1

Temple as Geographic Marker

Mapping the Tenth-Century Sectarian Landscape

South Asian art histories have generally relied on style as an indicator of dynastic groupings. Formalist data was taken as geopolitical evidence to name regions and periods. The Ambikā temple and the Śri Ekliṅgjī temple complex are part of the larger regional cohort known as the Mēdapāṭa School of architecture.[1] This geographic group—named from Sanskrit inscriptional evidence—became a chapter of the *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture* focused on the patronage of the Guhila dynasty. Though stylistic affinities clearly exist, many of the sites provide no inscriptional evidence or any outside textual evidence to suggest that Guhila leaders, or even subsidiaries to the Guhilas, sponsored them.[2]

The force of an intense fifty-year building campaign in a small region reflects more of a political transition that was common across northwestern India in the millennial era. Architectural efflorescence in this transitional time suggests the rise of many fledgling dynasties in the wake of Pratīhāra collapse. The move from a large empire to a vacuum of power, to a multitude of tiny Rājput kingdoms resulted in a scramble to construct a solar or lunar dynastic lineage, as well as a proclivity to sponsor buildings in distinct regional styles—as if the architectonic mark on the land itself was the best way to prove newfound territorial and political dominion.

Meanwhile, many temples fell outside the narrowly controlled areas of dynastic prowess and remained in regions of undetermined polity, where individuals and groups freely sponsored religious and artistic projects with no reference to a ruler at all. This is the case of the Ambikā temple in Jagat, as well as the Pippalāda Mātā temple in Unwās—both dedicated, not accidentally, to the goddess and, more significantly, to new mantric and tantric forms of worship and iconography symptomatic of populist trends in millennial religious practice, beliefs, and writings.

In contrast, the tenth-century Lakulīśa temple at the site of the fifteenth-century Śri Ekliṅgjī temple clearly links the practice of Pāśupata Śaivism to the Guhila dynasty. Whether these sites had tenth-century inscriptions linking them dynastically to the Guhilas or not, many reflect emerging stylistic changes that may reflect temporal changes in praxis in relation to the temples in their role as catalysts of ritual behavior and social interaction.

The limitation of one figural representation of a deity per wall recalls many North Indian Gupta sites, such as Deogarh, which represent the initial shift from abstract representations of deities in the form of sacrificial fire toward the figural emanation of deities on the temple wall.[3] By the tenth century, this modest temple program of one deity per wall, as found at Unwās in Mēdapāṭa, coexisted with a more complex formula of increased figuration that was more and more widespread. This figuration seems to parallel the rise of tantra, a form of worship that requires systematic sequences of gestures (mudras), sounds (mantras), and actions to awaken the deity in one's own body or in a stone icon (mūrti). Specific iconographic sets leave vestigial traces of ritual in stone. These tantalizing parallels have yet to be studied fully since textual scholars do not do the same kind of temple fieldwork that art historians do, whereas art historians who know Sanskrit may still not be aware of the full body of texts that Sanskrit scholars know. Recent translations of multiple tantric texts over the past two decades make it possible for the first time to begin to have a better geographic grid in stone temple waypoints of tantric practice, as well as to have a better sense at any one given site of what those rituals might entail.[4]

The most elaborate exterior sculptural program of this set of Mahā-Gurjara-style architecture is the Mīrāñ temple at Ahar. The fabric of the temple wall exhibits an extremely complex sculptural program. This density of figural decoration parallels the temple's place in the stylistic development of Mēdapāṭa. The temple wall of the Mīrāñ temple at Ahar, according to Dhaky,

> stands at the turning point of the stylistic era and hence historically it is an important document of what happened at that time, especially because the two other schools—Anarta and Arbuda—of the Mahā-Gurjara style have lost their countable buildings of those very crucial last two decades of the century. The building possesses several typical late Mahā-Gurjara formal and emotive features, but also foreshadows what was to come with the dawning of the Māru-Gurjara style in the first quarter of the eleventh century.[5]

With the evolution of architectural style throughout the medieval period came increasingly complex temple programs on the exterior walls. The content of these early medieval programs at Ahar, Jagat, Unwās, Hita, and Bāḍolī suggest a specific attention to tantric and mantric worship, with a prevalence of Sadāśiva/Pāśupata five-faced liṅga, the central placement of the tutelary goddess Kṣēmaṅkarī (whose name stems from the mantric seed syllable "Kṣa"), the pairing of Nateśa and

Cāmuṇḍā independent of other *mātṛkās* (which finds its corollary today in current folk worship of Bērujī [Bhairava] and Cāmuṇḍā throughout southern Rājāsthan), and vestigial traces of dance in the form of architectural pavilions, inscriptions, or iconographic representation of dancing deities.

A nondynastic approach allows us to imagine these temples in two distinct clusters running east to west rather than one large cohort along a north–south axis. New evidence from fieldwork in 2009 suggests a southern group with non-dynastic stylistic affinities running east to west along the Tiri and Mahi Rivers that flow into the Narmada and toward the historically fruitful plains of Malwa. A second northern group suggests a Pāśupata sectarian confluence of temples running east to west along the Banas River; this reading suggests that sites previously categorized as part of the Uparamāla area actually have a sociohistorical link with some of the Mēdapāṭa area temples in the northern part of that cluster.[6] To frame the discussion, this map uses fluvial mapping to link the sites rather than a general dynastic grouping (see fig. 0.8).

I begin this chapter by mapping the Pāśupata-Śiva sectarian landscape across Uparamāla and northern Mēdapāṭa along the Banas River, followed by a discussion of the tantric, mantric, and goddess sites located in the southern part of Mēdapāṭa. Two previously unpublished temple sites, the Lakulīśa temple at Āaṭ and the Nateśa temple at Hita, extend the reaches of this nondynastic, populist, and seemingly highly tantric southern region along the Mahi and Tiri Rivers. From Uparamāla into Mēdapāṭa along the northern stretches flows the Banas River. From Chandrabhaga, Bijoliā, Bāḍolī, and Menāl, past Chittorgarh, toward Khamnor, Īswāl, Nāgadā/Ekliṅgjī, and Udaipur, the general migration of this river parallels the geographic waypoints that the Guhilas and Sisodias used to construct their power. Similarly, and perhaps more importantly, Pāśupata-Śiva monastic retreats and temple clusters also seem to unfold along the same general route between c. 950 and c. 1200. Here I focus on the second half of the tenth century, primarily in northern Mēdapāṭa.

