Temple as Praxis

Agency in the Field in Southern Rājāsthan

"Tradition is always about the present," Marzia Balzani writes in *Modern Indian Kingship*.[1] Much in the same vein, Romila Thapar argues that South Asian history can no longer be written without a dialogue with the present.[2] An examination of current ritual reveals tantalizing parallels with the iconological record. The idea of a catalyst suggests that temples spark social interaction that is ever evolving.[3] Like contemporary kingship in Jodhpur, archaeological sites in southern Rājāsthan rely on the reification of tradition. In both cases, "tradition then not only takes on the conservative role of preservation but also becomes a statement of defiance in the face of a system in which the royal families of the past are no longer valued for their nobility alone."[4] Kingship remains a large part of the iconological performance at Ekliṅgjī, whereas many disenfranchised populations use the Ambikā temple at Jagat to assert their power through praxis.

In 2002 people used archaeological places in modern ways that nonetheless reflected their histories. At Ekliṅgjī and at Jagat ritual enforces hierarchy, often challenging state or national law to practice legitimately in the eyes of the community. Historically, the rituals performed in and around the temples occasionally left permanent signs. Mahārāṇā Raimal left the written trace of his ritual in the southern doorway of the sanctum, a privileged place where the inscription receives darśan from Śri Ekliṅgjī's southern face in perpetuity. Some features of the stone temple programs, such as the yogis at Ekliṅgjī or the depiction of liṅga worship on the Ambikā temple, mirror ritual. At Ekliṅgjī these stone yogis are at eye level when gazing at the roof of the Śri Ekliṅgjī temple from the upper platform (fig. 6.1), where the tenth-century Lakulīśa temple houses a gigantic black sculpture of this Pāśupata ascetic.[5] On the Ambikā temple at Jagat, small figures present

FIGURE 6.1. Yogis (upper right, three seated vertically) on the Śri Ekliṅgjī temple. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 6.2. Worship of a liṅgaṃ from Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

offerings to a liṅgaṃ (fig. 6.2) while miniature viewers peer out of small-scale bas-relief verandas at the circumambulator as if filling the temple for a festival in perpetuity (see fig. 5.20). Other aspects of ritual disappear without a trace. Ritual patronage often determines whether a permanent indexical imprint will be made on a particular site.[6] This indexical trace is a symptom of past ritual. The modern marble icon from Jaipur in the ancient sanctum of the Ambikā temple at Jagat is an indexical marker of the installation ceremony that took place in May of 2002.

The collective performances of clergy and their audiences create continuity at Ekliṅgjī and at Jagat, whereas the inscriptional and archaeological record suggests long periods of disuse and rupture. At Ekliṅgjī an embodied multisensory form of worship is experienced *en masse*, whereas at Jagat it is more individualized. An organized multimember clergy at Ekliṅgjī contrasts with a single folk shaman and one non-Brahman priest found at Jagat. The two temple complexes serve as loci of social activity both inside and outside the boundaries of the religious sites. Temporary spaces of social interaction such as a marketplace during a fair or ritual under a nearby tree draw on the power of these ancient temples to attract crowds and create spaces of exchange. This disintegration of the borders between numinous temple sanctums and social fields of activity suggests that these sites serve as catalysts, as permanent agents that set chains of events into action.

POSTCOLONIAL KINGSHIP: PHOTOGRAPHING THE DIVINE AND THE MAHĀRĀṆĀ/CEO

Given the complex identity of an icon, can a photograph capture the deity? Does a picture of an icon clone an icon, or does it serve as a portrait of the original? The careful protection of reproduction rights for divinities suggests that, for living temples, photographs produce clones, whereas under the archaeological heritage model a photograph could hardly hold even the ontological status of a portrait. When asked why the deity Śrī Ekliṅgjī could not be photographed, Śriji Arvind Singh Mewār replied that it was his exclusive inherited right to worship the god.[7] His response squarely situates the Śrī Ekliṅgjī temple out of the public domain as a private temple. Similarly, the Lakulīśa rights are exclusively his. What does it mean for a postcolonial king to "own" the right for darśan, or the exchange of gaze between an icon and a devotee? The god, in the form of a living icon, is believed to return the viewer's gaze as a form of blessing.[8] Perhaps with this relationship in mind, Śriji Arvind Singh Mewār compared photographing the black, four-faced liṅgaṃ icon of Ekliṅgjī to paparazzi. Drawings, however, did not hold the same potency and were therefore better reproductions (figs. 6.3 and 6.4). Śriji Arvind Singh Mewār felt these reproductions of Ekliṅgjī were more respectful, not interfering with his exclusive right to worship him, not interfering with the Śrī Ekliṅgjī Trust's exclusive copyrights, and not leading to theft. Śriji Arvind Singh Mewār emphasized his exclusive religious and commercial rights over Śrī Ekliṅgjī.[9]
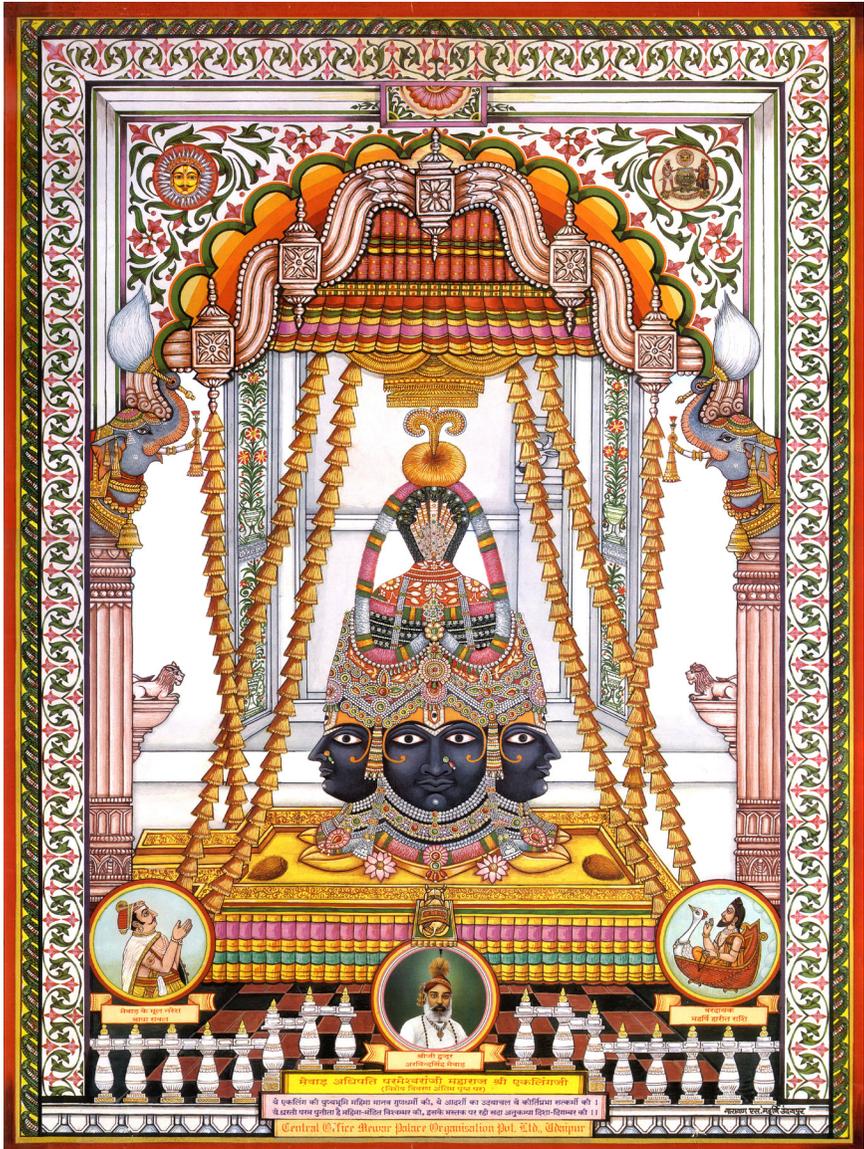
FIGURE 6.3. Śri Eklingjī as featured in the palace calendar, 2002. Gift of Śriji Arvind Singh Mewār. Photo by the author.

