

# Buddhism in Central Asia II

*Practices and Rituals, Visual and Material Transfer*

*Edited by*

Yukiyo Kasai  
Henrik H. Sørensen



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# Bridging Yoga and Mahāyoga: Samaya in Early Tantric Buddhism

Jacob P. Dalton

## 1 Introduction

The 7th and 8th centuries saw sudden-gradual debates popping up in all sorts of ways. Not only did the Chan Master Shenhui (668–760, 神會) claim the superiority of his lineage to that of Shenxiu (606–706, 神秀), not only did Tibetans have to negotiate the doctrinal differences between the Indian and the Chinese teachers who arrived at court, but Indian Buddhists too were debating the import of the burgeoning *tantras*. From Bhavaviveka’s 6th-century complaint that, “[...] *dhāraṇīmantras* cannot pacify sin, because they do not counteract its causes [...],” to Kamalaśīla’s 8th-century nuancing of how to understand the non-application of mind (Skt. *amanasikāra*), the possibility of a more immediate approach to awakening was causing consternation for some of India’s best Buddhist scholars.<sup>1</sup> Even Dharmakīrti took care to ground the transformative power of *mantra* in the ritualist’s own capabilities, in “[...] the utterance and the *samaya* of [persons] who are endowed with truthfulness, etc.”<sup>2</sup> By the 9th century, however, the concept of a teacher transmitting immediate

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- 1 *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvāla* (Derge Tōhoku no. 3856), in *bsTan 'gyur (sde dge)*, 213 vols., ed. Shuchen Tsultrim Rinchen (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982–1985), 184a.7–b.1: *gzungs sngags kyi kyang sdig pa zhi bar byed pa ma yin te/ de'i rgyu dang mi 'gal ba nyid kyi phyir*. For an English translation of the entire section, see Malcolm David Eckel, *Bhāvaviveka and his Buddhist Opponents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 179–182. On Kamalaśīla, see Luis O. Gomez, “Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment,” in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster (Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983). Other Indian examples are may be cited, and it is worth noting that related debates continued well into the 11th century, as seen in the *Abhiṣekhanirukti*, which warns against taking the realisation gained through initiation as the ultimate goal of Buddhist practice. “This is wrong,” it explains, “because it would mean that [complete] liberation would follow immediately from initiation” (*tan na yuktaṃ tu sekānantaramukitāḥ*); as translated in Isabella Onians, “Tantric Buddhist Apologetics or Antinomianism as a Norm” (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2001), 351.
- 2 *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* 124.14–15: *na mantrō nāmānyad eva kiñcit satyādimatāṃ vacanasamayād iti*. As cited and translated by Vincent Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics: Studies on the History, Self-understanding and Dogmatic Foundations of*

awakening to a disciple was being enshrined in the tantric fourth initiation, and before long, many Tibetans were enumerating various methods for ‘introduction’ (Tib. *ngo sprod*), introducing a disciple to the nature of mind.<sup>3</sup>

With such trends in view, the present chapter examines the role of *samaya* (Tib. *dam tshig*) in the early development of tantric Buddhist ritual. Arguing that the term was pivotal to 8th-century ritual developments in ways that have not yet been sufficiently recognised, the chapter suggests that the effecting of *samaya*’s entry (Skt. *āveśa*) into the practitioner’s heart constituted a central theme for both Yoga and early Mahāyoga. Indeed, once the centrality of *samaya* is recognised, the development of the ‘secret’ sexual practices of early Mahāyoga out of the earlier rites of the Yogatantras appears in a new light.<sup>4</sup> For my evidence, I turn foremost to the Dunhuang collection, as its numerous ritual manuals offer so many rare glimpses of early tantric practice, but also to some closely associated *tantras* and commentaries.

## 2 Yogatantra

We begin with the rituals of the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* (henceforth the STTs), the most influential of the Yogatantras, portions of which likely date to the late 7th century. First, we will examine the place of *samaya* in the initiation ceremony as it is described in the *tantra* itself and then in a Dunhuang (敦煌) *sādhana* for post-initiatory practice.

The fundamentals of the STTs ritual system may be found in the *tantra*’s first chapter. Following the creation of the system’s Vajradhātu *maṇḍala*, the

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*Late Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014), 129, except that I leave *samaya* untranslated.

3 On the emergence of the fourth initiation in the early 9th century, see Catherine Dalton, “Enacting Perfection: Buddhajñānapāda’s Vision of a Tantric Buddhist World” (PhD diss., UC Berkeley, 2019).

4 In the area of East Asian Buddhist Studies, some recent work has been done on the centrality of precepts (Chin. *jiē* 戒) and precept-conferral rites in early Chan and ‘esoteric’ texts associated with Śubhakarasiṃha, Amoghavajra, and others; see in particular Pei-ying Lin, “A Comparative Approach to Śubhakarasiṃha’s (637–735) ‘Essentials of Meditation’: Meditation and Precepts in Eighth-Century China,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor und Me’ir Shaḥar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 121–146; Robert Sharf, “Buddhist Veda and the Rise of Chan,” in the same volume, 85–120. Many of the observations made in these studies fit well with those of the present paper, though they are more relevant to a slightly earlier period of tantric ritual development and, of course, to a more specifically Chinese Buddhist cultural context. The present paper focuses more particularly on the place of *samaya* in Yoga and early Mahāyoga tantric practice.

chapter revolves around the initiation rites, which it describes in some detail. The ceremony's central sequence begins, following some initial prostrations, when the teacher covers the disciple's eyes and has him bind the so-called *sattvavajrāmudrā*, a gesture formed by clasping both hands together into a single fist and raising the two middle fingers to face each other. This gesture, as the late 8th-century STTS commentator, Śākyamitra, explains, represents a *vajra* standing upon a moon disc:

Resting within mind-only, that mind-only is explained to be like a moon disc. In order to make that firm, moreover, a five-spoked *jñānavajra* is placed there. This is the *samaya*; it is established as the form of the *jñāna* of the buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the Mahāyāna. How so? The moon disc is demonstrated by the *vajra*-clasp, and the *vajra* is shown as the two raised middle fingers.<sup>5</sup>

The *vajrasattvīmudrā*, then, is an instantiation of the buddhas' *jñāna*, here symbolised by a *vajra* standing upon a moon disc. The identification of *samaya* with the mind of buddha is seen throughout the STTS, wherein the four *mudrās* of *mahāmudrā*, *dharmamudrā*, *samayamudrā*, and *karmamudrā* are correlated with the buddha's body, speech, mind, and activities. The *vajrasattvīmudrā* is therefore equivalent to the *samaya* and thus to the buddhas' *jñāna*.