THE GUHILAS AND THEIR PĀŚUPATA PATRON SAINT, LAKULĪŚA

The Guhila dynasty used three different programmatic styles—auxiliary figures, the lone deity, and completely blank temple walls—to articulate power to different audiences, whereas temples without an inscriptional reference to dynastic affiliation in tenth-century Mēdapāṭa and Uparamāla tend to follow a rich iconographic style with auxiliary figures complementing deities on exterior walls. A massive schist icon of Lakulīśa found inside the temple attests to the historical importance of this Pāśupata leader as the actual ruler of Mēdapāṭa. The Guhilas styled themselves regents of God. The Pāśupata sect considers Lakulīśa—the one who carries a *lakula* (club)—to be the last incarnation of Śiva. This founder of the Pāśupata

FIGURE 1.1. Lakulīśa temple, c. 971, Ekliṅgjī. © Deborah Stein.

sect is also found in the lintel of the doorway of the Lakulīśa temple at Ekliṅgjī.[7] He came from Karvana and lived sometime in the second century CE. Lakulīśa had four pupils—Kusika, Gargya, Krusha, and Maitreya—who gave rise to four branches of Pāśupata-Śaivism. The Lakulīśa temple inscription, located to the left of the temple entrance, suggests that the ascetics of Ekliṅgjī were part of the Kusika lineage.[8] The powerful Paramāra dynasty, which built the temples at Arthuna in the early eleventh century, was also Pāśupata-Śiva. To the east Lakulīśa was worshipped at tenth-century sites such as Bijoliā in Uparamāla territories; and to the south, in the Lata country and in Anarta, Lakulīśa was worshipped in his celebrated birthplace. By espousing this Pāśupata leader, the Guhilas could establish their independent territories as Pratīhāra power dwindled in the region.

From an iconographical point of view, the Lakulīśa temple is the most austere temple of the Mēdapāṭa group (fig. 1.1). The overall program of the Lakulīśa temple is quite unusual. Its original plan lacks almost any figural depiction of deities. This temple does not even have an emanation of the main icon on the exterior wall of the inner sanctum. Since the main icon represents the founder of a sect—a saint of sorts, rather than a deity per se—he might not have necessitated a corresponding emanation on the back wall. Despite his lack of representation on the temple exterior, Lakulīśa was indeed commonly represented as an emanation of Śiva on the exterior niches of temples. In fact, only one large sculpture of a deity is found near the entrance, leaving the walls fairly devoid of ornamentation.
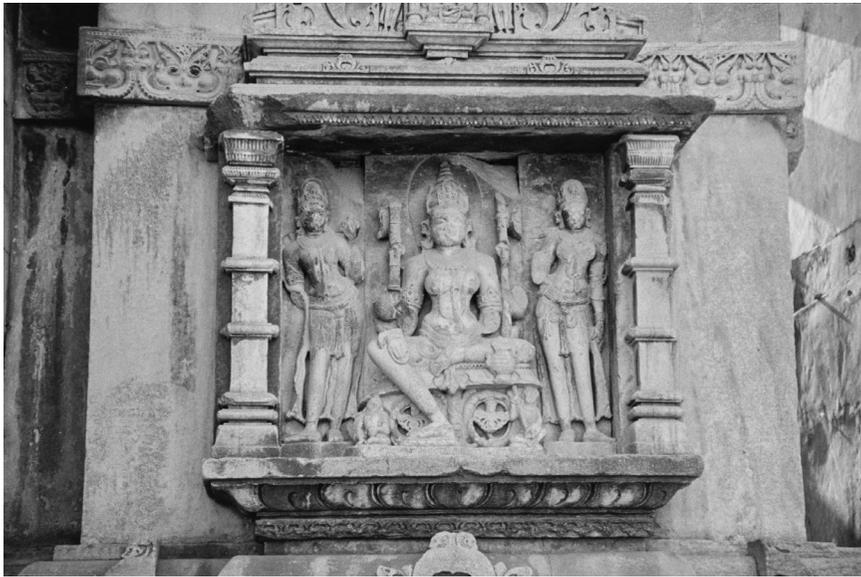
FIGURE 1.2. Sarasvatī, Lakulīśa temple, Ekliṅgjī. © Deborah Stein.

An image of Saraswatī, the goddess of learning and the arts, flanks the entrance of the Lakulīśa temple to indicate a center of learning and may well provide the only extant example of a sculptural version of Saraswatī in situ on a tenth-century building known to have been associated with the acquisition of knowledge (fig. 1.2). Saraswatī rarely graced sculptural programs of tenth-century temples. Even unusual evidence, such as the inscription at the base of a female figure, does not provide a similar visual example of Saraswatī. Previously known as King Bhoja's Saraswatī from Dhar, a sculpture now housed in the British Museum bears an inscription linking it to a royally sponsored university.[9] Saraswatī's association with learning and the arts is well known, but the inscribed sculpture provides evidence only for her association with sites of learning and not for her visual representation within an architectural context.[10] She holds in her hand an elephant goad, a typical attribute of this goddess, who prods her disciples toward ever-greater acquisition of knowledge, an item that is even mentioned in guru-disciple initiation rites in Abhinavagupta's writings on tantra.[11]

The paucity of sculptural form aside from this single goddess may reflect the audiences who used the Lakulīśa temple. A monastic audience would not have needed visual support to guide the body through space during circumambulation. Alternatively, this temple may have been used for *guru darśan*, which did not necessitate circumambulation or any form of practice that would require the animation of the central icon performed with a prayer manual.[12] The building

FIGURE 1.3. Śivēśvara temple, c. 950s–70s, Ekliṅgjī.
© Deborah Stein.

may have served as a monastic meeting space or lecture hall. Given the uncertain date of the main icon, it is even possible a living guru presided over some type of assembly. The inscription offers further evidence of the philosophical debates that may have taken place inside.[13] The visual pairing of the inscription with a statue of Saraswatī may indicate a learned ascetic audience for this shrine. Those who used this building may not have needed elaborate emanations of deities to guide their already sophisticated practice. This temple may have served a set of Pāśupata ascetics in residence at Ekliṅgjī.[14]

In contrast to the reserved simplicity of the Lakulīśa temple, the Śivēśvara temple in the Ekliṅgjī temple complex and the Takṣakēśvara temple found in the gorge nearby are much more typical of Mēdapāṭa temples in the second half of the tenth century CE (fig. 1.3). Guardians protect the corners of both buildings and *surasundarī* figures twist to either side of wall niches. Whereas the Viṣṇu temple has *vyālas*, the Śiva temple does not. The Śivēśvara temple and the Takṣakēśvara temple are undated but roughly contemporaneous with the Lakulīśa temple. The ornament and the texture of the temple wall are neither sectarian nor chronological. Temples in a spare style and in a more complex style coexist in tenth-century Mēdapāṭa. Although the carving of *surasundarīs* on the Takṣakēśvara temple is better executed, both temples evidence certain stylistic features common to the Mēdapāṭa School, such as the triangular forms above the window (*simhakarna*). Although the Lakulīśa temple is relatively unornamented, some decorative features such as the window screen (*candravalokana*) are typical of the Mēdapāṭa School. The quality of masonry of the Lakulīśa temple, together with the complex, multifigured formula of the Takṣakēśvara temple program, were preceded by an exquisite example of Mēdapāṭa architecture.