In her essay "In Plato's Cave" Susan Sontag argues that photography is a form of violence that turns people into objects: "To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just

FIGURE 6.4. Śri Ekliṅgjī popular prints for sale during Mahāśivrātri, 2002, Ekliṅgjī.
© Deborah Stein.

as the camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a sublimated murder—a soft murder, appropriate to a sad frightened time."[10] This sense of violence is acute in the mahārāṇa's mind, even if it is not articulated as such. His gut reaction is that, as Ekliṅgjī's dīwān, it is his duty not to allow Ekliṅgjī to become the subject of a photograph only to be turned into an object of the gaze. This issue is complicated since Ekliṅgjī could also be said to gaze back. In "Descartes's Cow and Other Domestications of the Visual," Robert Nelson argues that past definitions of vision assumed "intromission" and were based on the culture of twentieth-century science, whereas the majority of the world's population both past and present actually believe in "extramission."[11] Although visuality is cultural rather than scientific, these differences in visuality can be equated casually neither with East and West nor with past and present. For example, many educated Americans in the twentieth century believe in extramission.[12] Śri Ekliṅgjī's visuality is one of extramission based on an interchange between two subjects, the viewer and the animate icon. If we consider that Śri Ekliṅgjī in his environment is considered a subject rather than an object, then to photograph him, according to Sontag, would be a "sublimated murder," hardly acceptable for a holy monarch or his guardian.

Śriji Arvind Singh Mewār accords Śri Ekliṅgjī the same respect as he does Mewāri citizens: architecture is not off limits to photography, but ritual inside the Śri Ekliṅgjī temple is taboo. This dichotomy seems to be as much a question about ownership

FIGURE 6.5. Family portrait
of Śri Ekliṅgjī. © Maharana
Mewar Research Institute
(MMRI Archives).

as it is about respect.¹³ To take a photograph of Śri Ekliṅgjī would be to make a
reproduction of the god worthy of worship. The photographic taboo prevents the
accidental birthing of an icon and protects the mahārāṇā's copyright as a numinous
birthright. In addition to the mahārāṇā maintaining his exclusive right to worship
as a way of affecting kingship in a modern nation-state, his trust holds copyright to
the reproduction of the image and is responsible if it is stolen or defaced. By con-
trolling the reproduction, the god's function is controlled by his guardian.

The personal photo archives of the mahārāṇā were generously made available
to me for study.¹⁴ There I found more than one photograph of Śri Ekliṅgjī gaz-
ing out into the eyes of members of the mahārāṇā's family, whose bent backs face
the camera. This form of photography is very different from what my own would
have been (fig. 6.5). In images such as this one, Śri Ekliṅgjī poses in the act of
darśan, and the viewer is cast as a recipient of the gaze. These photographs are
not a record of what an Indian deity looks like to the scholars, students, and read-
ers who peruse my English text; the photographs commemorate important family
occasions, functioning much as a wedding album might.

But just as in human families, the relationships are intradependent. Śri Ekliṅgjī
contributes to the financial well-being of his family and of his kingdom. The mul-
timillion-dollar empire of heritage hotels under the control of Śri Arvind Singh
functions in large part based on the orientalist fantasies of middle-class foreign
tourists wanting literally to be king for a day.¹⁵ It would be hard to argue that enjoy-
ing a meal overlooking the rolling hills and palaces on the shores of Lake Pichola is
not a wonderful experience or that waking up to a world framed by peacock arches
is not pleasant. But tourism to the region does not depend on these comfortable,
beautiful converted palaces alone. To attract tourism, there must be something to
see—cultural property to be visited, rented, or sold, even if only as an idea rather
than as a material entity.

The majority of visitors to ancient monuments are operating under the
nineteenth-century aesthetic shared by Ruskin and by the Archaeological Survey

of India (ASI). The best tourist monuments are ruins devoid of people and available for tourists to photograph, project onto, and make their own, at least in their experience and in their minds. The success of an ancient monument for tourism is not based primarily on whether it is in use but above all on whether its current use is perceived as authentic. Herein lies the difference between a site in an official private trust, such as the Śri Ekliṅgjī Religious Trust, and a site under the control of a local population, such as Jagat. Both are contested as state property—the archaeological site of Ekliṅgjī via the legal system and Jagat via the law of proximity, which yields more power to the local population than to centralized administration. The highly organized, well-funded trust at Ekliṅgjī is able to construct continuity in ways that the folk practices at Jagat cannot. To the average tourist, the Ambikā temple at Jagat appears defaced by metallic gold paint, whereas the Ekliṅgjī temple seems carefully maintained by the descendants of those who built it. The aesthetics of rupture are much more pronounced at Jagat than at Ekliṅgjī because praxis at Ekliṅgjī renders the temple complex an ideological commodity, whereas praxis at Jagat turns the monument into both an ideological commodity and a material commodity for the international art market.

SNOW FALLING ON MOUNT KAILASH: RITUAL AS ICONOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE AT EKLIṄGJĪ

Revivalism, tradition, and invention characterize current uses of the archaeological site of Ekliṅgjī. Many aspects of temple activity in 2002 reflect Ekliṅgjī's past and present as a religious center linked with Mewāri polity. Ekliṅgjī exhibits an official hierarchy, as emphasized by the staff of the mahārāṇā/CEO. Even though the temples have long benefited from royal Guhila patronage, current uses indicate a special need to establish kingship in a period with no kings. Historically, when the capital moved and the dīwān changed location, Śri Ekliṅgjī, Mewār's rightful ruler, continued to hold sway from his home in Kailāśpurī. In the twenty-first century, royal sponsorship of Ekliṅgjī produces highly structured ritual conducted by a multitude of Brahman priests. The two-hour prayer service, or pūjā, unfolds at Ekliṅgjī three times a day. On Mondays pilgrims travel to join locals and the mahārāṇā at Ekliṅgjī. The pūjā at Ekliṅgjī is performed almost identically every time by royal priests, who hold the sole access to a jealously guarded, sacred book Ekliṅgjī's pūjā-paddhati, or prayer manual. For Ekliṅgjī's visitors and devotees the postcolonial power shifts and concerns with royal lineage have altered site access, while pūjā in the sanctum of the Śri Ekliṅgjī temple remained for the most part the same. The mahārāṇā and his clergy derive the authenticity of their ritual from the mythical antiquity of the text. Copied from older versions, the twenty-first-century pūjā-paddhati suggests a desire to fix ritual protocol in a bold revivalist maneuver similar to Mahārāṇā Kumbhā's own architectural projects.