Having formed the *sattvavajrāmudrā*, the disciple pronounces the *mantra*: 'You are the *samaya*' (Skt. *samayastvaṃ*). This is a significant moment that marks the disciple's initial encounter with the *samayamudrā*, the *jñāna* of the buddhas. The rites that follow all revolve around this same *mudrā*. Through a series of two acts, the ritual master installs the *mudrā* in the disciple's heart. The first rite emphasises the aspect of the *samaya* as an oath, while the second highlights its aspect as *jñāna*.

Leading him into the *maṇḍala*, the *ācārya* has the disciple recite *samaya hūṃ* and explains that he will now generate the *vajrajñāna* within him. He then himself binds the same *sattvavajrāmudrā* that the disciple is still holding. Placing it face-downward on the disciple's head, he explains that it is the *samayavajra*. We read on:

5 *Kosalālamkāra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2503, 108a.4–6. *sems tsam du bzhag la sems tsam de yang zla ba'i dkyil 'khor lta bur bshad de/ de brtan par bya ba'i phyir yang de ye shes kyi rdo rje rtse lnga pa gzhaq pa 'di ni dam tshig yin te/ theg pa chen po thams cad du sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' rmams kyi ye shes kyi skur bsgrubs pa yin no/ gang gi phyir rdo rje bsdams pas ni zla ba'i dkyil 'khor ston pa yin la/ so mo gnyis bsgreng bas ni rdo rjer bstan te.*

Then, with that same *samayamudrā*, he [consecrates] some water, pronouncing the pledge heart[-*mantra*] one time, then has the disciple drink it. Now, this is the pledge heart[-*mantra*]:

“Now Vajrasattva himself dwells in your heart. If you speak of this precept, you will instantaneously be destroyed. *Oṃ vajrodaka tḥaḥ.*”<sup>6</sup>

Vajrasattva in the form of the *sattvavajrīmudrā* thus enters into the student as he drinks the water. “In order for the *jñāna* to enter, [...]” concludes Śākyamitra in his commentary, “[...] the *sattvavajrīmudrā* is positioned in the student’s heart, and the heart[-*mantra*] is recited.”<sup>7</sup> As Śākyamitra, explains, this is the crucial moment of entry (Skt. *āveśa*), when the buddhas’ *jñāna* enters inside the disciple for the first time. The master then informs the disciple that henceforth he must happily obey his every command or suffer dire consequences, after which he has the disciple pronounce, “May all the *tathāgatas* empower [me]! May Vajrasattva enter me!”<sup>8</sup>

Having thus completed the bestowal of the *samaya* in the context of the vows of obeisance, the master *once again* binds the now familiar *sattvavajrīmudrā* and explains that it is none other than Vajrasattva. “May the unsurpassable *vajrajñāna* enter you this very day. *Vajrāveśa aḥ.*”<sup>9</sup> He then breaks open the disciple’s own *sattvavajrīmudrā*, which is still held at his heart, thereby causing it to enter once more into the disciple’s bodily interior. This time, the *samayamudrā*’s entry brings divine knowledge and all other pleasures, *samādhis*, and attainments. The rite concludes with the disciple reciting a *mantra* so that the *vajrajñāna* may consecrate his heart and remain there steadfastly.

The disciple then tosses the flower-garland and is introduced to the details of the *maṇḍala*, but with the double entry of the *samaya*, first as an oath and then as the buddhas’ *jñāna*, the main part of the initiation is complete. Two aspects of these proceedings stand out: the importance of entry and the dual valence of the *samaya/samayamudrā*, as oath and as *jñāna*.

6 *Sarvathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*, vv. 221–223: *tatas tathaiṃ samaya-mudrayodakaṃ śapathā-hṛdayena sakṛt parijāpya tasmai śiṣyāya pāyayed iti/ tatredaṃ śapathā-hṛdayaṃ bhavati/ vajra-satvaḥ svayaṃ te ’dya hṛdaye samavasthitaḥ/ nirbhidyā tat-kṣaṇaṃ yāyād yadi brūyād imaṃ nayam// vajrodaka tḥaḥ.* For the Tibetan corresponding to these and the next few lines, see Derge Tōhoku no. 479, 27b.2–6.

7 *Kosalālamkāra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2503, 99a.1: *ye shes dbab pa’i phyir sems dpa’ rdo rje ma’i phyag rgya rdo rje slob ma’i snying gar bzhag la snying po brjod par bya’o.*

8 *Sarvathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*, v. 223: *sarva-tathāgatāḥ adhiṭiṣṭhantāṃ vajra-satvo ma āviśatu.*

9 *Sarvathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*, v. 224: *āveśayatu te ’dyaiva vajra-jñānam anuttaram/ vajrāveśa aḥ.*

The centrality of the *samayamudrā*, *qua* a *vajra* standing upon a moon disc, is evident already in the narrative that opens the STTS itself. There, the soon-to-be-awakened Sarvārthasiddhi (a.k.a. Śākyamuni) is led through the five stages of the *pañcākārābhisambodhikrama* in order to generate himself as the Buddha Mahāvairocana. While the precise nature of these five stages differs between manuals, in the *tantra* itself, the first two stages produce a moon disc and its consecration, and the third and fourth produce a *vajra* upon that disc and its consecration. Significantly, the resulting formation of a *vajra* upon a moon disc is referred to twice as the *sattvavajra*, marking it as identical with the *sattvavajrīmudrā* that plays such a crucial role in the initiation ceremony.<sup>10</sup> It is out of this *mudrā* that the form of Mahāvairocana emerges in the final, fifth stage. We may presume that the *sattvavajra* remains at the resulting buddha's heart. Indeed, immediately following the last of the five stages, the resulting form is consecrated by all the *tathāgatas* entering into that same *sattvavajra*, presumably at Mahāvairocana's heart, in a moment that mirrors in many respects the initiation described above.<sup>11</sup> The presence of all these elements in the *tantra*'s framing narrative further confirms the importance of the *sattvavajrīmudrā*, the instantiation of the *samaya*, which is also the *jñāna* of the buddhas.

