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FIGURE 1.11. Ferocious Śiva (Andhakāntaka?), c. 955–75, stone, Hita. © Deborah Stein.



FIGURE 1.12. Nateśa, c. 955–75, stone, Hita. © Deborah Stein.



FIGURE 1.13. Cāmuṇḍā, Nateśa temple, stone, c. 955–75, Hita. © Deborah Stein.

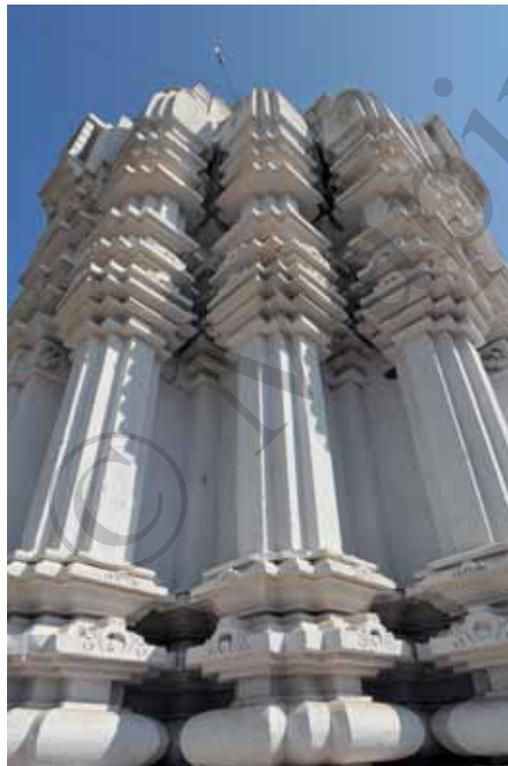


FIGURE 1.14. Exquisite śekhārī architecture, Nateśa temple, stone, c. 955–75, Hita. © Deborah Stein.

Andhakāntaka steps on a demon and stabs another with a trident. Perhaps because of his fangs, he is often misunderstood as Bhairava. This figure on the south side of the temple in Hita seems to swing a drum above his head. The main position on the back wall of the temple faces east. There, in a move similar again to Menāl, Bijoliā, and Bāḍoli in Uparamāla, Nateśa dances his cosmic dance, bending in an almost impossibly limber way (fig. 1.12). His dance is met on the north wall by none other than Cāmuṇḍā (fig. 1.13). Before laying eyes on the ferocious emaciated female form, the circumambulator is confronted with one of the sharpest, most geometrically clean, small śekhārī temples in India (fig. 1.14). Located southeast of Chittauḍgaḥ on the way to Jagat via Bambora, the tripartite iconography of this temple recalls temples of Menāl, Bijoliā, and Bāḍoli in Uparamāla.

The last image in circumambulation so resembles the sculptural carving style of Jagat that one could imagine only three scenarios. The first is that one artist carved the same sculptures for both temples. A second scenario is that one guild was responsible for each—though they seem even too similar for that. The least likely is that somehow a piece of sculpture got carried from one site to another and reinstalled. Given that there is no record of this temple in the Archaeological Survey of India records, this is unlikely. The concluding sculpture at Hita (fig. 1.15) is the one that bears such a remarkable affinity to sculpture at Jagat, such as the Kṣēmaṅkarī in Dhaky’s photograph.<sup>37</sup> Delicate rows of beaded necklaces and girdles decorate the finely chiseled features of voluptuous, fleshy bodies, filled with life-breath yet not overinflated on *prana* nor overly “medieval” in their columnar elongation. The sensual texture of these bodies makes stone seem like a warm, living place where one could rest one’s head, the jewelry delicately jingling as the carving synesthetically invades one’s ears. The foundations of other temples suggest that Hita may well have been a larger center than imagined today.

The location of Hita pushes the spread of the Mēdapāṭa cohort south and east, away from Ghānerāo and the Guhila strongholds around Nāgadā/Eklingjī. Jagat’s closest stylistic companion now lies closer to Uparamāla territory and yet significantly south of Bijoliā, Bāḍoli, and other tenth-century sites found on the east–west axis along the Banas River. Pilgrims and travelers may well have stopped in Hita before overnighing in Bambora, where a palace was built a few hundred years later north of what became known as Jaisamand Lake. Bambora, a subregal noble retreat, is currently in the female *jagīr* (dowry) of the nobles/family of Jodhpur, who married into the family from Dūngarpur. Regardless of modern marital property rights and erstwhile kingships, this bustling little town is the closest city east of Jagat and Āaṭ. Just west of Jagat and Āaṭ is the historical zinc mining center of Jāwar. Together, these places form a route from Hita, to Bambora, to Jagat, to Āaṭ, to Jāwar—a route through a region that saw fluctuating and alternating pockets of time with no polity, forming by the sultanate period the “gray areas” of the map in northwestern India.