The god Ekliṅgjī's daily pūjā serves as a mirror of the modern kingship of his human chancellor. For hundreds of years Śri Ekliṅgjī has resided in the town of Kailāśpurī, located approximately sixteen miles from Udaipur. Mahārāṇā Arvind Singh Mewār today sees himself as carrying on the tradition of the dīwān of Śri Ekliṅgjī in the postindependence era. His father held this responsibility before him and transferred trusteeship of the site on his death in 1984. His grandfather used to travel to the temple on horseback and would change horses four times on his way owing to his impetuous riding.[16] Although Mahārāṇā Arvind Singh Mewār is the second son, his father chose him as his heir. It is in this capacity that the postcolonial king administers the Śri Ekliṅgjī Charitable Trust. He has replaced the horseback traditions of his ancestors with a white Mercedes but nevertheless makes his way to the temple every Monday to exercise his unique right to worship Śri Ekliṅgjī from within the inner gates of the sanctum. He alone visits the tenth-century Lakulīśa temple to pay homage to this patron sage of the Pāśupatas.

The priests on the trust payroll offer their prayers to Śri Ekliṅgjī on behalf of the dīwān. At the sixteenth-century Śri Ekliṅgjī temple located on the level below the tenth-century Lakulīśa temple, devotees, pilgrims, visitors, and residents of Kailāśpurī may receive darśan and witness the entire pūjā; however, they cannot offer the same prayers as the dīwān. Certain relatives of the mahārāṇā and other distinguished guests can witness the pūjā from within the silver gates just outside the inner sanctum (fig. 6.5). Meanwhile, from the main hall of the temple the crowds circumambulate, sing *bhajans* (religious songs), recite mantras, exchange gazes with the deity, and share smoke and light with Ekliṅgjī. The pūjā process constructs separate spaces for the god, the priests, the king, the distinguished guests, and the public.

The order of ritual events in the daily pūjā is fixed and crucial to the success of the worship. The ritual sequence focuses on a multisensory experience for the deity and the viewer. The general syntax of the god's daily routine mirrors that of the local people: bathe, dress, pray, eat, and sleep:

1. Wipe off old leaves.
2. Bath with water, milk, curd, and ghee.
3. Anoint with sandalwood powder.
4. Adorn with jewelry and dress with cloth.
5. Place leaves atop liṅgaṃ.
6. Bedeck the deity with flowers.
7. Hang golden parasol over deity's head.
8. Place flowers on the parasol.
9. Light and bring incense lantern to the four faces of the deity and in turn to the viewers' gaze.
10. Take fire lantern (*arthi*) to all four faces and in turn share the light with the viewers.

11. Keep water running constantly.
12. Dress and feed the deity; show the deity a mirror, fly whisk the deity, put it to sleep.

This sequence of sensory interactions with the liṅgaṃ is repeated during a two-hour service held three times a day. During pūjā the viewer participates in the simple daily rituals of the divine. The ritual sequence touches all of the senses of the viewer and of the deity, creating a concentrated transitory state, yet sensory treatment alone is not enough to awaken the deity. The priest attending the deity accompanies these actions by special verses uttered during every single act. The high secrecy of these Sanskrit mantras adds to their power.

According to Pundit Narendra Dashora, there are three types of mantras: semantic only, phonic only, and both semantic and phonic. The pūjā-paddhati mantras are both semantic and phonic; only those who know the meaning and the correct intonation can invoke their full power. Many of the mantras recited by temple-goers may have specific meaning but may not rely on phonic resonance to be effective forms of prayer. *Bhopas* (shamans) often rely on phonic mantras, which may not necessarily carry semantic meaning. The mantras of the pūjā-paddhati create a sacred space in which the deity can be awakened.

These chanted verses awaken different aspects of the deity's environment. For example, while placing his right hand on the doorframe, a priest will recite a mantra to consecrate the space of the threshold to the sanctum.[17] Once the environment has been activated, the icon itself is addressed according to the four directions of its four faces, each with a distinct facial expression. The eastern face is Tatpuruṣa, the omnipresent deity. The southern face is Aghora, a nonhorrific form of Rudra representing Yama, the god of death. The northern face is Vāmadeva, an auspicious wish-granting form of Śiva, and the western face is Sadyojāta, a form of the deity as a newborn child. The top of the liṅgaṃ is considered a fifth face, called the Isana form of Śiva, a shapeless representation and a center of *śakti* (powerful female energy).[18] Each of these faces and directions aligns with the five elements.

On the one hand, the multifaced liṅgaṃ, according to modern practitioners, is a cornerstone of Pāśupata-Śaivism.[19] On the other hand, ancient texts and archaeological sites do not confirm that the multifaced liṅgaṃ is exclusive to Pāśupata worship. But whether or not multifaced liṅga are considered indicative of Pāśupata-Śaivism per se, the ritual requirements of this ideology do demand this particular form. Although the mantras may not be exactly the same, the process of ritual animation is likely quite ancient.

As the supreme icon of Mewāri kingship, the *caturmukha* liṅgaṃ enjoys elaborate pūjā year-round, but Mahāśivrātri is by far the most extravagant celebration. The holiday of Mahāśivrātri is the most important day of the year for Mewāri Śaivaites. Mahāśivrātri celebrates three events: Śiva's birthday, Śiva and Pārvatī's marriage, and Śiva's taking blue poison in his throat in an elaborate mythical

performance. Throngs of pilgrims flock to Kailāśpurī on foot from Udaipur and the surrounding areas. The pilgrims walk past temples; people; Ferris wheels; vendors of plastic toys, silver, ornaments, implements, pottery, posters, cassettes, and sugar cane; and through the ancient gates and into the valley. On this day the inhabitants of Kailāśpurī make *sābudāna*, a special pilaf free of wheat or rice. The night of Śiva begins with the ten o'clock pūjā, when the liṅgaṃ is dressed in yellow garments and leaf ornaments with a special necklace. The priests bathe him and put three ash stripes on him and then put him to bed. There are twenty *arthis* (lamp ceremonies) in the whole program, five in each service.

The most dramatic part of the thirteen-hour program is when the priests periodically undress the liṅgaṃ and pour white flour over this black stone icon. This visual effect creates the appearance of snow falling on Mount Kailash, Śiva's home in the Himalayas. This completes the pilgrimage for all those who have traveled twenty-six steep kilometers through the dry, thirsty landscape of southern Rājāsthan to come to the cool valley of Kailāśpurī.[20] A winter landscape is staged in this ritual performance for those who may never make it so far as the actual sites of Śiva's rites of passage. The flour snowing onto the black stone liṅgaṃ and clustering over each of the four faces of Śiva may be the only snow most of the viewers ever encounter. After this scene water is poured over the deity to wash him, which makes him look as if he is crying cloudy tears.

The priests massage the body of the god. More than one priest told me he thought of himself as Pārvatī when serving Śiva. The massaging of the stone phallus with *āmla*, a special perfumed ointment, then takes on a certain gendered slant if the priests see themselves as emanations of his wife. Once finished with his ablutions and dressed, Śri Ekliṅgjī checks his appearance in the mirror held up for him. The holding up of a mirror to meet an icon's gaze creates a very powerful circle of vision. Receiving the gaze of the icon is a form of worship in itself—in front of a mirror, the deity gazes on himself.

Śri Ekliṅgjī's embodied worship entails meals of rice, yogurt, water, flour, and gram for the god. Although the activities of the deity mirror those of humans, the quantities on Mahāśivrātri are always greater for the god while the humans fast. Everything is served in nine-kilo portions. The servings of nine suggest the tantric element of Śri Ekliṅgjī's pūjā. Exceptionally, *pradakṣinā* (circumambulation) was counterclockwise in the sanctum and yet remained clockwise outside the temple. The embodied nature of Śri Ekliṅgjī pūjā is inherently tantric. On the one hand, according to priests, king, and temple-goers, this tantra is exclusively right-handed. On the other hand, local tantric practitioners recount that left-handed tantra may be practiced at the temple, as well, in the form of secret mantras uttered by tantric practitioners during the night on Mahāśivrātri.