Following his initiation, the disciple would commence upon his *sādhana* practice. One such *sādhana* is the *Tattvasaṃgrahasāadhanopāyikā*, a text that appears in at least five copies at Dunhuang, plus a nearly complete commentary. I have published on this text elsewhere, but for the sake of convenience, the relevant manuscripts are listed here:

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- 10 Throughout our sources, the masculine and feminine forms of *sattvavajra/i* are used more-or-less indiscriminately. This is probably due to the identity of, on the one hand, the *sattvavajra* in the opening narrative and, on the other, the *sattvavajrī pāramitā* goddess who performs the consecration in a ritual setting. Thus, Amoghavajra's ritual manual for the worship of Uṣṇīṣavijayā (*Foding zunsheng tuoluoni niansong yiqui fa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼念誦儀軌法 [Rite for the Recitation of the Superlative Dhāraṇī of the Buddha's Crown], T. 972.367a4), the same *mudrā* is used for a similar purpose, though there it is called the '*vajrapāramitāmudrā*,' which likewise reflects the feminine gender of the *mudrā*. We shall see the feminine gendering of the *mudrā* again below in a parallel context. Ultimately, Śākyamitra observes that the masculine and feminine forms are really the same: *rdo rje sems dpa' dang sems dpa' rdo rje ma'i phyag rgya 'ba' zhidzhi tha mi dad pa*. See *Kosalālamkāra*, vol. yi, 108b.1.
- 11 *Sarvatathāgatataṭṭvasaṃgraha*, 30: *sarva-tathāgatāḥ vajra-dhātos tathāgatasya tasmin sattva-vajre praviṣṭāḥ*.



*Ārya-sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā:*

- (1) P. 792/10L Tib J 551: Complete copy.
- (2) 10L Tib J 417 /P. T. 300/10L Tib J 519: Almost complete (missing first folio).
- (3) P. T. 265: Single folio from the middle of the *sādhana*.
- (4) P. T. 271: Single folio from near the end.
- (5) 10L Tib J 448/P. T. 270: Another copy, with various appended notes missing several folios from both beginning and end.

*Commentary to the Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā:*

- (1) 10L Tib J 447: Same paper and handwriting as 10L Tib J 448 (missing first folio).

Elsewhere I have argued that this work is a translation from an Indic original, though the lengthy commentary contained in 10L Tib J 447 is likely of Tibetan authorship.<sup>12</sup> The *sādhana*'s general outline also closely mirrors the ritual structures followed in Amoghavajra's (705–774, Chin. Bukong 不空) Chinese writings. All this is to say that in this work we likely have a fairly standard example of an 8th-century STTS-related *sādhana*.

According to our *Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā*, following some prostrations and initial purifications, the practitioner generates himself as the deity, what we today might call the *samayasattva*, though that term may not yet have come into use at the time of our *sādhana*'s composition. As is well known, in *sādhanas* of later centuries, union with the deity was affected in two steps, with the practitioner first generating his body in the form of the buddha, called the *samayasattva*, and then consecrating that form by installing into himself the *jñānasattva*, or the mind of the buddha. In our *Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā*, we find the same two-step process of creation and consecration, but here the inert form is consecrated not with the *jñānasattva* but with its equivalent, the *samayamudrā*. As I have suggested elsewhere, this shift in terminology, from the earlier *samayamudrā* to the later *jñānasattva*, probably occurred sometime around the late 8th century, and authors were quite explicit about the change.<sup>13</sup>

12 See Jacob P. Dalton, "On the Significance of the *Ārya-tattvasaṃgraha-sādhanopāyikā* and Its Commentary," in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2017), 321–327.

13 Jacob P. Dalton, "Mahāmudrā and Samayamudrā in the Dunhuang Documents and Beyond," in *Mahāmudrā in India and Tibet*, ed. Roger R. Jackson and Klaus-Dieter Mathes (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 126–128.

Returning to the specifics of our *Tattvasaṃgrahasādhanopāyikā*, the practitioner first generates himself in the form of the deity by means of the *pañcākārābhisaṃbodhikrama*. As in the STTS's opening narrative about Sarvārthasiddhi, this is immediately followed by the practitioner's (self-) consecration (Skt. *svādhiṣṭhāna*) of the resulting form:

For the *tathāgata* [buddha] family, bind the *mudrā* of Sattvavajrī. 'You are the *samaya*' [(Skt. *samayastvam*)]. By means of this [*mudrā* and *mantra*], place a moon disc that encircles one with light behind. For binding the *sattvavajrī*[*mudrā*], raise the middle fingers with level fingertips. With this [*mudrā*], bless the four places—the heart, between the eyes, the throat, and the top of the head—together with this *mantra*: *Sattvavajrī adhiṣṭhasva mām*.<sup>14</sup>

Then generate pride, saying, "I am the *mahāsamaya*." Then, thinking that oneself is identical with that *sattva*, who is one's own *mudrā*, recite this heart[*-mantra*] and imagine it is so: "I am the *samaya*" [(Skt. *samayo'ham*)].<sup>15</sup>

Here the practitioner brings the *samayamudrā*, i.e., the enlivening *jñāna* of the buddhas, into his transformed body through a series of ritual acts. First, he arranges his hands into the now familiar *sattvavajrīmudrā*. Gazing at this *mudrā*, he pronounces a Sanskrit *mantra*: "You are the *samaya*" (Skt. *samayastvam*), precisely the same *mantra* that the disciple recited during his initiation, at the beginning of the sequence that affected its entry into his heart. The consecration of the practitioner's body with the *jñāna*/*samayamudrā* is now performed by touching this *sattvavajrīmudrā* to four places on his own body, while reciting a *mantra*. This accomplished, he generates divine pride and finally seals the union by proclaiming, "I am the *samaya*" (Skt. *samayo'ham*).

This consecration of the practitioner's body with the *samayamudrā* represents a significant moment in our *sādhana*'s proceedings. As Ānandagarbha,

14 IOL Tib J 447, r16.4–6, "aligns the heart with the mind, the forehead with the body, the throat with the speech, and the crown of the head with the activities".