FIGURE 1.4. Sūrya on his seven-horse chariot, c. 950–75, Ṭūṣa. © Deborah Stein.

One of the earliest works of tenth-century Mahā-Gurjara architecture in Mēdapāṭa is the Śaivaite Sūrya shrine at Ṭūṣa built, in all likelihood, under the reign of Bhartṛpaṭṭa in the second quarter of the tenth century.[15] Like the Ambikā temple at Jagat, the Sūrya temple at Ṭūṣa repeats three manifestations of the same deity adorning the exterior walls of the *garbhagṛha* in each of the niches found on the three *bhadra* wall protrusions (fig. 1.4). In similar fashion Sūrya is flanked by two *surasundarīs* who are flanked by *vyālas*. The *dikpālas* guard the four corners of the shrine. In contrast with the Takṣakēśvara shrine, which shares this basic iconographic structure, the sculpture complements the protrusions and recesses in the temple wall. The presence of couples above the heads of the figures is a shared feature with the Ambikā temple, although here they sit rather awkwardly above the full figures without any architectural articulation, whereas at Jagat the couples sit on shelves within their own defined space.

The sculpture of Mēdapāṭa is known for a balance between rounded flesh and crisp, finely linear carving, as is exemplified by the *surasundarī* in figure 1.5. The *tribhanga* (three-bend) pose makes it seem as if her girdle is swaying with her movement, and the articulation of her stomach is unsurpassed in this region. The sculptors have captured the way her flesh gently protrudes over the top of her waistline by indicating the beginning of fabric, with only a delicately carved line, and the flattening of flesh above her belt. This way of representing a standard set of female forms atop lotuses exemplifies the regional style of Mēdapāṭa

FIGURE 1.5 Surasundarī, Ṭūṣa. © Deborah Stein.

sculptors. The poses repeated on temples dedicated to Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Śiva, and Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī in the region indicate that they were a multisectarian architectural element dependent much more on the political and aesthetic choice of a *sūtradhāra's*, mason's, or patron's style than on any particular religious text or convention. Their presence has been understood as formal (expression of artist's style), as decorative (*alaṅkāra*), and as a sign of celestial inhabitants of a regal heavenly palace (temple as *prasāda* [palace]), and could well have been used in tantric practices to harness the viewer's concentration in pairs on each exterior wall of the temple (as a set of four pairs of celestial maidens).[16]

Perhaps it is not by chance that the earliest religious monument in the Mēdapāṭa region is dedicated to the sun god, Sūrya.[17] Sūrya worship has been associated with the Hunas and the Gurjara-Pratīhāras, whose decline made way for Guhila autonomy. The Guhilas, however, were not of Huna stock. They may have descended from Nagara Brahmans in Gujarat and wanted to cover up their nonaristocratic origins.[18] The Guhilas also may have come from Bhils, who were trying to Aryanize themselves to take power.[19] This is the first temple of this type in this region, so it may indicate a regional form that was adapted to include local deities and beliefs. Mahā-Gurjara architecture first became a local signature of the Guhila dynasty while still using deities (such as Sūrya) that may have had powerful associations with foreign forms of worship.

RETHINKING ART REGIONS IN EARLY MEDIEVAL MĒDAPĀṬA AND UPARAMĀLA

Geography illuminates networks that were previously ignored because they were not dynastic. Previously understood as a puzzling add-on to the stylistic group of Mēdapāṭa regional temples, the Ambikā goddess temple in Jagat had no connection to any dynasty for the first two centuries after it was built. Architecturally, the Ambikā temple in Jagat was grouped in a field that ran along a roughly north–south axis from the Jain temple of Ghāṇerāo; to the cluster of primarily Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples around modern-day Udaipur, including Ahar, Nāgadā, Īswāl, and Unwās; extending farther south to Ṭūṣa; and ending with the Ambikā temple in Jagat. The architectural and sculptural evidence for stylistic commonalities among these groups suggests a coherent network of masons and patrons, but a closer look at these temples as "markers of time and space" may make it possible to trace the spread of ideas—more specifically, populist tantric ideas—along two separate rivers following an east–west axis instead.[20]

Temple towns, known previously from an archaeological and inscriptional record, often have no dynastic connection whatsoever and appear at first glance to exist in isolation from any nearby temples. Historically, sites such as the Ambikā temple in Jagat were then assigned a stylistic category—in this case, Mahā-Gurjara.[21] Mason then built on the Mahā-Gurjara architectural category with a

cogent analysis of sculpture in which she argues that the distribution of weight shifts from low to the ground in the west, and the center of gravity for the sculpted body moves higher as the sculpture is found farther east. Stylistic variants on plumb line and weight in sculptural production moved on a west–east axis as well.

New discoveries in the archaeological record further suggest an east–west orientation along two rivers: the Banas to the north and the Som to the south. Based on two new temples in the vicinity of Jagat, the tenth-century record of the region seems to shift to orient along the Som River and other tributaries of the Som draining into the Narmada, which runs from central India in Madhya Pradesh into the Bay of Khambhat in Gujarat, just under the Mēdapāṭa region where the cluster of Māru-Gurjara-style temples cluster geographically.

As a result of new archaeological evidence and fluvial mapping, the entire Mēdapāṭa and Uparamāla regions need to be redrawn in new nondynastic ways. The unpublished and largely unknown site of Hita, made evident only in the new construction of a superhighway in Rājāsthan, has a sculpture of Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī so similar to the sculpture of Jagat's Ambikā temple that, based on visual evidence alone, one could argue it was the same artist's hand or at least the same workshop. Hita lies east of Jagat and very close to the same latitudinal location. In fact, Jālōr, Jāwar, Āaṭ, Jagat, and Hita all lie along a similar latitudinal line at the fringes of the Som River, which flows into the Mahi River—an east–west thoroughfare at the base of northwestern India leading into modern-day Madhya Pradesh and out into the Bay of Khambhat.

Geography and newly discovered tenth-century temples may begin to answer some age-old questions. What was a goddess's temple on the southern stretches of Mēdapāṭa doing there alone, with no trace of dynastic affiliation and no other temples nearby? Were there other sites with stylistic or sectarian similarities closer to Jagat? In fact, there were. The preeminent historian Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha collected rubbings of inscriptions in the field from a wide region covering Dūṅgarpur, Vagada, Chhapa, and Mewār. From these records, now housed in the archives of the royal family of Dūṅgarpur, Ojha translated these regions into historical narratives of early medieval Rājāsthan. Working from his book *Dungarpur Rajya ka Itihas* and following in his footsteps, I traveled in 2002, looking for these original inscriptions. As an art historian, I was most interested in the pedestals, sculptures, and architectural monuments where the rubbings had been made. The Juna Mahal collections in Dūṅgarpur had rubbings of well-known and published inscriptions, such as the four earliest inscriptions found on the columns of the Ambikā temple in Jagat, but also included inscriptions from sites I assumed to be primarily textual and not found on temples at all.[22] Luck proved me wrong, and I stumbled on the site of Āaṭ, where the foundations of no fewer than thirteen subshrines, a gateway similar to the *toraṇa* at Nāgadā, and a standing structure awaited. There—literally in a field adjacent—significant sculptural remains added to the evidence of a fairly large tantric temple center complete with a *maṭha* or

possibly a *dharmśālā* (guesthouse for pilgrims) right next door, half buried in the dirt. Āaṭ forever changed how I saw Jagat.