Not only are the quantities of food consumed by the deity greater on Mahāśivrātri, but the hierarchy of temple-goers is even more pronounced. In the seventeenth century, silver gates were added inside the *maṇḍapa* to differentiate

FIGURE 6.6. My downstairs neighbor from Ekliṅgjī, the wife of one of Śri Ekliṅgjī's priests, pouring water into an aqueduct leading into the inner sanctum, July 2002, Ekliṅgjī. © Deborah Stein.

even further the space inside the temple. The holiest layer of space is the inner sanctum where the deity lives. This inner shrine is open on four sides to access the deity in order to perform pūjā. The *garbhagṛha* (womb chamber) allows the priests to circumambulate the deity. Only the priests enter the *garbhagṛha*, with the exception of the mahārāṇā, who claims the unique right to worship the deity as Mewār's dīwān. The silver gate creates a third layer of sacredness to distinguished guests, who crawl through a small door to enter the space. This area is open to the public just once a year in the summer time, when the god offers milk as *prasād* (divine leftovers). The fourth layer of ritual space is the maṇḍapa behind the silver gate on the raised platform where women sit in the middle and men stand on the sides. The fifth layer of sacred space is the path around the platform where people circumambulate and pass in front of the deity to offer flowers and receive the divine gaze. Layers of architectural elements leave temporal residue of ritual change.[21] Although the architecture leaves some trace of different stages of ritual, most ritual residue is ephemeral, finding merely an echo in stone.

Outside the book, vernacular pleasures suggest that seasonal rites may have been performed historically even though they were not recorded. Although pūjā is performed throughout the year according to the pūjā-paddhati, the devotees and priests bestow special unwritten seasonal pleasures on Ekliṅgjī. These collective actions create spectacular visual effects to reify the human character of the divine. Corresponding approximately to early July, Aśadh is an incredibly hot month even in Kailāśpurī, a wind tunnel bordered by hills on either side. During every midday pūjā, temple-goers gather behind the temple at a special stone spout adapted from architectural fragments. Each person in turn pours a pot of water into the aqueduct leading to the inner sanctum (fig. 6.6). There, inside the temple, a constant stream of water pours over Ekliṅgjī as if the River Gaṅgā were falling through his hair. At a time when the pond behind the temple complex is entirely dried up and the heat has permeated every living creature, a cool stream of water pleases Ekliṅgjī.

FIGURE 6.7. Clay liṅga, Ekliṅgjī.
© Deborah Stein.

During these hotter months, the deity is fanned during the three pūjās. Devotees operate the fan via a long cord, rhythmically pulled to the tune of the *bhajans* they sing. Vernacular practices, such as these acts of kindness performed by devotees for the comfort of their god, are not prescribed by written records. Sometimes even the priests perform seasonal rites not included in the pūjā-paddhati even though they may recite some of the official mantras as part of the ritual.

The month of Śrāvan is a time when the pūjāris sit to the side of the maṇḍapa hall before the services and build perishable liṅga of clay (fig. 6.7). The clay liṅga exhibit a full repertoire of liṅga iconography and are modeled based on the pūjāri's own choice within a standard repertoire of shapes. These ephemeral liṅga undergo a separate pūjā. While reciting mantras, the priests place uncooked rice on the clay liṅga followed by flowers and water. They chant in Sanskrit together. The liṅga are then offered *rabari*, a cooling yogurt concoction. When devotees arrive, they can offer a few rupees so the pūjāri will anoint their foreheads with vermilion and tie special pūjā cords on their wrists. At last the prayers are over and the red cloths are gathered off the stands encompassing the clay liṅga and all the flowers and offerings. The ritual residue is placed in a large basket and anointed with vermilion. Later the basket's contents are emptied into the pond. This form of worship parallels the year-round rites that take place within the sanctum with the permanent liṅgam.

Whereas some argue the pūjā-paddhati is a sign of the permanence and antiquity of current ritual at Ekliṅgjī, the importance of vernacular rites alongside textual recitation suggests a much more organic model of interaction with the divine. The pūjā-paddhati corresponds to the current black schist liṅgam. Since this liṅgam replaced a more ancient liṅgam in the sixteenth-century, whose form may or may not have been the same as that of the present liṅgam, the antiquity of the pūjā-paddhati cannot predate the icon. This rupture does not delegitimize the ritual power of current forms of practice at Ekliṅgjī. To the contrary, the presence of so many forms of worship complementary to recited mantras implies continuity in pūjā structure and audience response. The lay public knows inherently

FIGURE 6.8. Worshipping cloth, Ekliṅgjī tailor's fair. © Deborah Stein.

when to participate in seasonal forms of worship based on empathy for the god's condition. The clergy also know when to conduct extra variations on traditional worship even though those changes are not at all dictated by the pūjā-paddhati. The visual resonance of rites with Purāṇic mythology and stone form suggests a continuity different from the fixed form of the pūjā-paddhati. In contrast with the record of revivalism created by text, the specificity of twenty-first-century ritual draws sacristy from ancient myth in a mixture of old and new.

TIES THAT BIND: GUILD RELATIONS AND
THE POSTCOLONIAL KING OF MEWĀR

Whether for a regal CEO or for a guild of tailors, Śri Ekliṅgjī lends legitimacy and power to established hierarchies. The living archaeological site becomes a *darbar* (court assembly), a village parliament, a theater of visual mythmaking, and the center of material exchange. During the tailors' fair the elders of various clans bind their followers to their deity with cloth in a form of *līla* (divine sport). The life-cycle events are played out in the altered daily routine of the deity. The tailor's *mela* (festival/fair) focuses exclusively on one guild with three equal clans. On the last day of the year when the moon has waned completely, three guilds of tailors hold a competition at Ekliṅgjī. Each *jati* (subcaste or guild) arrives at the temple the night before with five hundred meters of cloth. They sleep in the temple compound with their families and worship the cloth (fig. 6.8).

In 2002 the tailors' cloth contest produced long strands of fabric reaching from Bappa Rāwal, out of the temple complex, up the neighboring mountaintop, and to
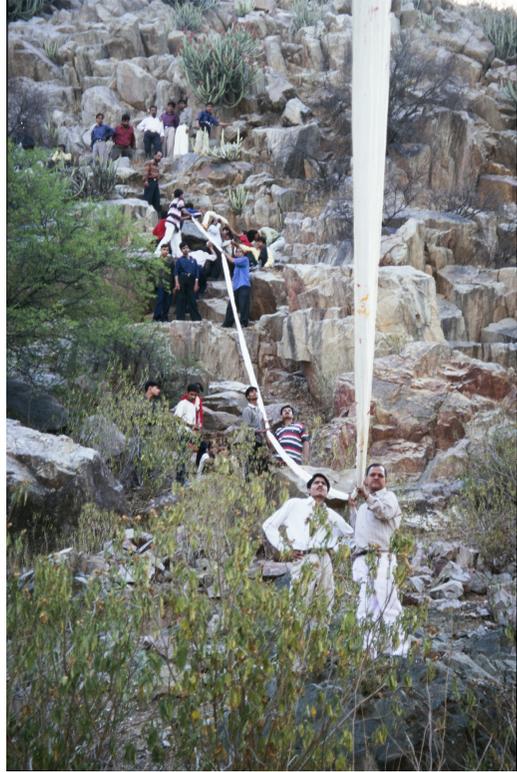
FIGURE 6.9. Ties that bind;
fabric strung up the hill at Eklingjī.
© Deborah Stein.

a final cascade landing on the pinnacle of the Śrī Eklingjī temple *śikhara*, directly on axis with the Śiva lingam inside (fig. 6.9). This rite literally bound the ritualists to each other, bound the characters of the Mewāri origin myth together, and bound the ritual participants to their divine ruler. Moreover, the visual impact of this performance recreated the myth of the river goddess Ganga's fall into Śiva's ascetic locks of hair. The flowing tresses of fabric tied the local manifestation of Śiva, in the form of the Mewāri ruler Śrī Eklingjī, with cosmic myths from his mountainous Himalayan home. Visual metaphor invested the ecology of the local landscape with the sanctity of cosmic geography.