15 IOL Tib J 417, 42v.4–41r.1: *yang dag par gshegs pa'i rigs su sad twa ba dzra'i phyag rgya bchings la/ sa ma ya stwam/ 'dis rgyab du 'od gyi 'kord du gyurd pa'i/ zla ba'i dkyil 'khor zhog shig/ sad twa ba dzra'i bchings la/ gung mo bsgreng ste/ rtse mo bsnayams la 'dis snying ka dang smyin mtshams dang/ lkog ma dang spyi bo dang gnas bzhir sngags 'di dang bcas te byin gyis brlab pa bya'o/ sad twa ba dzri a dhi ti sta swa mām/ de nas bdag ni ma ha sa ma ya yin no zhes/ nga rgyal skyed chig/ de nas bdagi phyag rgya'i/ sad twa bdag yin no snyam du/ snying po 'di rjod de soms shig/ sa ma yo ham. Here, the folio marked by the British Library as fol. 42 should come immediately before (not after) fol. 41. That the '*mudrā* for one's family' named in the first line is indeed the *samayamudrā* is clarified by Śākyamitra's *Kosalālakāra*, vol. yi, 107b.7–108a.1.*

a 10th-century Indian commentator on the STTS, explains, this final statement, “I am the *samaya*” (Skt. *samayo’ham*), is “a display of the accomplishment of the *mahāmudrā* as the final result of one’s meditation.”<sup>16</sup> Insofar as the consummation of the practitioner as the fully consecrated deity is accomplished through the entry of the *samaya* into his heart, the post-initiatory practitioner thus seeks to reenact his original initiation, to return to the original transmission he received from his guru. The entry of the *samaya* therefore marks a central moment in both the initiation and the associated post-initiatory *sādhana* rites.

### 3 Mahāyoga

Fifty to a hundred years after the STTS rites were taking shape, the sexual *yogas* of the Mahāyogatantras were spreading. It is now well established that the Mahāyoga materials from Dunhuang reflect a kind of ‘intermediate period’ in the development of sexual *yoga*.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps better called ‘early Mahāyoga,’ this period is characterised by a ritual focus on a sacramental drop of sexual fluids—a transformative instantiation of *bodhicitta*. Accordingly, in India around the turn of the 9th century, there existed only the first two of the four tantric initiations that are common today. The equivalent of the vase initiation (Tib. *bum dbang*; Skt. *kalāsābhiṣeka*) had already emerged around the late 7th century with the Yogatantras, while the second, the so-called secret initiation (Tib. *gsang dbang*; Skt. *guhābhiṣeka*), appears to have emerged roughly a century later to formalise what was by then the cutting-edge focus of early Mahāyoga *sādhana* practice.

Somewhat curiously, I know of no unambiguous reference to the secret initiation as such anywhere in the Dunhuang manuscripts, despite the fact that consuming the *bodhicitta* as a sacrament is a central element of the early Mahāyoga rituals seen at Dunhuang. The term secret initiation does appear in IOL Tib J 579, a *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*-based initiation manual. There, the secret initiation is listed as the last of eleven initiations, the other ten being variations on the standard initiations that came to comprise the vase initiation.<sup>18</sup> The procedure described, however, consists of just touching the

16 *Tattvāloka*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2510, 150a.6–7: *bsgom pa’i rab kyi mthar thug pa las byung ba phyag rgya chen po grub pa yin zhes bya ba ’di yang ston pa yin*.

17 Jacob P. Dalton, “The Development of Perfection: The Interiorization of Buddhist Ritual in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32.1 (2004): 1–30.

18 They are: *vajra*, crown (Tib. *dbu rgyan*), vase, rosary, crown pendants (Tib. *cod pan*), *mudrā*, name, four activities, *dharmarāja*, *dhāraṇī*, and secret (discussed in IOL Tib J 579, 16r.4–18r.5).

*mudrā* of the principle deity to five places on the disciple's body while reciting the relevant *mantras*.<sup>19</sup> Possibly related are some odd lines in another *Sarvadurgati* initiation manual, IOL Tib J 439/712, which describe three levels (outer, inner, and secret) of *bodhicitta* initiations.

In short, the directional guardians, the bodhisattvas of good fortune, the goddesses of the times, and so on have been initiated by means of the outer *bodhicitta*. All appearances within the outer scope of all sentient beings, are likewise initiated by that outer *bodhicitta*, so that they arise in the manner of the *saṃbhoga*[*kāya*]. The eight great *uṣṇīṣa* [i.e. the bud-dhas] have the nature of the inner *bodhicitta*. When one has arrived there [at their circle], one obtains the initiation of the inner *bodhicitta*, being initiated by the *nirmāṇakāya*. The central circle is called the great peace of the *dharmakāya*, the secret *bodhicitta*. In that way, the master grants the excellent initiation of the *dharmakāya*, the secret *bodhicitta*, to the present patron and all limitless sentient beings. Having obtained [the initiation] thusly, they manifestly and completely awaken and are ones who display the *siddhi* of vastly enacting the purposes of all sentient beings in the nature of the spontaneously present three bodies.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the presence of this passage, the initiations that follow in the same manuscript make no further mention of a secret initiation. Significant, however, is one line in the *Precept for Supreme Goodness*, a brief Mahāyoga *sādhana* found in ITJ331/1. While it does not reference the secret initiation by name, it