These new sites suggest a new vision of early medieval Mēdapāṭa, one focused on geographic routes rather than dynastic categories. Jagat was less than ten kilometers away from a major Pāśupata-Śiva center, connected by a river now dried up; the second site had become completely inaccessible. Neither site shared any dynastic affiliation, and both sites seemed to have much more in common with each other than with other elements of the Mēdapāṭa cohort, such as the Jain temple from the same fifty-year building spree two hundred kilometers to the north. Clearly, Āaṭ was a tantric center and a travel stop on a known route at the turn of the millennium in early medieval India. Ideological affiliations, even more explicit sexual imagery at Āaṭ, and the mantric associations of the Kṣēmaṅkarī goddess on the front lintel of the Ambikā temple lead in two directions: (1) toward the goddess temple at Unwās, for a better understanding of goddess tantra gleaned from the material record at the same time that tantric texts were being recorded in manuscript form; and (2) toward a better understanding of stylistic affinities not available in the heavily rebuilt remains of the Pippalāda Mātā temple in Unwās, which might explain how the artist networks and ideological patronage networks overlapped. The discovery of the new temple at Hita suggested a sculptural affiliation so tight, so close, that the sculptures may have even shared the same artistic hand. This allows us to remap the southern group of Mēdapāṭa temples along an east–west axis to contextualize the Ambikā temple in Jagat within a world that included both the tantric center at Āaṭ and the temple at Hita, to the other side of Bambora on the way to Chittorgarh. There, at Hita, I found a small temple, possibly dedicated to the dancing form of Śiva, called Nateśa.

If we begin with the first premise, that the famous Ambikā temple in Jagat was indeed a tantric temple dedicated to the goddess from the Devī Māhātmya story but was also available for ritual interpretation along the meditational lines of mantric worship and tantric worship as enunciated in famous contemporary texts such as the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, we find that the bidirectional architecture of the Ambikā temple encourages kinesthetic arguments about the building and disintegrating of the female form as a tool for the manipulation of desire and attachment.

Dedicated to the goddess Ambikā, the temple was built around the year that Abhinavagupta was born, roughly 959 or 961, depending on how one interprets the modest inscription that describes the donor's project, which includes a well and a garden in addition to the temple. Although not generally published as part of the temple complex, as of 2002 a well to the south of the temple (now behind a locked gate in a private field) still had a shiny black sculpture of Kālī in situ, under an authentic tenth-century stone architectural frame. The southern wall dates to the time of the temple, and the foundation of a few subshrines seem to ring the temple in a square formation—the most prominent of which include the *praṇālā* (now attached to the temple by the later addition of a drain spout), a brick

structure behind the temple slightly to the northeast, and a remodeled shrine with an original *phāṃsanā* roof that houses the tenth-century schist sculpture of the fearsome goddess Cāmuṇḍā. The southern wall, which attaches to the foundations of surrounding walls and an original staircase down into the complex, and which stretches the entire length of the complex, has received relatively little scholarly attention, but new research on maṭhas in Madhya Pradesh, together with evidence for a maṭha in Āaṭ and two different period maṭhas near Ekliṅgjī, leave little doubt in my mind that the village school and *chaukidar*'s (watchman) home are sitting on top of the only known early medieval monastery dedicated to goddess worship in India.

"Tantra" is a term with seductively orientalist overtones that has been loosely bantered about for the past two centuries or so. In contrast with common misconceptions, not all goddess worship is tantric, and "tantra" should refer more to specific modes of practice or to specific textual sources. "Tantra," for our purposes, will refer simply to embodied forms of worship, where a practitioner becomes a god or merges with a form of a god through the recitation of incantations called mantras, the physical practice of gestures called mudras, and the meditational practice of progressively identifying with a deity in sculpture or mental image corporeally.[23] This less sensational and more pedestrian view of tantra in general suggests the increasing accessibility of these modes of worship, despite the secrecy of guru-śiśa transmission in a variety of different sects.[24]

The early medieval temple in Jagat was known to be the earliest Indian example of a goddess temple in regional style—in western India and not in Bengal. Built of quartzite, the program was built to last, and it has for more than one thousand years. Many think of all goddess worship as inherently "tantric" and of all goddess temples as tantric (an overgeneralization to which I do not subscribe), but the Ambikā temple in Jagat does have some very specific architectural and material evidence of tantra in the more specific sense of these esoteric practices that have been increasingly studied and documented in recent scholarship.[25] The temple program does reference some of the "five Ms," such as drinking wine (madya), consuming meat (māṃsa), eating fish (matsya), ingesting grain (mudra), and sexual union (maithuna), in the sculptural iconography, but a closer look reveals tantric associations directly related to roughly contemporary texts, albeit not from the exact same region but rather from a spread of ideas in this period and just after traceable from as far north as Kashmir and as far south as Tamil Nadu.[26]

The Ambikā temple in Jagat does not leave a trace of an exact affiliation to a specific cult as some millennial temples do in referencing Śiva's cosmic dance as Nateśa in relation to Śaiva-Siddhanta or the ash-clad asceticism of Pāśupata Śaivism found at the Lakulīśa temple in Ekliṅgjī.[27] The closest known tantric texts may come from just south of Mēdapāṭa and Vagada, in Malwa, but unfortunately postdate the Ambikā temple by two hundred years. The geographically closest text to Jagat and Āaṭ known today is Hṛdayaśiva's twelfth-century *Prāyaścittasamuccaya*,

which may codify much of what was being innovated through praxis, art, and architecture along the Som River, north of the Narmada River in millennial India.[28]