At the start of the festival three *pañcāyats* (village associations) met to settle the disputes among members of their communities. The *pañcāyats* consisted exclusively of men over the age of forty-five. While they governed, the women and children slept. Pūjā began at four-thirty in the morning. Priests bathed Eklingjī as women sang *bhajans*. When the pūjā service concluded, around eight in the morning, each of the three clans threaded their cloth past Bappa Rāwal (see fig. 3.1), up to the roof of his maṇḍapa, over to the roof of the main temple's golden staff, and then all the way up the hilltop across from the temple complex.[22]

The *jati* that completed the task first won. To ensure victory, the *panchayat* of each clan played Hoḷī, which involves throwing colored powders at the cloth and garlanding it before the games begin. The spring festival of Hoḷī, according to McKim Marriott, is a time of reversals, when hierarchy is undone.[23] During Hoḷī a devotee might throw colored powders at a god, or a young female researcher might throw colored powder at an older male Brahman informant. The cloth's supremacy was established through its subversion in the game of Hoḷī, when the tailor devotees permitted themselves to shower the revered bundle in colored powder. The contest concluded unceremoniously, when the three cloths were removed to the temple office and everyone went home.

Records of vernacular worship date to the eighteenth century and point to continuity in the public's relationship to the divine ruler of their region, through the changing of seasons and the passing of time. For example, the women of the Mali caste still sell garlands at the entrance to the temple complex. Their female ancestors can be found sitting in the same place on an eighteenth-century mural found inside the maṭha at Ekliṅgjī. More organic forms of worship may well be more ancient than the static forms recorded in the text of the pūjā-paddhati. In contrast with Ekliṅgjī, at Jagat vernacular forms of worship seem to be the only surviving practice. But even these historical rites were imported into the archaeological site of the Ambikā temple from the Mallar Mātā shrine atop the adjacent hill and from the local pīpal tree.

THE ARBOREAL BODY OF THE GODDESS: DAŚAMĀTĀPŪJĀ AND THE IRRELEVANCE OF FORM

Stone flesh, absence, and the arboreal body suggest the fluidity of form and antiform in women's worship of the goddess. These various manifestations of the goddess in the form of a stone icon, the stone place of contact with an absent image, or a tree provide equally numinous foci for women's worship. Women as an audience may not have historically had access to the ancient temple for their rituals, which may have taken place primarily at a tree or in their homes. Like the Meena and Bhil forms of folk religion that have slipped into the archaeological site, women's forms of worship, as exemplified by the modern holidays of Śītalā-saptamī and Daśamātāpūjā, indicate that Jagat served as a catalyst for women's activity that rarely took place within the temple compound. The Ambikā temple has always served as a catalyst, but the most recent ritual use of the archaeological site dates only to the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Śītalā-saptamī (the day of the smallpox goddess) falls seven days after the spring festival of Hoḷī and a week before the Hindu New Year, just as the hottest season begins in April. This long, hot, dry time puts many people at risk for smallpox. Just as Ekliṅgjī is treated as a king by a king, Śītalā is treated as a female

relative by village women. Long before dawn, women wake up and make *chapati* dough. They form the bread dough into ornaments for the goddess. Śītalā wears all of the accoutrements of a married woman: earrings, nose rings, bangles, toe rings, and a *mangal* sutra necklace. The small-scale bread-dough ornaments are carefully laid out on a plate (see fig. 0.10). Next to the jewelry, the lady of the house places vermilion powder and green henna powder. Some brightly colored cloth is added to the plate as the goddess's clothes along with yogurt and uncooked grains. The married woman then covers the plate with a cloth and takes it to the family shrine to circle it in front of the sanctum.

The women make their way with their pūjā platters from their homes to the Ambikā temple. Inside, all the activity takes place on the left side of the temple. Dressed in their finest clothes, the women feed, ornament, and dress the goddess Śītalā. When I visited in 2002, the actual figure was missing since it had been stolen along with the main icon in 2000. Still, the women continued to anoint the stone throne that once framed the goddess. They lent the same attentions as when an icon was present, even though form had become formless as a result of violence. During the installation of a new icon in May of 2002, a second new icon representing Śītalā was installed into the frame of a stolen tenth-century goddess sculpture once placed in the southern niche inside the *maṇḍapa* and worshipped as Śītalā. Once the women had worshipped the niche, they placed a few grains on the threshold where the goddess had been. Then after a quick stop at the Gaṇēśa on the opposite side of the shrine, the women headed toward the small Cāmuṇḍā shrine outside the temple. They drew auspicious *svastika* symbols in vermilion dripping like blood on the shrine's threshold. At a spot on the earth between the Ambikā temple and the Cāmuṇḍā shrine the women put their dough ornaments on the earth along with yogurt and then went home to rest.

Later, under the pīpal tree, the women gathered, and the elderly among them told stories. They explained why only cold things are eaten on the day of the small-pox goddess: in order to cool off fever. One story was about how the goddess has a different name in every house but is actually the same goddess. Other stories had to do with water and bread, kings and Brahmans, caste and vows. At the end of each story the listeners would throw grains of corn onto the base of the tree with an emphatic "Hey Ram, Hey Bhagawan." The pīpal tree had a series of ten-dot red vermilion clusters on the trunk and a sacred lamp burning inside near its roots. This aspect of the pan-Indian smallpox holiday very closely mirrors Daśamātāpūjā.

Daśamātāpūjā is a localized vernacular holiday popular in Mewār.[24] On the Sunday after Śītalā-saptamī, Daśamātāpūjā is honored with stories and pūjā platters. The worship is much like the Śītalā-saptamī worship except the ritual and storytelling all take place under the pīpal tree.[25] The women pour water on the tree, lay ornaments on the roots, and dress the trunk in red cloth and string as clothing and the necklace of a married woman (fig. 6.10). Then the women go to a stone surface and make oil lamps from the bread-dough ornaments.[26] They worship little stones

FIGURE 6.10. Women pour water on the tree, lay ornaments on the roots, and dress the trunk in red cloth and string as clothing and the necklace of a married woman. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 6.11. Śītalā worship in side niche of Ambikā temple, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

as goddess incarnations. The women burn large amounts of incense, turning the air into "Havai Śakti," a powerful goddess atmosphere. Friends and neighbors tell stories and gossip as they encircle the pīpal tree with long white string. The ten stories of Daśa (from the root "ten") Mātā are told. At the conclusion the women throw the rest of their grains into the base of the tree and pour vermilion onto the trunk. The result is a bloody-looking cluster of ungerminated seeds lying at the base of the tree where the roots meet the trunk. This is clearly a visual metaphor of gestation and fertility. The number ten in Daśamātā and her ten stories may well refer to the lunar gestation cycle of forty weeks divided by ten menstrual months.