19 See IOL Tib J 579, 18r.5–7.

20 IOL Tib J 439/712, 14r.5–14v.4: *mdor na/ phyogs skyong dang/ bskal pa bzang po'i byang cub sems dpa' dang/ dus kyi lha mo la bstogs pa ni/ phyi byang cub kyi sems kyis dbang bskur te/ sems can thams cad kyi phyi'i spyod yul du snang ba thams cad kyang/ phyi byang cub kyi sems kyis dbang bskur te/ longs spyod rdzogs pa'i tshul du 'byung ba dang/ gtsug tor chen po brgyad ni nang byang cub kyi sems kyis dbang rang bzhin te/ 'dir phyin pa tsam na/ nang byang cub kyi sems kyis dbang thob ste/ sprul pa'i sku dbang bskur ba dang/ dbus zlum ba ni/ chos kyi sku zhi ba chen po gsang ba byang cub kyi sems zhes bya ste/ de ltar deng gi yon bdag dang/ mtha' yas pa'i sems can thams cad chos kyi sku/ gsang ba byang cub kyi sems kyis dbang dam pa/ slob pon gis dbang bskur ba bzhin du thob nas/ mngon bar rdzogs par sangs rgyas te/ sems can thams cad kyi don rgya cher mdzad pa'i dngos grub sku gsum lhun kyis grub pa'i rang bzhin du bstan pa lags. The *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* are probably reversed. Note too that the Vajravarmaan-attributed commentary to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* references both the more standard secret initiation, as well as the third, wisdom-*jñāna* initiation (Tib. *shes rab ye shes dbang*; Skt. *prajñājñānābhīṣeka*), though no fourth initiation, which may well date the work to the 9th century; see Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts with Introduction, English Translation and Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 47.*

does describe the prerequisite to practice as the “initiation by means of the drop” (ITJ331/1, 1r.2: *thigs pas dbang bskur*). Given that the *Precept* is attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra, who lived in the second half of the eighth century, this may be our earliest evidence for the secret initiation, even if not by name. Otherwise, to date, our earliest dateable reference to the secret initiation by name remains the early 9th-century *Dvitiyakramatattvabhāvanāmukhāgama* of Buddhajñānapāda.<sup>21</sup>

What we do find in the Dunhuang manuscripts, however, is the bestowal of a so-called supreme *samaya* (Tib. *dam tshig mchog*) within the context of a group practice. P. 321 is a *pothi*-style manuscript of 24 folios from Dunhuang. Complete at the beginning, missing no pages in the middle, but cut off mid-sentence at the end, it remains unclear how many pages might be missing. The manuscript contains a single text, an untitled manual for a *gaṇacakra*. The text begins with the ritual master generating himself as Śrī Heruka at the centre of a wrathful *maṇḍala*, after which it directs the ritual participants to perform an offering of the five ambrosias (Tib. *bdud rtsi lnga*; Skt. *pañcāmṛta*), the five transgressive ambrosias of human flesh, urine, feces, semen, and menstrual blood. Though it is mixed with other substances, the text makes it clear that the semen, or *bodhicitta*, is primary. Thus, we read, for example:

The medicinal compound of the ambrosia of immortality,  
The medicine composed of the *rasāyana* and so forth,  
These medicines that are innately secret,  
Are the secret of all the *tathāgatas*.

21 Dalton, “Enacting Perfection,” 248. The later tradition often points to the eighth chapter of the *Guhyasamāja* as a *locus classicus* for this secret initiation, but read free of later commentaries, the chapter was clearly originally intended as a discussion of a rite of sexual worship (Skt. *pūjā*), as indicated already in Dalton, “The Development of Perfection,” 16 fn. 41. Another possible early reference might be chapter three of the *Cakrasaṃvara* (*Śrīherukābhidhāna*), which probably reached its received form around the early 9th century. On dating the *Cakrasaṃvara*, see David Gray, *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra: Editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies [Columbia University Press], 2012), 6–8. There we read, “The master, well equipped, should worship the consort (*mudrā*). On the second day he should make the drop for the disciples with blood thrice enchanted. Having unveiled his [blindfolded] face, he should then show the *maṇḍala* to the disciple” (as translated in David Gray, *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka) (Śrīherukābhidhāna): A Study and Annotated Translation* (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies [Columbia University Press], 2007), 174), with the Sanskrit edited in Gray, *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra: Editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan*, 63: *tato hi pūjayen mudrām ācāryaḥ susamāhitaḥ/ śiṣyāṇāṃ tu dvitīye ahani raktena trijaptena tilakaṃ tasya kārayet*. The verse appears within a larger discussion of an initiation, though the bestowal of the sacrament (Skt. *tilaka*; Tib. *thig le*) itself is somewhat veiled. Nonetheless, the passage remains a significant.

Within the sky-expanse of Samantabhadrī,  
The *bodhicitta* pearl is emitted.

At the centre of Samantabhadrī's expanse,  
Through the stirring of Samanatabhadra's body,  
There comes the supreme *samaya* of yoga:  
May it be received with the thought of being pleased.

Through the offering of this *samaya* worship,  
The unsurpassable *samaya* substance, the supreme of ambrosias,  
May the Bhagavan Buddha Heruka  
And Buddha Krodhīśvarī,  
Receive it and be thoroughly pleased.  
And may they bestow the magical *siddhi*.<sup>22</sup>

This supreme *samaya*, then, consists primarily of the drop of seminal *bodhicitta* that is emitted through ritualised sexual union, even when the result is mixed with the other four substances.

After offering the preparation to the *vajrācārya* (here termed the 'Vajra-King'),<sup>23</sup> the assembled receive the *samaya* themselves:

Administer the *samaya* to the gathered [*dharma*] brethren:<sup>24</sup> With the tips of one's thumb and ring finger together, while perceiving that the

22 P. T. 321, 5v.5–6r.3: 'chi myed bdud rtsi sman sbyor ba/ ra sa ya na las bstsoqs sman/ rang bzhin gsang ba'i sman nmams 'di/ de bzhin gshegs pa kun gi gsang/ kun du bzang mo mkha' dbyings su/ byang cub sems ni mu tig 'phro/ kun du bzang mo 'i dbyings dkyil du/ kun du bzang po 'i sku bskyod pas/ rnal 'byor dam tshlg mchog lags kyIs/ dgyes par dgongs te bzhes su gsol/ bcom ldan 'bu ta he ru dang/ 'bu ta gro ti swa rI la/ bla myed dam rdzas bdud rtsI 'I mchog/ dam tshlg mchod pa 'di 'bul gis/ bzhes nas kun dgyes mdzod la/ 'phrul gi dgongs sgrub stsal du gsol.