At Jagat we do not have a direct linkage of text and image, in either specific time or place, but rather kinesthetic architectural traces of ritual, use, and praxis that suggest a general "tantric" mode of worship using the female form as an alternate model for arousal and disgust in the search for detachment from desire. Writings by Phyllis Granoff and others have emphasized the plurality of subjective positions, even quoting early medieval writings that elucidate and imagine how no fewer than six different demographics would have understood the sexuality of a temple wall at a site like the infamous Kaṇḍāriyā Mahādeva temple in Khajurāho.[29] At Jagat the bidirectional circumambulation of the temple program suggests two narratives that would have been available in similar form to men and women alike and of all ages and social stations in varied stages of enjoyment, standard worship, and more esoteric and philosophical though equally populist tantric worship (fig. 1.6). Art historically, the Ambikā temple at Jagat has long captivated the imagination because of the beautiful, largely intact carvings dedicated to the goddess Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī, who vanquished the buffalo demon, Mahiṣa, in cosmic battle when the male gods could no longer restore order.[30] The Purāṇic account of the goddess lends itself most aptly to narrative iconography such as the famous frieze at Mamallapuram in Tamil Nadu. The goddess Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī is named for her sacrificial act, when Durgā kills the buffalo demon named Mahiṣa. Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī wielded the borrowed weapons of the male gods to confront demons on the battlefield, issuing new warriors from a light in her forehead. The most famous of the goddesses to emanate from Durgā's forehead is none other than Kālī, whose long tongue is known to stretch the length of a miniature painting lapping up the blood of demons quelled in battle before the drops could sprout into new warriors. This story, the *Devī Māhātmya*, the stuff of the oral legends told across Rājāsthan—that is, until the very recent replacement of pan-Indian Gujarati "garbha" dancing—was told in seven hundred verses every day during the autumnal festival of Navratri, the nine nights of the goddess, culminating in the tenth night of Dusserah celebrated across India. But the oral legend, the Purāṇic texts, and the narrative festival traditions seem to have little to do with the highly iconic, monoscenic, or even nonnarrative way in which the artists, masons, and patrons chose to represent the goddess Ambikā at Jagat.

The tenth-century temple in Mēdapāṭa is often characterized by the way the icon in the inner sanctum emanates powerfully outward on architectural axes in the four directions. These axial relationships usually take the form of three sculptural icons on the three outer walls of the sanctum, with the fourth direction being the direct gaze of the deity on the worshipper inside the temple. A *bhadra* is an Indian architectural term for the protrusion of the temple wall that aligns axially with the icon in the inner sanctum of the temple. There are always three *bhadras* that face three of the four directions and allow the essence of the icon to emanate

FIGURE 1.6. Door to sanctum on each side allows the bidirectional circumambulation, Ambikā temple, c. 960, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 1.7. Durgā zoomorphic, side 1 (south), Ambikā temple, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 1.8. Durgā zoomorphic/anthropo-morphic, side 2 (east/back), Ambikā temple, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

outward in every direction—the fourth direction, of course, is the interior opening to the *garbhagṛha* sanctum, where the icon gazes out directly onto the viewer during worship. Each *bhadra*, then, has a niche on the exterior of the three outer walls of the temple sanctum. Exactly on axis with the inner icon, three of the same or three different sculptural deities represent the three directions in which the inner god of the sanctum is exuding power. Each manifestation geomantically reflects the directionality. For example, particularly fierce deities associated with death often face north. These axial protrusions and emanations form a sequence as the viewer circumambulates in the normal clockwise direction, or counterclockwise in an esoteric twist on the sequence that serves to relativize the passage of time or the inherent order of things.

The Ambikā temple in Jagat, in particular, has two doorways on either side of the inner sanctum that serve as thresholds between the exterior *bhadra* niches with their emanations of the inner sanctum. The viewer can then take darśan from the main deity before choosing to circumambulate either direction around the temple sanctum exterior before returning up a few steps back inside on axis with

FIGURE 1.9. Durgā anthropomorphic, side 3 (north), Ambikā temple, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

the main icon. On the three walls of the temple sanctum the goddess plunges her trident into the flank of the buffalo demon, and three different times he seems to die in pain on each wall as the devotee circumambulates the structure.[31] If one faces the temple in normal circumambulatory order, with one's right side to the wall in clockwise fashion, three forms unfold on the southern, western, and northern walls. In the first *bhadra* niche, the zoomorphic form is quelled (fig. 1.7). In the second *bhadra* niche, the spirit in human forms begins to rise from the buffalo's sacrificed neck (fig. 1.8). And in the last *bhadra* niche, the goddess holds the fully human form of the spirit tightly by the hair (fig. 1.9). One could move from animal sacrifice to the vanquished spirit or, alternatively, in a left-handed tantric manner, from the vanquished spirit toward the sacrificed animal form. Either way, the double doorways suggest that the main icon was the fourth and main culminating component in either circumambulatory order.

Left-handed and right-handed coexisting circumambulatory paths do suggest tantra, but who exactly was in the main sanctum? Recent worship and thefts have clouded this picture, as have competing archaeological photographs, but it seems that only two viable options remain.[32] Dhaky argues the main icon was Kṣēmaṅkarī, which would make sense, given the location of this mantric goddess above the entrance to the temple, where she stands atop two lions in classical iconography.[33] A second possibility lies in the emaciated version of the goddess Durgā slaying the buffalo demon that (as of 2009) lay cast aside to the right of the main icon in the

FIGURE 1.10. An icon cast aside inside the sanctum displays an emaciated form of Durgā in the act of killing the buffalo demon. Ambikā temple, quartzite, c. 960, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

inner sanctum (fig. 1.10). Either possibility suggests a tantric interpretation of the fourth and most important element in circumambulation. Kṣēmaṅkarī is a beatific version of the goddess, who would encourage a devotee to focus on the seed syllable, or *bīja* mantra, "Kṣa," associated with the entire "garland of letters," as Arthur Avalon would have put it.[34] The goddess ferociously and independently sacrifices the evil demon and then is revealed as this pleasant version of Śiva's wife, Pārvatī, a calm evocation of the power of mantra, or speech incarnate, as Śiva's *śakti*, or his cosmic energy. The second icon, still in situ but cast aside, suggests instead that the voluptuous, sensual body of the sacrificing independent goddess, repeated three times on the exterior, becomes emaciated in the inner sanctum. The mounting arousal of the sacrificial moment by the libidinal actor then culminates in the skeletal confrontation of time itself—either in the withering of one's own female body, the withering of the object of one's desire for a female body, or the withering of the object of desire—or of desire itself. Whether delightfully mantric, through the personification of speech as Kṣēmaṅkarī, or whether gruesomely corporeal through a reiteration of destiny and death incarnate, either goddess would have cemented the bidirectional tantric circumambulation found at Jagat. Either way, the cycle of samsara is reiterated forward or backward in the kinesthetic architecture of the temple sanctum flanked by two doorways.

Could a temple as unusual as the Ambikā temple in Jagat really exist in isolation as so incredibly unique—a long-lost material key to illustrate the textual scholars' interpretations of tantric texts? The tenth-century temples in Hita, Āaṭ, and Bāḍolī suggest otherwise. The artists of the Ambikā temple in Jagat worked in their lifetimes on a temple dedicated to Nateśa directly east of Jagat at the previously unpublished site of Hita. Not only do we have a physical trace of a time and place on the map, but we also have an intact iconographic program at Hita that integrates female goddess sculptures into a Śaivaite program—sculptures identical to those found at Jagat, less than sixty kilometers west of Hita. Sculptural fragments at Hita include a Gaṇēśa (very similar in style to the Gaṇēśa at Jagat) and exterior wall sculptures of the female form where the jewelry, flesh, position, finish, carving, and stone seem identical to what is found at Jagat—more than any other two tenth-century sculptures I have found across modern-day southern Rājāsthan.