Ironically, in a society where women's inherent reproductive power remains in worship, real women do almost all the work and are devalued. Men are pūjāris and *bhopas*. Women become possessed, make pūjā trays of food and offerings, and tell stories. Men receive offerings in the name of the goddess and distribute food as prasād to men and women. On Śītalā-saptamī, the women worship Śītalā in the *maṇḍapa*, to the left of the entrance in her side niche (fig. 6.11), whereas only one male is present. The priest worships at the temple sanctum alone. Both Śītalā-saptamī and Daśamātāpūjā are women's holidays, where women perform worship for female deities. The temple space, controlled by men (be that the ASI, the local shaman, or a king), would not be consecrated for this type of worship. Past worship that evokes fertility and blood so explicitly was perhaps not seen as pure enough for temple precincts. And while animal sacrifice involves the ritual letting of blood, the blood is not brought inside the temple.

GOAT SACRIFICE FOR THE GODDESS: RITUAL AND MYTH BETWEEN MALLAR MĀTĀ AND HER SISTER AMBĀ MĀTĀ

More than the articulation of hierarchies, gender divisions characterize ritual performance in Chhapa. Men have historically controlled temple celebrations, whereas ancient women's folk festivals for the goddess often take place under trees. In the temple, in the home, and under the tree, ritual is often directly imported from one location to another. Many of the folk traditions of tree worship produced and enjoyed by women have begun to move into the temple compound. During the last quarter of the twentieth century the temple served as a site of affirmation, not only for a variety of castes but also for women who took their ancient rituals into the archaeological compound. Both Śītalā-saptamī and Navratri (the nine nights of the goddess) are celebrated in parallel by Rājputs and by Meenas and Bhils, among others. Meena and Bhil concern for basic survival with few resources informs their practice, whereas Rājputs concentrate on reifying their power in a period when they no longer govern. Whether performed by Meenas and Bhils or by Rājputs, all of the rituals make use of visual metaphors to create cycles of action.

FIGURE 6.12. New goddess
icon, installed May 2002, Ambikā
temple, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

The Ambikā temple is not only the source of much of the ritual activity; it also mirrors much of the ritual in its stone iconography.

At Jagat, activity in the archaeological compound in the 1950s faded from the record in the 1960s. When R. C. Agrawala "discovered" the temple, in the archaeological sense of the term, an unpublished image graced the main sanctum.[27] Since then, more than one icon has been consecrated and then stolen from the sanctum; the most recent was installed in May of 2002 and remained as of the spring of 2009 (fig. 6.12). Several other ancient sites in the region have also undergone significant shifts in use, changing from archaeologically "protected" ruins to local centers of ritual for the people living near the sites.[28]

Two temples and one shrine house Hindu goddesses in worship at Jagat. A modern folk temple on the hilltop shelters Mallar Mātā (fig. 6.13). Within an archaeological compound administered by the Rājāsthan State Archaeological Survey, the tenth-century Ambikā temple enshrines a sculpture from 2002, and a renovated side shrine houses an ancient schist Cāmuṇḍā sculpture (fig. 6.14). Several ancient stone fragments have been carried up the hill and installed along the left wall of the Mallar Mātā temple (fig. 6.15). Meanwhile, over the course of the 1990s, several folk practices such as possession and healing by shamans have been carried down the hill and through the gates of the archaeological compound. Within the

FIGURE 6.13. Bus-stand portrait of Mallar Mātā, Mallar Mātā hilltop shrine, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 6.14. Cāmuṇḍā, c. 960, Ambikā temple compound, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 6.15. Fragments from Ambikā temple complex, c. 960, Jagat (now housed in the Mallar Mātā hilltop shrine). © Deborah Stein.

FIGURE 6.16. Tenth-century stone Cāmuṇḍā on the exterior wall of the Ambikā temple. © Deborah Stein.

compound at Jagat the renovation of Cāmuṇḍā's side shrine involved the addition of a neo-*phāṃsanā* roof.[29] This *phāṃsanā-kūṭa* structure, which houses Mallar Mātā's sister, Cāmuṇḍā, suggests the importance of this goddess's healing power.[30] This tenth-century schist sculpture physically resembles Mallar Mātā because of the buildup of ritual residue such as ghee, vermilion, and foil.

A tenth-century stone Cāmuṇḍā found on the southern exterior wall of maṇḍapa of the Ambikā temple physically resembles the schist icon of Cāmuṇḍā, in form if not in medium (fig. 6.16). The difference in materials suggests that the schist Cāmuṇḍā may have been intended for inside use as an icon (see fig. 6.14). Mallar Mātā, in turn, seems to date at least to the tenth century and is also made of black schist (see fig. 6.13). Size and medium suggest that Mallar Mātā and Cāmuṇḍā may have originally belonged to a set of *yoginīs* or *mātṛkās* (divine mothers). In contrast, Mallar Mātā's sister, Ambā Mātā, may never have been included in this set. The size of the *parikara* (icon frame) alone precludes the possibility (see fig. 6.12).

Where practice and aesthetics may flow freely between the Mallar Mātā temple and the Ambikā temple compound, folk religion and sacrifice are privileged

at the hilltop temple, and iconography and archaeology are given more weight within the ancient archaeological compound. There is an interesting exchange of both sculpture and practice between the old and the new. The result is a historical museum-quality collection of sculpture in the hilltop folk shrine and a flourishing folk religion within the archaeological compound. Ambā Mātā, the sister who inhabits the archaeological compound, is called by her pan-Indian name, referencing the sixth-century *Devī Māhātmya*, whereas her hilltop sibling, Mallar Mātā, goes by her local Mewāri name. Cāmuṇḍā, who presides over folk practices such as possession and divination within the archaeological compound, retains her pan-Indian Sanskritic name.

Ritual has traveled from the folk shrine down the hill into the archaeological compound. Ritual in turn creates a desire for the numinous objects that the archaeological site offers. Caste plays a vital role in who attends and performs rituals at each site. The royal caste of Rājputs controls the ritual at the archaeological site through patronage, whereas low-caste Meenas perform the ritual at the hilltop shrine. Although Rājputs sponsored the installation of a new deity in the ancient temple, Meenas and many other groups of people control the ritual at the archaeological site through praxis. As ritual seeps down the mountain, the field of devotees widens to include pilgrims from other villages in the region. The recording *Jagat Mātā Kaṭhā: The Story of Mother Jagat*, available at the bus stand on cassette tape, combines local oral history and inscriptional evidence from the ancient Ambikā temple to situate the goddess geographically and to establish her relationships with such neighboring deities as Jāwar Mātā. When Jāwar Mātā's devotees listen to the cassette, they are motivated to visit Jāwar Mātā's sister in Jagat.[31]

Blood sacrifice offers male Rājputs an opportunity to temporarily seize feminine powers during the festival of the nine nights of the goddess, called Navratri. Sacrifice has often been understood in terms of a theory of exchange. At Jagat, sacrifice does include elements of exchange; however, sacrifice at Jagat serves primarily as a visual metaphor. Both daily and holiday ritual are occasions for animal sacrifice, a visual explanation of the relationship between a living being and its essence, soul, or lifeblood. Sacrifice has been understood previously as a piece of a god to be consumed, as a gift, or as the act of consecration.[32] Sacrifice is a manner of exchanging blood between god and man.[33] Most theory describing sacrifice is only liturgy-based and does not pay enough attention to practice. The form of animal sacrifice conducted at Jagat has little to do with purity or mantras. These blood sacrifices are nonlinguistic and are performed by low-caste men who are not clergy. The decapitation of the sacrificed animal creates visual effects captured in the stone iconography of the Ambikā temple.