23 P. T. 283, R1, ll. 15–16 clarifies that this refers to the *vajrācārya* (Tib. *slobs dpon rdo rje rgyal po*).

24 *Byin* here and throughout the manuscript (e.g., P. T. 321, 7v.5 and 9v.3) is used to mean something like 'all'. Thus, already on the manuscript's opening line, we read: *da ni rgyal po man cad mched byin dgongs pa mthun par* [...], which might be translated as, "Now, all the [*dharma*] brethren, from the king on down, being in general agreement [...]." Such phrases may be compared with the parallel construction seen at *ibid.*, 10v.4, *mched lcam dral ma lus pa'i nmams*, where *ma lus pa* appears to serve a similar purpose to *byin*. The same term, in a similar context, also appears in P. T. 283, R1, l. 28 (*rdo rje rgyal po man cad mched lcam dral byin*), and in that same manuscript, we find another parallel alternative, with *tshogs* replacing *byin*, as on *ibid.*, l. 18: *slobs dpon man cad mched lam dral tshogs*. Finally, we may suggest that the term comes from the Chinese character *jin* (盡) as the

nature of this ambrosia, the *siddhis* of body, speech, and mind, are being attained, place it upon the [disciple's] tongue three times and pronounce these words:

'A union of all the buddhas [(Skt. \**sarvabuddhasamāyoga*)],  
Should this bond [(Tib. *sdom pa*)] be transgressed by anyone,  
Then all the buddhas there are,  
The bodhisattvas and *vajra*-holding [protectors],  
The gods and humans,  
The *siddhas* and the *yogins*—  
All of them will become enraged,  
Draw forth the human blood  
From his corrupted heart and drink it.

A mixture of human flesh, urine, feces,  
Semen and menstrual blood, this medicine  
Should be drunk with yogic commitment.

This is the supreme *samaya*,  
To be protected by *vajra*-bearers.

The secret of body, speech, and mind,  
This *samaya* is a great wonder.  
You must not transgress this *samaya*.

If you transgress this *samaya*,  
Your tongue and heart will be drawn out through your throat;  
This will be a hell-water,  
That will rest at your heart.  
If you protect the *samaya*, there will be *siddhi*,  
So, drink; it is a fresh ambrosia.<sup>25</sup>

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latter is used as an equivalent of *thams cad* in the 821/2 Sino-Tibetan treaty; see Kazuo Iwao, et al., ed. *Old Tibetan Inscriptions* (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2009), 33–35. On another note, *dam bsre* appears repeatedly in the manuscript to mean something like, 'to administer the *samaya*,' presumably with the implication of mixing (Tib. *bsre*) the *samaya* with their mindstreams.

25 P. T. 321, 9v.3–10r.3: *mched byin dam bsre/ srin lag dang mthe bo rtse sprad de/ bdud rtsI 'i rang bzhIn/ sku gsung thugs kyI dngos grub thob par dnylgs nas/ lce 'I thog du lan gsum bzhag cIng/ tshIq 'dI skad brjod do/ sangs rgyas kun dang mnyam sbyor ba'I/ sdom ba las nI gang 'das pa/ ci snyed sangs rgyas thams cad dang/ byang cub sems dang rdo rje 'dzin/ lha*

The opening instruction here emphasises that the ambrosia's nature, the buddha's body, speech, and mind, is attained immediately upon its bestowal, yet the recited verses make it clear—and here we return to the dual valences of term—that the supreme *samaya* is also an oath not to be transgressed. This dual nature of the supreme *samaya* relates to the paradox that is fundamental to Mahāyoga practice, i.e. that one is already a buddha, yet often quite elaborate rituals are required. Put another way, the supreme *samaya* brings immediate and complete awakening, yet it needs to be cultivated.

Having swallowed the sacramental drop, the *gaṇacakra* recipients are told to “rest with vitality in the realisation of the conqueror.”<sup>26</sup> To get a better sense of what was expected from drinking the sacrament, we may look to chapter eight of the Padmasambhava-attributed commentary on the *Thabs kyi zhags pa*. Here again, the sacrament is bestowed in conjunction with a group practice (Tib. *tshom bu*) that culminates in *gaṇacakra*-style feasting, singing, and dancing, and here the *bodhicitta* is bestowed alone, without the other four substances:

When one drinks it down, the supreme accomplishment is attained [...] Through the consecration that thusly unites expanse and awareness, there arises an awareness that unerringly realises the aim. By means of that *bodhicitta*, which is Vajrasattva, one passes beyond subject and object and enters into absorption in non-duality, the realm of *mūṃ* [i.e., emptiness]. For this reason, one is called Vajrasattva, he who dwells on the level of Vajra Holder, and he of the thirteenth level. This is the supreme accomplishment.<sup>27</sup>

The sacrament thus bestows a direct taste of buddhahood. Ritual falls away, and a direct meditation on non-duality emerges.

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*mams dang ni myi mams dang/ grub pa po dang mal 'byor mams/ de dag khros nas khrag chen po/ nyams pa'i snying nas drangs te 'thung/ sha chen dang ni bsang gci dang/ khu ba khrag dang sbyar pa'i sman/ brtul bzhuḡs can gis btung bar bya/ 'di ni dam tshIḡ mchog yin te/ rdo rje can gIḡs bsrung bar bya/ sku dang gsung dang thugs gsang ba/ dam tshIḡ 'dI nI smad po che/ dam tshIḡ 'dI las khyed ma 'da/ dam tshIḡ 'di las khyed 'das na/ lce dang snying yang rkog mar 'dren/ 'di ni dmyal ba'i chu yin te/ snying la rab du gnas pa 'o.*

26 P. T. 321, 10r.5: *rgyal po dgongs pa myi g.yel bar bzhuḡs.*

27 10L Tib J 321, 30r.5–30v.4: *khong du 'thungs na dngos 'grub mchog thob bo/ [...] de ltar dbyings nyid dang rig pa'i gnyis su 'byor pa'i byin brlabs las/ don ma nor bar rtogs pa'i rig pa 'byung ba ni/ byang chub kyi sems te/ rdo rje sems dpa'yin/ des gzungs 'dzin las 'das nas/ gnyis su myed pa mUM gi sa la snyoms par 'jug go/ de 'i phyir rdo rje sems dpa' ni/ rdo rje 'dzin kyi sa la gnas te/ sa bcu gsum pa zhes kyang bya 'o/ 'di ni dngos grub mchog yin te.*



The secret initiation likely would have been supposed to engender a similar taste of immediate realisation. Writing around the turn of the ninth century, Buddhajñānapāda offers an early glimpse of how the secret initiation was understood:

Having descended, [the drop] enters the lotus at his heart. By this means, the field is purified; [Perceiving] all phenomena as illusions, and so forth—the twelve [experiences]—are realized in actuality.<sup>28</sup>

As Jñānapāda's commentator, Vaidyapāda, explains, the 'field' here refers to the disciple's psycho-physical aggregates, while the twelve experiences engendered by the secret initiation are twelve metaphors that demonstrate the illusory nature of phenomena.<sup>29</sup> Again, the drop's entry into the heart brings instant insight into the nature of reality.