Dancing with his skull staff, Śiva dominates the back wall of the sanctum, which suggests that the tenth-century temple in Hita was devoted to a tantric form of the god in mid-dissolution as Nateśa. Like the Śaiva-Siddhanta lord of dance, Nataraja, found so commonly among Chola bronzes, his northern counterpart, Nateśa, was quite common in Madhya Pradesh along the Narmada River and its tributaries at the turn of the millennium.[35] Nateśa also had a long history of association with *mātṛkās* (mother goddesses) in Rājāsthan.[36] This Nateśa temple thus links to the Ambikā temple in Jagat with *mātṛkā* worship and links to more eastern sites with established centers of tantric worship during the second half of the tenth century. Remains from the Gupta period, such as the *mātṛkā* sculpture of Aindrī in the Udaipur archaeological museum and a tiny five-faced Pāśupata liṅgaṃ found by the *thakur*'s (local government official) family and kept in their compound of Rawala in Jagat, suggest that Śiva/Śakti *mātṛkā* worship and visual icons of Sadāśiva liṅga at the site of the Ambikā temple existed at least four hundred or more years before the tantric temple was built (before similar icons were made in the eighth century at Kalyanpur, and before the infamous one in Ahar—which Lyons argues may have served as a model for Śri Ekliṅgjī himself).

The walls of the smaller and more sparsely decorated temple at Hita do not include as many auxiliary semidivine figures as are found at Jagat, but the basic program includes a series of figures on the sanctum walls. The maṇḍapa is connected to the sanctum, and all is severely whitewashed and restored, so no evidence of a bidirectional circumambulatory path remains, except perhaps in the proportions that would leave enough room for a small doorway on either side of the main sanctum. At Hita, as at the better-known goddess temple of Unwās, we are left to work primarily from sculpture left in situ rather than from original intact architectural space. The circumambulatory order at Hita begins with a ferocious form of Śiva (fig. 1.11). Could it be Andhakāntaka, found with Nateśa and Cāmuṇḍā at Menāl and known more famously from Ellora and Elephanta?

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 *śekharī* 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 Bāḍolī 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 *śekharī* temples in India (fig. 1.14). Located southeast of Chittorgarh on the way to Jagat via Bambora, the tripartite iconography of this temple recalls temples of Menāl, Bijoliā, and Bāḍolī 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.[37] 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 Ghāṇerāo and the Guhila strongholds around Nāgadā/Ekliṅgjī. Jagat's closest stylistic companion now lies closer to Uparamāla territory and yet significantly south of Bijoliā, Bāḍolī, 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 overnighting 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 Dūṅgarpur. 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.

FIGURE 1.15. Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī in the identical artistic style of Jagat, c. 960, Hita. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 1.16. Guru and disciple on the temple wall, stone, c. twelfth
to thirteen century, Gamari. © Deborah Stein.

In the tenth century, when Hita and Jagat and Āaṭ were small temple towns,
they lay on a route along the Som, north of the Narmada, where multiple estuar-
ies connected them back to the great maṭhas of central India and down the river,
through the birthplace of Lakulīśa, founder of Pāśupata ascetic Śaivism. Could
Pāśupatas, goddess worshippers, and others have traveled from monastery to
monastery through this back region of the Narmada between central India and
the port of Khambhat—stopping along the way for tantric mediation and worship
at three or more interconnected temples in Hita, Jagat, and Āaṭ? Ojha recorded
an inscription from Āaṭ in his *Dungarpur Rajya ka Itihas*, and the remains found
there suggest a thriving Pāśupata center with possible Jain remains and radically
explicit sexual imagery, better-sculpted and yet linked stylistically through similar
representation of pectoral muscles in stone to the bestiality and other motifs found
farther south at sites such as Gamari.

With uncertain dating, many of the architectural remains of Vagada have
remained outside of art historians' purview. Sites such as Gamari are fairly remote
to modern visitors and are not nearly as impressive stylistically as the core of the
Mēdapāṭa cohort or even the Paramāra remains at Arthuna. Hastily and simply
carved sculptures on the exterior of the temple in Gamari, for example, suggest
artistic trends in a more tenuous period of political upheaval in the twelfth and
thirteenth centuries (fig. 1.16). Despite a later date, the content and meaning of the
carvings suggest an interesting waypoint between sultanate-era Āaṭ, as a function-
ing tantric center off the beaten path, and a site much closer to the Mahi River
as it gushes along the borders of the Malwa plateau and into the Narmada River

FIGURE 1.17. Bestiality on the temple wall, stone, c. twelfth to
thirteenth century, Gamari. © Deborah Stein.

toward Gujarat.[38] Whereas the quality of the art element of Gamari would not nor-
mally catch the attention of art and architectural historians, the scenes of bestiality
(fig. 1.17) and other explicit forms of sexual embrace could be used to trace the reli-
gious record in stone—a tenth-century tantric inheritance from Āaṭ and Jagat still
important enough in twelfth- or thirteenth-century Vagada to merit the expense
and trouble of carving the stone and publicly erecting the stone architecture even
though it was unlikely to be sponsored by any dynastic power.

Mēdapāṭa used to include Jagat, Ṭūṣa, Nāgadā, Ekliṅgjī, Īswāl, Unwās, and
Ghāṅerāo. Uparamāla used to include Bijoliā, Bāḍolī, Menāl, and Chandrabhaga.
These regional appellations are found in contemporaneous inscriptions, which
suggests that they served as place names for people in those regions at the time.
But if we use fluvial patterns to imagine networks of exchange rather than autono-
mous dynastic regions with fixed borders, we can begin to remap the sectarian
landscape over a large region during an increase in production of tantric architec-
ture in the tenth century.

Along the Banas River from c. 950 to 1200, an east–west axis reveals active
sites of Pāśupata Śaivism where temples are not the only stone markers of rit-
ual. Chandrabhaga, Bāḍolī, Bijoliā, Menāl, Chittorgarh, Īswāl, Unwās, Ekliṅgjī/
Nāgadā, and Ṭūṣa lie along this route. These sites leave traces of Śaiva-Śakti wor-
ship specifically of Nateśa and Cāmuṇḍā. Cāmuṇḍā was once a part of sets of sixty-
four or eighty-one yoginīs or was found as one of the seven mother goddesses.
Michael Meister's work in this very region suggests that the mother goddesses
often included Nateśa, a male form of dancing Śiva, as the eighth figure.[39] We see

this in the mother goddess shrine at Bāḍolī, for example. From these mother goddess sets, so popular in the Gupta period throughout northern India, Cāmuṇḍā and Nateśa seem to arise as a pair or on their own around 950 CE in Uparamāla, Mēdapāṭa, Chhapa, and Vagada—a large contiguous region north of the Malwa plateau, situated more broadly between the Gangetic Plains and Gujarat's ports, which open onto the Persian Gulf.