## Temple as Catalyst

### *Renovation and Religious Merit in the Field*

The history of temple renovation sheds light on tensions between preservation and use at archaeological sites in southern Rājāsthān. The word “renovate” in Hindi, *nayā karanā*, has Sanskrit origins (*navī karoti*) and contains the root “*nayā*” (new), just as the English word “renovate” means to make new again. Ancient inscriptions rarely distinguish between renovation and new construction since once an icon or site is *jīrṇa* (“old” or “tainted”), it should automatically be replaced with something new according to local belief. Renovations have historically ranged from slight modifications to significant additions, to completely rebuilding. This range of renovation activity continues today. Generous ancient definitions of renovation clash with ideas about archaeological preservation inherited from the British. Temple trusts, archaeological departments, and local patrons alike undertake creation in the name of preservation.

The aesthetic interpretation of archaeological sites hinges on the subjective notion of taste. In the discipline of art history, beauty has long been a subject of debate.<sup>1</sup> When we travel, both temporally and geographically, the issue of taste, of aesthetic judgment, is fraught with difficulty. Taste, according to John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, “is merely another item in the cabinet of social display.”<sup>2</sup> They describe the “truly tasteful collector” as someone who creates taste rather than ascribing to it. This creation of taste is grounded in a unique approach valued for its difference. So when we turn to a temple, most often understood by the discipline of art history as a specimen from an archaeological collection, we exercise taste that originated in the colonial British project of collecting patrimony.<sup>3</sup> Disdain for current modes of renovation, such as metallic gold paint, reaches far beyond the Ambikā temple. Any Indian urbanite, especially among the rising middle classes,

may well find metallic paint on the tenth-century stone sanctum of the Ambikā temple in Jagat just as distasteful as most art historians do.

Ancient definitions of renovation gleaned from the historical record suggest that inexpensive, modern materials may actually perform a rather traditional function. In Alois Riegl’s terms, modern materials conflict with monuments’ transcendental “age value,” a value that he argues actually interferes with the preservation of monuments.<sup>4</sup> The Ekliṅgī temple complex and the Ambikā temple complex also lose “historical value” and their “original status as an artifact” to white plaster roofs, metallic gold paint, and a twenty-first-century white marble icon.<sup>5</sup> Given that “disfiguration and decay detract from [historical value],” one could argue, as well, that the local people see their efforts as the preservation of “historical value” through the erasure of decay.<sup>6</sup> With the birth of archaeology in India, the romantic ideal of the ruin implicit in “age value” was replaced by a quintessentially modern concern for “historical value.”

Historicity had the power to “single out one moment and place it in the developmental continuum of the past and place it before our eyes as if it belonged to the present.”<sup>7</sup> Current uses of archaeological sites in southern Rājāsthān attempt to steal buildings from history to create “intentional commemorative value.” According to Riegl’s definition, “intentional commemorative value aims to preserve a moment in the consciousness of later generations, and therefore to remain alive and present in perpetuity.”<sup>8</sup> Sowing the seeds of memory keeps monuments alive and greatly empowers the specific commemorative vision and aspirational zeitgeist of the individual person constructing memory. Those who farm memory attempt to trump death through control of future generations’ harvests.

Controversial enough to spark legal battles, the renovation of temple sites is an institution as old as temple building itself. Temples derive much of their meaning from the numinous power of the sites on which they stand. The ability to create links with the past often secures the value of a temple’s future.<sup>9</sup> At both the Ambikā temple and the Śri Ekliṅgī temple the future is woven into the past. This intersection of past and present is often a site of legal contention, moral quandary, and empowering affirmation, where preservation gives way to creation and consecration borders desecration.

#### EKLIṅGĪ’S GATES

Historical definitions of repair found in inscriptions reveal the amount of physical change and new building considered to be a renovation and not something entirely new. In 1489 CE, Mahārāṇā Raimal repaired the Śri Ekliṅgī temple and made land grants.<sup>10</sup> Buildings in the Nāgadā-Kailāspurī region had been largely destroyed when the Guhila dynasty was taking refuge at Kumbhalgarh in the preceding century (fig. 2.1). Mahārāṇā Raimal’s inscription suggests that “repairs” often meant completely rebuilding on a sacred site. The Śri Ekliṅgī temple dates



FIGURE 2.3. Marble icon stolen in 1998, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

documentation on the subject, especially after theft and damage. Writing in 1964, he reported some very important information about the Ambikā temple's inner sanctum: "The interior, measuring 7 feet × 7 feet, contained a medieval schist image of goddess Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, under regular worship on an altar. Here we notice the demon coming out of the chopped off head of the buffalo (Mahiṣā) under the mighty influence of contemporary art traditions."<sup>22</sup> This description corresponds to the image found on the back exterior wall of the shrine (see fig. 1.8), temporally in-between the zoomorphic form of Mahiṣā found on the south wall and the anthropomorphic form of the demon found on the north wall during the course of circumambulation. Hence, as of 1957, when Agrawala saw it, an ancient statue of Mahiṣāsūramardīnī was under worship in the sanctum. This sculpture's iconography correlated to the iconographical program found on the exterior temple walls.