With the shift from Yoga to Mahāyoga, the entry of the *samaya* into the initiand's heart acquired a new, 'secret' (read sexualised) form. The *samayamudrā* and the *samaya* water it consecrated in the STTs were replaced in Mahāyoga with the supreme *samaya*/the seminal drop of *bodhicitta*. In both vehicles, the *samaya* would come to rest in the recipient's heart, and in both, it played on the term's dual valences of oath and *jñāna*.

The taking of *bodhicitta* as a sacrament also appears in post-initiatory Mahāyoga *sādhana* practice. Here we see the practitioner administering the sacrament to himself. IOL Tib J 464 offers a particularly clear example. We join the text at the end of the sexual *yoga*, just after the drop of *bodhicitta* has been emitted:

Having thoroughly cultivated in that way, by means of the inner and outer praises and the melodies of the *ṣāḍava* and so forth, in the manner of supreme yearning, strongly praise the great identity. The offering is made, and the *siddhi* [i.e. the drop] received [(...)] When one comes to know it is time for the dismissal, snap the fingers with [arms] crossed.<sup>30</sup>

28 Translation based on Catherine Dalton's recent edition of Jñānapāda's *Dvītyakramatatt vabhāvanāmukhāgama*; see Dalton, "Enacting Perfection," 312: *ltung bas snying gi padma zhugs/ de yis zhing ni dag byas te/ chos kun sgyu ma la sogs pa'i/ bcu gnyis don du rtogs par 'gyur*.

29 As observed by C. Dalton, "Enacting Perfection," 380, fn. 174.

30 IOL Tib J 464, 4v.3–5r.1: *de ltar shin du bsgoms nas su/ phyl dang nang gi bstod ra dang/ sha da ba las stogs pa'i glu/ mchog du gdung ba'i tshul gyis su/ bdag nyid chen po rab du bstod/ mchod pa dbul zhing grub pa blang/ gtong ba'i du ni shes pa na/ se gol snol mar gtogs*. For a canonical reference to the *ṣāḍava* (hexatonic) melody, see the *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍ*

Of particular interest and significance is the ellipsis, the three dots (...). Of course, these appear only in my translation, but their presence is implied by the author's careful wording. The text could have said, "when it is time for the dismissal" (Tib. *gtong ba'i dus na*), but it adds, "when one comes to know it is time" (with *shes pa na*), so that following the reception of the *siddhi* (elsewhere clearly the drop of *bodhicitta*), one loses track of time, until one emerges from the resultant state.<sup>31</sup> It would seem, then, that the manual's careful wording represents a nod to the idea that following the reception of the sacrament, one is supposed to enter a non-dual state of timelessness, "the realm of *mūṃ*," as the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* said. The culmination of such early Mahāyoga practices was in this sense a reenactment of the secret initiation and a recollection of the encounter with awakening that one first experienced at that moment.

While 10L Tib J 464 does not refer to the sacramental drop of *bodhicitta* that is self-administered in post-initiatory *sādhana* practice as the *samaya*, the *Guhyagarbhatantra* does. In fact, the *Guhyagarbha* uses the now-familiar term, supreme *samaya*, regularly. Chapter nine includes a particularly relevant verse:

With a consort who has luminosity or has been consecrated,  
In the manner of the [entire] trichiliochasm entering inside a mustard  
seed,  
The *maṇḍala* is invited into the expanse and worshipped.  
Having pleased [the deities], one [receives] the supreme *samaya* of  
accomplishment.<sup>32</sup>

Here we see a fairly standard, if abbreviated, description of the sexual yoga that results in the emission of the *bodhicitta*, which is then offered first to the buddhas and then to oneself as 'the supreme *samaya*' that grants all

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*ākinijālasaṃvara*, 157a.1. In his 'Od *gsal snying po*, Mipham offers a later Tibetan description of it: "With this approach, the tone is intense and forceful like thunder. The syllables are recited slightly fast and intensely, like water rushing off the face of the cliff" (Jamgön Mipham, *Luminous Essence: A Guide to the Guhyagarbhatantra*, trans. Dharmacakra Translation Committee (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2009), 156–157). I am indebted to Douglas Duckworth for first bringing this reference to my attention. It has to be said that Dalton, "The Development of Perfection," 11, was way off in his interpretation of the term.

31 On the *siddhi* being the drop, see 10L Tib J 464, 4r.4–5, where the reader is instructed to hold the drop of *bodhicitta* at the tip of the *vajra* for as long as possible: *bsrung ba'i sbyor ba s ci nus pas/ grub pa'i bdag nyid brtan bar bsrung*.

32 *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 832, 120a.1–2: *gsal ldan ma'am byin brlabs la/ stong gsum yungs 'brur 'jug tshul du/ dbyings nas dkyil 'khor spyen drangs mchod/ mnyes nas grub pa'i dam tshig mchog*.

*siddhis*. The *sPar khab*, an early (though just how early remains a question) *Guhyagarbha* commentary traditionally attributed to the mid-8th-century Indian author, Vilāsavajra, explains that the verse teaches the secret worship (Tib. *gsang ba'i mchod pa*).<sup>33</sup> Such a worship (Skt. *pūjā*) could constitute a stand-alone *sādhana* or function as part of the master's preparations for an initiation rite. And indeed, a description of the *Guhyagarbha's* initiation rite does follow shortly after the above-cited verse. Either way, we may conclude that still in the second half of the eighth century (when the *Guhyagarbha* was likely composed), the term 'supreme *samaya*' was being used not only in the context of a *gaṇacakra*, but also in *sādhana*-style practice to refer to the self-administered sacramental drop of *bodhicitta*.