Sacrifice can be understood as the performance of iconography. Iconography, in turn, can be understood as a record of ritual. Goat sacrifice in 2002 visually manifested life leaving the animal body. Each pūjā service at the Mallar Mātā temple inevitably included at least one goat sacrifice in which the animal was butchered

FIGURE 6.17. Sacrificed goat, winter 2002, Mallar Mātā shrine.
© Deborah Stein.

and distributed as *prasād* among the clan who killed it (fig. 6.17). The somewhat precarious location of this mountaintop shrine makes it an ideal site for a practice illegal since the 1970s. Since the temple is very secluded, sacrifice need not be a hasty, clandestine affair, as it is at the ancient Ambikā temple or the neighboring Jāwar Mātā temple near the Jāwar mines.

Only in death can males control lifeblood. Through sacrifice men create a visual demonstration of the separation of life from the body by draining blood from an animal. In ritual men perform this function, but in myth the goddess drains the blood. The goddess is a liminal figure between the generative powers of menstrual blood and the destructive powers of sacrifice. In the myth of the goddess Devī Māhātmya, perhaps the liminal position of goddesses makes Devī Māhātmya the only candidate to kill the demons. The male deities lend her their weapons for the occasion, transforming the goddess into the supreme sacrificer. As warriors and hunters, Rājput males have long relied on goddesses' powers for victory. These gender differences are highlighted by ritual.

After a typical *arthi* ceremony, consisting of darśan, possession, and fortune-telling, many women leave by going down a path behind the sanctum different from the path on which they arrived. Male devotees gather at the back of the *maṇḍapa* with their backs to the *garbhagṛha*. Some stand in front of the temple, close to the small patch of earth at the edge of the mountain. The male family members who have brought their goat hold down the increasingly hysterical animal while a young man unsheathes a sword from its pink velvet case. A young family member raises the sword high above his head and lops off the goat's head in one fell swoop. The ears of the goat's head flop, and its tongue wiggles back and forth. Its body shakes as blood squirts out of its severed neck and is swallowed

FIGURE 6.18. *Paddhi* channel planted around the temporary
pratiṣṭhā pavilion, sprouting midfestival, and vermilion footprints
leading into the pavilion after one-week festival, May 2002, Jagat.
© Deborah Stein.

thirstily by the hot dry earth. During these liminal moments between life and
death, hot vapors travel visibly up toward the sky. When the body stops moving,
devotees begin to descend the mountain while the relatives butcher the meat. The
animal is now *prasād*, or the remains of whatever the heavens have consumed as
seen in the rising vapors. In this leftover capacity the goat not only provides rare
sustenance to the extended family who purchased it, but it also affords those who
may not have even been present to partake of the same food as the divine.

Just after the goat is slaughtered, the body lies in a position similar to the stone
iconography of the slain buffalo demon. Perhaps the ancient artists' technique
was taken more from life than previously imagined. The iconography suggests
the integration and sublimation of folk practices, such as animal sacrifice rather
than fire sacrifice, into the mainstream classical religion over time. Paintings of
Navratri in the collection of the Palace Museum of Mewār show royal celebrations
of the killing of the buffalo demon by the goddess. This festival always involved
the sacrifice of a live buffalo by the mahārāṇā. In addition to being an interesting
documentation of ritual as early as the eighteenth century, these painted depic-
tions of sacrifice display the form of the dead sacrificial victim—the same as the
classical iconography.

Navratri is an example of a pan-Indian holiday celebrated in a modern way at
an archaeological site. The Gujarati *garbha*, a circle dance with sticks, was never
danced within the archaeological compound even though Navratri has prob-
ably existed from the tenth century, when the Ambikā temple was built. Many
modern forms of worship represent a visual rupture from traditional uses of this

FIGURE 6.19. *Pūrṇaghata* motif next to woman with overflowing pot on her head, May 2002, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

temple, with the exception of the pots of sprouting *paddhi* grown over the nine nights of Navratri and thrown into water on the tenth day (fig. 6.18). These pots are probably an ancient form of worship, as is reflected in the *purna ghaṭa* (over-flowing pot) motif commonly seen on ancient stone temples and on the Ambikā temple (fig. 6.19).

Hindus in Jagat celebrate the nine nights of the goddess in different ways. Public celebrations vary from brightly lit nocturnal electric *pūjās* in the temple courtyards to virgin girls carrying germinating sprouts on their heads, to sacrificing animals. Private observances include fasting, vows, and rituals conducted at family *kūldevī* shrines. The consumption of alcohol, meditation, or trance may also form a part of private practice. Navratri draws various overlapping audiences to a wide variety of rituals that unfold over a ten-day period, ending with Dusserah, the celebration of the defeat of the demon Ravana.

The public dancing of *garbha* has only taken hold in Rājāsthan over the past decade. *Garbha* is an example of technology's role in globalization. The introduction of cassette music has metamorphosed the celebration of Navratri by taking a Gujarati folk dance and making it a pan-Indian passion.[34] Every village and city neighborhood sponsors its own *garbha* celebration. Electric lights are strung,

FIGURE 6.20. Children enjoying *garbha* dancing, Jagat, 2002. © Deborah Stein.

perishable icons of the Durgā are ensconced in niches, powdered colors are used to draw images of Durgā, and auspicious pots of plenty are filled with a coconut and placed on the altar. Then, whether in the tiny village of Unwās or the neighborhoods of Udaipur, the blaring music of the same cassette rings forth and everyone joins in the circle dancing until the wee hours of the morning. At Unwās I was told as recently as the early 1990s the *garbha* was performed. This new pan-Indian fashion had replaced *kaṭhā* (storytelling). The villagers of Unwās used to gather and listen to a storyteller recount the *Devī Māhātmya*, the story of Durgā's cosmic battle.[35] *Garbha* has taken over and is much touted by young people, as seen in figure 6.20, an image of children dancing in Jagat. This is an example of how technology has changed local alliances into nationwide affiliations. Even though the children of Unwās or Jagat may never have been to Udaipur, they are connected to children everywhere by dancing *garbha* like everyone else. While some ethnologists and folklorists may lament the dying of local rituals, *garbha* represents the spreading and sharing of a Gujarati folk dance, not an international import.

Two *garbha* dances take place in Jagat: one Rājput celebration takes place within the archaeological compound of the Ambikā temple while the other Meena festivities unfold at the temporary shrine near the bus stand. On this first night of Navratri the Rājput dance was somewhat deserted, whereas the Meena event was quite popular. Both dance their Rājāsthani *garbha* the same way, a fun-loving, if not fully perfected, tribute to the Gujarati original. Both *garbhas* play the same

FIGURE 6.21. "Portrait" of the goddess Ambā Mātā (Girl possessed by Ambā Mātā), Ambikā temple, spring 2002. © Deborah Stein.

cassette as heard at Ekliṅgjī, at Unwās, at Jāwar, and in Udaipur. Both play the cassette at the same intensely loud volumes resounding in the night throughout Mewār. At Jāwar Mātā's temple elderly women sing high-pitched *bhajans* while *garbha* music blares in the courtyard. Old and young, oblivious to each other just yards away, sing to the goddess in the name of two social orders, which are really just two manifestations of the same desire to gather among friends, family, and neighborhoods during the night, as weather cools and the workload is reduced because of the season.