Along the Banas and its smaller branch rivers at sites often protected in natural enclaves formed by mountain ranges such as the Vindhyas, or by natural plateaus at Chittorgarh and seasonal waterfalls at Menāl, ithyphallic club-bearing statues of Lakulīśa held forth (Ekliṅgjī, Menāl, Bāḍolī, and Bijoliā), Nateśa danced his cosmic metaphors of dissolution (Menāl, Bāḍolī, Bijoliā, and Hita), and Cāmuṇḍā held forth in ubiquitous groups of seven (or eight, including Nateśa) mothers and on her own (Chandrabhaga, Bāḍolī, Bijoliā, Menāl, Chittorgarh [Kālikā temple], Unwās, and Nāgadā). The power and immediacy of tantric worship through tantra, mantra, and yantra was spreading in millennial India, and the sculpture, architecture, and geography leave interesting traces of specific cults along a geographical grid largely independent of dynastic affiliation.

At Bāḍolī several fragments reinstalled on-site and not in their original locations, preclude the type of programmatic analysis available for Unwās and Jagat; however, tantalizing iconographic parallels emerge at this tenth-century site in Uparamāla. For example, the Sadāśiva liṅgaṃ found at Jagat in the *thakur*'s house dated to the Gupta period, the Sadāśiva liṅgaṃ found at Kalyanpur, the Sadāśiva liṅgaṃ installed at Ahar, the Sadāśiva head reinstalled at Ekliṅgjī, and the Sadāśiva head found in the *kuṇḍa* (tank) at Bāḍolī all manifest four faces, with the fifth, Iśvara, pointing upward. In Uparamāla, too, whether under the Pratīhāras, or in Mēdapāṭa under the Guhilas, or in Chhapa with no reference to a dynasty at all, this form was prevalent from the Gupta period into the fifteenth century and beyond in this region.[40]

Continuing east to west along the Banas River, near Ekliṅgjī at Nāgadā, we find a stone mandala similar to the ones we find made of legumes and grain laid out at Ekliṅgjī and Jagat to this day (fig. 1.18). Beneath this image, on either side of a sacrificial fire, devotees in stone ladle ghee onto the fire and utter "*swaha*." Ritual does leave a record in stone, but this does not make Indian history, art history, or religion timeless. To the contrary, specific continuities and ruptures can be historicized visually in particularly accurate ways owing to the stone record of temples. For example, the mandala made of legumes in 2002 for the goddess installation celebration in Jagat (fig. 1.19) is not an exact replica of the mandala of multiplying figural emanations found at Nāgadā, even though both may speak to a similar mental process of visualization. Temples are geographic and temporal markers of what was or was not happening ritually, historically, religiously, and inscriptionally in a specific time and place. To moderns, the temple serves as a buffer against ahistorical orientalisms. Each period reveals specific ideas different from the next,
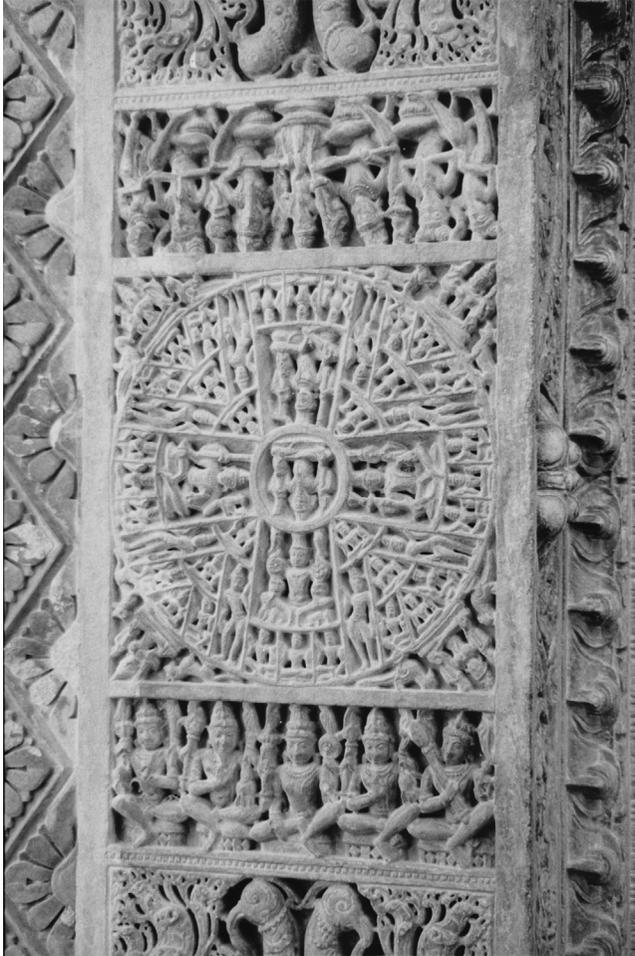
FIGURE 1.18. Mandala in stone, with devotees ladling ghee over a
fire, c. tenth or eleventh century, Nāgadā. © Deborah Stein.

yet visually, ritual links, such as the stone and grain mandalas, sometimes remain
organic echoes of each other over time.

Built around a century later than the Pippalāda Mātā temple, fewer than one
hundred kilometers away, the fifteen shrines surrounding the two larger Sās-Bahu
temples at Nāgadā are marked by similarly sparse walls but on a more prolific scale.
The Sās temple has relatively few sculptures in its program. Two sculptural couples
frame the entrance, Śiva/Pārvatī and a broken couple. On the exterior sides of the
pavilion Viṣṇu holds the never-ending knot; another representation of Viṣṇu, Śiva,
and Brahma appears on either side of the exterior of the inner sanctum; and Viṣṇu

FIGURE 1.19. Mandala made of legumes in Jagat, May 2002, temporary maṇḍapa during goddess installation. © Deborah Stein.

predictably graces the back niche. This temple has no auxiliary figures whatso-ever. Although it was built after the Takṣakēśvara shrine in the gorge at Ekliṅgjī, after the Datoreśvara Mahadev temple at Śobhagpura, and after the Sūrya shrine at Ṭūṣa, this temple has a program similar to the Pippalāda Mātā temple in Unwās. Rather than displaying a rhythmic entourage of deities and attendants, the shrine invokes only the most basic deities. The exterior figures serve to show a correspon-dence with the interior deities and with the main deity's emanation on the back wall of the inner sanctum.