As in the earlier Yogatantra system of the STTS, then, the early Mahāyoga *sādhana* practitioner sought to reenact the entry of the buddhas' *jñāna* into his heart that he first experienced during the secret initiation.

#### 4 Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have repeatedly observed how the term *samaya* carried two meanings. From the STTS's initiation to the early Mahāyoga *gaṇacakra*, whether in the form of the *samayamudrā* or the supreme *samaya*, it was both an oath and the buddhas' *jñāna*. In his mid-8th-century commentary to the STTS, Buddhaguhya/Buddhagupta addresses these two uses of the term explicitly and reconciles them as follows:

The secret mind of the great beings is referred to with the term *samaya*. The *tantras* explain that *samaya* can be for what will be correctly attained or realised, or for the purpose of what is not to be transgressed. Why? The suchness of one's own domain is the *samayamudrā* [...] Because it is like that, the symbol of the secret mind of the deity is explained as the *samaya*.<sup>34</sup>

For Buddhagupta, the *samaya* defines the horizon of the Buddha's mind, as both an oath not to be transgressed and the mind of awakening that is always

33 *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 832, 60a.1.

34 *Tantrārthāvatāra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 2501, 6a.1–3: *bdag nyid chen po rnam kyī thugs gsang ba ni dam tshig ces bya ba'i sgrar brjod de/ rgyud nas bshad pa ni yang dag par 'thob pa 'am / rtogs par bya ba'i phyir ram/ mi 'da' ba'i don du dam tshig ces bya'o/ gang gi phyir zhe na/ de rang gi yul gyi de kho na nyid ni dam tshig gi phyag rgya ste/ [...]* *de lta bas na lha'i thugs gsang ba'i mtshan ma ni dam tshig ces bshad pa'i don te.*

already accomplished. The *samaya* that is the tantric oath is precisely the mind of the Buddha, which in both the STTS's ritual settings of initiation and *sādhana* takes the form of a *vajra* upon a moon-disc at the practitioner's heart.

*Samaya* was therefore a Janus-faced concept, at once an oath, or set of oaths, to be observed and an instantiation of *jñāna* that could be immediately inserted into one's heart and mixed with one's mindstream. Insofar as the efficacy of *mantra* was rooted in *samaya*, then, it depended on the purity of the *mantra* reciter but also on the entry of the *jñāna* into his heart, put another way, on his having received the proper initiation. Here it may be significant that chapter nineteen of the *Guhyagarbha* opens with: "Then the Bhagavan, with great pleasure, expressed the *mahāsamaya*, so that mantrins might accomplish their aims."<sup>35</sup> The chapter then proceeds to discuss first this *mahāsamaya*, which it also terms the 'supreme *samaya*,' as beyond all transgression, and then proceeds to enumerate the various *samaya* vows to be maintained.

Over time, the ritual centrality of *samaya* as the buddhas' *jñāna* faded, though its vestiges may still be seen in moments such as the drinking of the *samaya* waters, the secret initiation, and the entry of the *jñānasattva*. Already in the late 8th century, the all-important *samayamudrā* was being replaced by the *jñānasattva*, and by the turn of the 9th century, identifications of the sacramental drop of *bodhicitta* as a supreme *samaya* were becoming increasingly rare. In later centuries, the tantric term *samaya* came to be generally understood in terms of the oaths taken during an initiation, oaths that could be enumerated in various ways.<sup>36</sup> Occasionally, one might encounter in later writings an ultimate-truth discussion of *samaya* as being beyond any possibility of transgression, but the ritual significance of such distinctions has been largely lost.

From the late 7th century, right through to the end of the 8th century, *samaya* played a crucial role in tantric Buddhist practice, not simply as sets of tantric vows to be observed but as a core aspect of immediate awakening.<sup>37</sup>

35 *Guhyagarbhatantra*, Derge Tōhoku no. 832, 129b.5: *de nas bcom ldan 'das dgyes pa chen pos/ sngags 'chang mams don yod par bya ba'i phyir/ dam tshig chen po 'di ched du brjod do*. Note that the 'great *samaya*' is also discussed at the end of Vilāsavajra's *Dam tshig gsal bkra*, 1202, ll. 12–13, where he too writes, "In this, there is absolutely nothing to protect; there exists no even a particle of diminishment."

36 On such enumerations in Tantric Buddhist writings, see Sam van Schaik, "The Limits of Transgression: The *Samaya* Vows of Mahāyoga," in *Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang: Rites and Teachings for this Life and Beyond*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Sam van Schaik (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2010), 61–83.

37 Note that in Dalton, "Mahāmudrā and Samayamudrā," 129, I highlight the centrality of *samaya* and 'the great *samaya*' in certain Chinese Tantric texts from Dunhuang. Here we may be approaching a point of contact between tantric initiation and the precept

Recognising the larger ritual significance of *samaya* in this way allows us to see too the importance of entry (Skt. *āveśa*) and how the earlier Yogatantra practices of the STTS underwent remarkably straightforward transformations to become the ‘secret’ rites of early Mahāyoga. These transformations turned the STTS initiation’s key moment of *āveśa*, or entry of the *samaya* into the practitioner’s heart, into the secret initiation’s swallowing of the *bodhicitta* whereby the sacramental drop comes to rest, once again, at the heart. Meanwhile, the installation of the *samayamudrā* (read *jñānasattva*) within one’s own body within the context of post-initiatory *sādhana* practice in the STTS became the self-administering of the drop of *bodhicitta*, the supreme *samaya*, at the culmination of early Mahāyoga sexual union. According to the logic of this transformation, the Mahāyoga’s *bodhicitta* sacrament is the *jñānasattva*. The development of early Mahāyoga practice in the 8th century was thus fundamentally rooted in Tantric Buddhism’s early focus on the key concept of *samaya*. *Samaya* served as the developmental bridge, *samaya* as the horizon of the buddha’s *jñāna*, a sacramental *bindu* resting at the practitioner’s heart.

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ordination of Chan, rites that other scholars too have suggested may have been equated by some early Chinese authors; see, for example, Robert Sharf, “Buddhist Veda and the Rise of Chan,” in *Chinese and Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism*, ed. Yael Bentor and Meir Shahar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 85–120.