FIGURE 2.4. New marble image from Jaipur, May 2002. © Deborah Stein.

Unfortunately, Agrawala did not include an image of this sculpture. Surprisingly, a photograph from 1963 reveals neither any deity nor any sign of worship whatsoever.<sup>23</sup> Was the white marble Mahiṣāsūramardīnī sculpture under worship in the sanctum in 1998 (fig. 2.3) actually installed in 1957? Stolen in 2000, the statue had left the sanctum empty when I returned in January of 2002.<sup>24</sup> The image believed by scholars to be the original icon of Kṣēmaṅkarī remained cast aside, leaned up against a side wall.<sup>25</sup> By May of 2002 the villagers of Jagat and the surrounding area had raised enough money to commission a new marble image made in Jaipur (fig. 2.4). The ensuing installation raised critical questions concerning the value of the site as patrimony, as well as problems with rejecting archaeological death in favor of modern religious and political use.

when a protected monument is used for religious worship, it should be protected from pollution or desecration.<sup>27</sup>

The tension between use and preservation remains unresolved. The legal definition of desecration, which loosely implies harming an icon, hateful graffiti, or the destruction of a mosque to build a temple, lacks clarity. In contrast, the code makes no mention of changing the visual culture of an ancient site as a part of consecration. Section 5 provides for maintenance, including “fencing, covering in, repairing, restoring and cleansing of a protected monument.”<sup>28</sup> The act seems to refer to restoration associated with preservation in the archaeological sense of the term. The Jaipur Preservation Act attempts simultaneously to protect the sacral quality of monuments and to maintain them as archaeological treasures, seemingly unaware of the tensions between these two models.

In the absence of a clear legal mandate, the issue of preservation and use becomes a matter of taste—albeit with significant political ramifications. Although the metallic paint and modern marble sculpture may even be considered kitsch or vulgar according to Western art-historical notions of taste, from a Marxist standpoint these modern renovations may well be the opposite of vulgar. Theodor Adorno writes:

Only in mutilated fashion does the vulgar represent the plebeian that is held at a distance by the so-called high arts. When art has allowed itself, without condescension, to be inspired by a plebeian element, art has gained in an authentic weightiness that is the opposite of vulgar. Art becomes vulgar through condescension: when, especially by means of humor, it appeals to deformed consciousness and confirms it. It suits domination if what it has made out of the masses and what it drills into them can be chalked up to their own guilty desires.<sup>29</sup>

If we take Adorno’s definition of vulgarity as a form of condescension, the use of metallic gold paint on the tenth-century sanctum at Jagat could just as well be understood as possessing “an authentic weightiness that is the opposite of vulgar.” The act of painting the shrine metallic gold is also a commemoration of the installation of a new icon, a white marble goddess statue chiseled in Jaipur (fig. 2.7). This piece of sculpture has no place in a museum. The white stone fits neither the rhetoric of modern transnational artists such as Anish Kapoor nor the premodern Hindu art in museum collections. The new icon has no place on the art market, no reason to be stolen. This primarily religious object is not valuable aesthetically yet extremely valuable from a ritual standpoint. The installation of the goddess is a political act of reclaiming ritual space.

The authors of *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags* describe how the 1990s’ Hindu right corresponds to a rise in popular goddess worship.<sup>30</sup> By painting the ancient Ambikā temple, the participants removed its historical and aesthetic value and replaced it with political and ritual value, thus putting the sanctum in the same category as the new icon it housed. Theft in the eyes of the preservationist, this act was a reclaiming of space in the eyes of the Rājputs who sponsored the goddess



FIGURE 2.7. New icon, under worship in the Ambikā temple, 2009. © Deborah Stein.

installation. For the average village local, however, people who would have little impact on their lives or practice were simply making a claim to power.

In the case of the *śubhamaṇḍapa* at Jagat, the performers of ritual usurped the historical site. The grassy jagged lip of the upper wall meets no roof in the 1950s photograph (fig. 2.5). As of 2002 the same structure looked well maintained and