In keeping with the sparse program of the Pippalāda Mātā temple at Unwās, the Sās-Bahu temple at Nāgadā displays an even more reduced program, with only three exterior figures on the walls of the *garbhagṛha*: Śiva with a fruit, Viṣṇu, and Brahma. Most of the shrines surrounding these temples share this abbreviated form of iconography. Of note is a small Devī shrine at the back of the complex at Nāgadā. Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī is sculpted on the back wall of the shrine. Mahesvari, with her skull staff, and Cāmuṇḍā accompany her on the two side walls. This Śaiva-Śakti shrine has no main icon, but the Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī is represented with the demon's human leg protruding out of the neck of his decapi-tated buffalo form (fig. 1.20). A second goddess shrine close to the entrance gate by the lake is dedicated to Saraswatī. This shrine still has a statue of Pārvatī inside. A Jain complex also suggests that Nāgadā—located adjacent to Ekliṅgjī where the
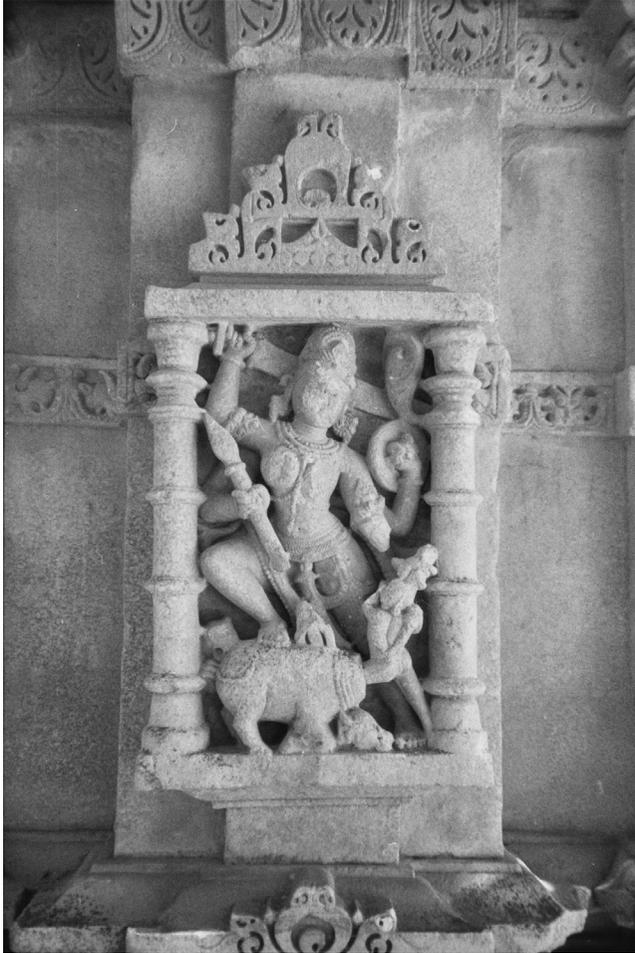
FIGURE 1.20. Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī, c. tenth or eleventh century, stone, Nāgadā. © Deborah Stein.

famous 971 CE debate among Jains, Buddhists, and Pāśupata Śaivaites was held—was already a multisectarian center for trade in the eleventh century.[41]

   Several features of the temple complex plan at Nāgadā resonate with other tenth-century sites farther south. At Jagat, shrines also tightly overlap to the point of precluding circumambulation. There the *praṇālā* shrine would have originally been freestanding, as is evident from the later addition of the stone spout awkwardly joined to the shrine through the middle of a piece of sculpture (fig. 1.21). The plan of the site on a raised platform with several closely spaced shrines is similar to the Śaiva complex at Āaṭ, which also has an elaborate entrance gate similar in

FIGURE 1.21. Jagat *praṇālā*, demon's leg protruding out of the neck of the decapitated form. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 1.22. Toraṇa gate, Nāgadā. © Deborah Stein.

style if not in iconographic content to the gate at Nāgadā (fig. 1.22). Two inscriptions from the eleventh century attest to the growing power of the Guhilas near Nāgadā and Ahar in the Mēdapāṭa region.[42] An inscription from Nāgadā dated to 1026 CE describes the town as "a renowned seat of scholars well versed in the Vedas."[43] Unfortunately, the fragmentary inscription leaves the name of the ruler a subject of speculation.[44] Viṣṇu is invoked by the name of Puruśottama in this inscription. The inscription at this grand site of Viṣṇu temples terminates with the symbol of the diamond lotus. Whether this motif is considered tantric or merely decorative, it was certainly multisectarian in early eleventh-century Mewār.

These traces of ritual and the record in stone suggest that a diachronic approach cannot reveal timeless religious beliefs but rather that elements of current worship have landed vestigially in the twenty-first century and that—together with the inscriptional, architectural, iconographic, and stylistic evidence—we can begin to map specific responses to periodic shifts in religious practice along a grid of specific forms of worship and belief. To this end, if we follow the less-traveled waters of the Som and Mahi Rivers, we find a new set of sites, including two previously unknown to scholars.

Along the Som River we find a southern group of temple sites in a region that was historically and to this day largely outside of dynastic reaches. Bhils, Meenas, Lohars, and other Ādivāsi people still form the majority populations there. Careful inscriptional work can even trace exact points when Mērwara tribes joined the

Sisodia elite from Uparamāla in tenuous political relationships reaching as far west as Jhadol. But for the most part, Chhapa, throughout the one-thousand-year history we have explored, remained beyond the reaches of kings. In this fertile region Śakta tantra and Śaiva tantra abound to this day—with the worship of Bērujī and Mātājī predominating at hilltop shrines where *bhopas* preside with peacock brooms and corn-grain divination around the corner from many of the ancient art historical sites covered in this study.

Along the Som tributary to the Mahi River, it is no surprise that from southern Uparamāla into southern Mēdapāṭa, on the northern fringes of the Malwa plateau, we find that Nateśa (the classical version of Bērujī) and Cāmuṇḍā (the classical version of Mātājī) held sway alone more than one thousand years ago at Hita, Jagat, and Āaṭ. During the brief flash of dynastic power held by the Guhilas of Kiṣkindā prior to the tenth century, we find one of the earliest and most impressive four-faced and four-bodied Pāśupata-Śiva icons at Kalyanpur, which dates approximately to the eighth century and provides a precedent for Ahar, Ekliṅgjī, Bāḍolī, and other Pāśupata-Śaiva centers. Contemporaneous sculptures in Āmjhara suggest excellently carved mother goddess sculptures from the eighth to ninth centuries hidden and dispersed over a wide area, perhaps in the wake of destruction of their stone home.

Postmillennial sites in the region suggest expansive states attempting often quite precariously to take hold of these largely tribal lands with the construction of fortresses, mines, and public works from Jaisamand Lake to Jāwar mines and multisectarian temples, to the long sculptural and architectural history of Jhadol. This southern stretch was a place where Bērujī and Mātājī were canonized in stone; where Jains bankrolled Sisodia imperial power; and where Rājputs, Afghans, Turks, and many others traveled, looted, negotiated, fought, laid siege, marched, pillaged, but never lingered. It was in this vacuum of statehood that art, architecture, and local religion flourished in creative and unique ways, leaving a record in stone and a rich heritage of practices found today that will leave no ephemeral traces for tomorrow.