and 79. A variant form of *siddhāsana* taught at *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.36 is taken from *Vasiṣṭhasamhitā* 1.81, in which the posture is called *muktāsana*.

⁹⁰ These are *siddhāsana* (a variant of that taught at 1.36) and *padmāsana*: *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.35 and 1.44 = *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 7–8. A variant form of *padmāsana* found at *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* 35–36 is taught at *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.45–46.

⁹¹ This is *paścimatānāsana*: *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.28–29 = *Śivasamhitā* 3.108–109.

⁹² *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.32 = *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* 24cd.

⁹³ In the eighteenth-century *Jogpradīpikā*, for example, the ancient ascetic practice of hanging upside down from a tree is taught as *tapkāra āsana*, "the ascetic's posture" (179–183), and the *mahāmudrā* first taught in the *Amṛtasiddhi* is taught both as a *mudrā* and an *āsana* (105–106).

⁹⁴ *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.27.

and *kukkuṭāsana*, the peacock and cock postures, are taken from the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, which in turn derives its teachings from earlier Vaiṣṇava works.⁹⁵ *Mayūrāsana* is first taught in the c. tenth-century Vaikhānasa *Vimānārcanākalpa*, in which it is one of nine postures, the rest of which are seated positions.⁹⁶ The nine postures are divided into three groups of three, which are classed as low, middling, and high; *mayūrāsana* is included among the low postures. Its anomalous nature as a balancing position which cannot be held indefinitely is not remarked upon, nor is it said to have any particular aim. *Kukkuṭāsana* is first introduced in the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā*, which says that all the eleven postures that it teaches (of which only *mayūrāsana* and *kukkuṭāsana* are not seated postures) are for promoting health.⁹⁷ In its description of *mayūrāsana*, which is derived from that of the *Vimānārcanākalpa*, the text says that it destroys all poisons and wards off all diseases,⁹⁸ playing on the peacock's ability to eat poisonous animals. The *Hāṭhapradīpikā* adds the ability to digest an excess of bad food to *mayūrāsana*'s benefits as taught in the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* and *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*.⁹⁹ *Kukkuṭāsana* is not said to have any specific benefits in the *Hāṭhapradīpikā* nor in the texts from which it derives its teachings.

4.3 *Kumbhaka*

Breath control (*prāṇāyāma*) is central to all methods of yoga. Until the advent of the *hāṭha* corpus its sole documented practice was a simple method of alternate nostril breathing and breath retention used to purify the body and still the mind (and, in some *dharmaśāstras*, as a method of atonement for wrongdoing).¹⁰⁰ The *hāṭha* corpus introduces eight further techniques of breath control, classified as *sahita kumbhakas*, 'accompanied breath retentions', which for the most part involve variations in the method of inhalation or exhalation. Four of these, *sūryā*, *ujjāyī*, *śitalī*, and *bhastrī*, are first taught in the *Gorakṣaśataka*.¹⁰¹ They are included in the *Hāṭhapradīpikā*'s teachings on *kumbhaka* together with four further breathing practices, *sītkārī*, *bhrāmarī*, *mūrccā*, and *plāvinī*, source texts for which have not been identified.¹⁰² Mastery of the breath in *hāṭha* texts is marked by the ability to spontaneously suspend the breath for as long as desired. This is called *kevala kumbhaka*, 'unaccompanied breath retention', and can only be performed once the eight *sahita kumbhakas* have been mastered.

The *sahita kumbhakas* are to be practised after the body's channels have been purified by means of the basic alternate nostril *prāṇāyāma* and a group of internal cleansing techniques called the *ṣaṭkarmas* (which are taught for the first time in the *Hāṭhapradīpikā*). The *sūryā*, *ujjāyī*, and *śitalī kumbhakas* help to further purify the body, curing imbalances of the *kapha*, *vāta*, and *pitta doṣas* respectively. The *bhastrī kumbhaka* awakens Kuṇḍalinī and pierces the three knots (*granthis*) in the central channel. The four *kumbhakas* introduced by the *Hāṭhapradīpikā* have more esoteric effects, with *bhrāmarī* and *mūrccā* bringing about states of bliss, *sītkārī* making the yogi a second god of love, and *plāvinī* allowing him to

⁹⁵ For details see MALLINSON 2014:227-228.

⁹⁶ *Vimānārcanākalpa* paṭala 96

⁹⁷ *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* 31.30.

⁹⁸ *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* 31.37.

⁹⁹ *Hāṭhapradīpikā* 1.31.

¹⁰⁰ MALLINSON AND SINGLETON 2017:129-30.

¹⁰¹ *Gorakṣaśataka* 28-49.

¹⁰² *Hāṭhapradīpikā* 2.44-71.

float on water like a leaf.

4.4 *Nādānusandhāna*

The practice of *nādānusandhāna*, ‘concentration on the [inner] sound’, taught in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* as one of the auxiliaries of *haṭhayoga*, combines two different notions of *nāda*, ‘sound’ or ‘resonance’: the spontaneous arising of different internal sounds marking the yogi’s progress through the four stages of yoga practice, first taught in the *Amṛtasiddhi*; and deliberate concentration on the sounds that arise internally as a means in itself to attaining *samādhi*, the goal of yoga practice.¹⁰³ Source texts for the verses which teach the latter (4.78–99) have not been found, but the practice has precedents in the tantric corpus.¹⁰⁴

5 The results of success in *haṭhayoga*

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* and earlier texts which teach *haṭhayoga* chart progress in its practice in a series of four stages, *ārambha*, *ghaṭa*, *paricaya*, and *niṣpatti*, first taught in the *Amṛtasiddhi*. The *haṭha* techniques, correctly employed, make the vital principle, variously conceived as the breath, Kuṇḍalinī, and/or semen, rise up the central channel, piercing three knots, the *brahma-*, *viṣṇu-*, and *rudra-granthis*, along the way. Different internal sounds arise corresponding to each stage, together with more intense experiences of bliss (*ānanda*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*). When the final stage is mastered, the vital principle reaches the head and the yogi attains *samādhi*, which is identified with *rājayoga*, ‘the royal yoga’, *amaratva*, ‘immortality’, and *jīvanmukti*, ‘liberation while living’.¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰³ *Haṭhapradīpikā* 4.65–102. See also MALLINSON 2016:116 and MALLINSON AND SINGLETON 2017:329–330.

¹⁰⁴ VASUDEVA 2004:272–280.

¹⁰⁵ *Haṭhapradīpikā* 4.2–4.

¹⁰⁶ Unless otherwise stated, references to the *Amaraughaprabodha* in this chapter are to its shorter recension, on which see BIRCH forthcoming.

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