Toward the end of Navratri the pots of *paddhi* begin to sprout. At Ekliṅgjī, at Jāwar, and at the Ambikā temple the pot of germinating sprouts grows hidden at the side of the *garbhagṛha*. In private shrines sprouts are also made to grow. When they are fully grown on Dusserah, the tenth day of the celebration, the *paddhi* is taken on a procession through the village. Unmarried girls carry pots of water on their head. The water splashes and spills due to their possessed undulations (fig. 6.21). Meanwhile the Meenas, on what they counted as the ninth day, held a pūjā at their temporary shrine.[36] Surprisingly, it was Pundit Purohit, also used by the ruling thakur of Jagat, and not the set of Gujarati priests who conducted the
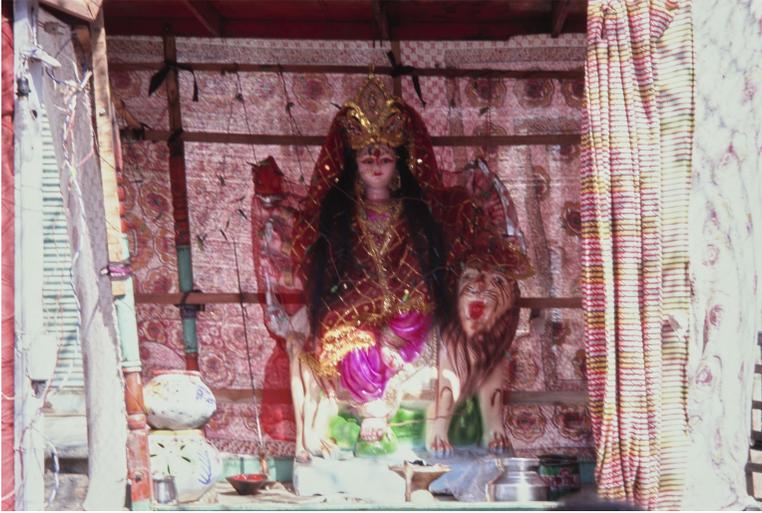
FIGURE 6.22. Plastic Meena goddess, later drowned in the well, May 2002, Jagat.
© Deborah Stein.

majority of the rites, who was reading for them. He told me the *mandalas* were exactly the same and that he never understood the content of the Sanskrit he read. The next day, on the last day of the festival called Dusserah, the plastic goddess is drowned in the local well (fig. 6.22). Whereas the germinating powers of the goddess, expressed in the sprouting *paddhi*, remain an integral part of the celebrations, the reenactment of her sacrifices in battle are waning.

The autumnal celebration of Navratri in October of 2002 did not yield the buffalo sacrifice I had been told to expect within the archaeological compound of the Ambikā temple. Instead, a goat was hastily brought covertly one morning during the nine-day festival when no one was around. Two men quickly severed the head of the unsuspecting goat, which was in the shadow of the Ambikā temple, on the grass between the temple and the Cāmuṇḍā shrine, out of view of passersby. The men quickly grabbed the head and went to offer it to Cāmuṇḍā in front of her shrine, and they drank some of the blood poured in a little bowl for her. Then they hurriedly brought the dead goat around to the back of the temple, even further from casual view, and proceeded to butcher it in the corner of the complex, just under the archaeological attendant's house. The parts were whisked away just as quickly as the goat had appeared, and soon it was almost as if nothing had ever happened.[37]

Even more elusive was the buffalo that never appeared. Every year a diverse committee of people pool their funds to purchase a buffalo for sacrifice at Jagat. In 2002 the official calendar condensed two days of Navratri into one. As I have mentioned, while the Rājputs were following the calendar, the Meenas and Bhils were

FIGURE 6.23. Human form crawls up from the severed neck of the buffalo demon's body, just as the goddess confidently and easily sinks her trident into the sacrificial animal's back, her foot triumphantly poised on his lower back, while her lion vehicle chomps eagerly into the flank. Tenth-century iconography, Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī, c. 961 CE, quartzite Ambikā temple, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

counting their days according to the sun. Owing to the calendar confusion that year, the buffalo was not sacrificed on the tenth day since it was also the inauspicious eleventh day, according to the Meenas and Bhils. A tailor who was collecting the funds in the neighboring village had told me the sacrifice would take place the following Sunday, but it never materialized until finally it would have to wait for the next year. In this seventh year of drought, no one could afford to sacrifice a buffalo, but they refused to admit that the yearly tradition could not take place. Earlier that year the new goddess had been installed, so perhaps all the funds had gone to the costly consecration ceremonies.

The buffalo sacrifice would have transpired somewhat similarly to the clandestine goat sacrifice and would have resulted in a scene mirroring that on the walls of the Ambikā temple at Jagat, that of the Mahiṣāsuramardinī sculpture of the goddess vanquishing the buffalo demon. When the ritual event is commemorated in two-dimensional paintings such as those depicting the mahārāṇā sacrificing the buffalo during Navratri, the line between ritual and iconography is blurred. There, the historically recorded ritual performance looks much like the stone iconography of the Devī Māhātmya myths.

The relationship between myth and ritual can be used to describe the similarities and differences between the stone image and the sacrificial act. The stone image captures a mythical moment when the demon is slain. This moment is reenacted through animal sacrifice. The makers of the stone image may have relied on their contemporaneous visual exposure to ritual. Thus, the stone image ends up looking like the ritual reenacting the myth, in contrast to the conventional consensus that myth precedes ritual. The demon is located in human form, spurting from the neck of the sculpture and in the blood spilled from the real animal's neck (fig. 6.23). This "animal liquor" is sometimes consumed after the sacrifice.[38]

In the iconography of the goddess killing the buffalo demon, the demon springs forth from the severed neck. Blood drains and vapors rise from the neck. The physical movement of liquid and vapor provide physical visual depictions of an inner life, spirit, or soul—ideas that may otherwise sound quite metaphysical. This literal depiction of what is inside the body relies heavily on the senses and does not require any metaphoric leaps of faith or complicated canonical explanations. This nontextual form of revelation points to an ancient practice firmly rooted in oral tradition.

CONCLUSION

The masses of people who attend the fairs and festivals in southern Rājāsthan may barely cast a glance at the deities housed in temples. The marketplace often takes over as a space of display and exchange. The fairs and festivals reflect the changing seasons, and their success is often linked to the success or impending desperation of a particular season's economy or weather. Temples have served as catalysts for

FIGURE 6.24. Original Śītalā icon, broken from her frame, covered in dots of *sindūr*. Note that the figural icon (to the right) and the "empty" space she once inhabited are filled with these indexical traces of people's prayers. Photo taken prior to *pratiṣṭhā* ceremonies in May 2002. © Deborah Stein.

commercial activities for thousands of years; however, the historicity of their present use reflects the recent explosion of a global market economy and the inequities that ensue.

In Jagat, Meenas and Bhils, who worship primarily at the Mallar Mātā temple, have carefully dragged most of the important sculpture from the Ambikā temple up the mountain to their shrine. These pieces form a sort of *dharmic* museum, or religious collection, which lends a numinous aura of historic authority to the folk faith followed there. At the same time, this protects their deities from thieves, who could never get the pieces of stone and themselves down the mountain without enraging everyone or simply plunging to their deaths. Even so, this collection does not inherit the slightest colonial notion of preserving patrimony. Most of the faces of deities, even the tiny heads of framing deities, eventually succumb to enormous amounts of lovingly applied *sindūr* powder and colorful foil (fig. 6.24). While this technique of honoring a deity is well suited to stones under trees, it is somewhat ill adapted for finely carved medieval sculpture. Special treatment actually protects the images much more than if they were left at the site to be broken and carried away, or even if they were put in museums, where their "preservation" would be accomplished only at the expense of their original context.

Jagat's inhabitants redefine the distinction between temple and museum to claim the buildings and sculpture of their ancestors as their own and not something to be delocalized in the hands of the nation-state. At Ekliṅgjī, the continuity of practice in the sixteenth-century Śri Ekliṅgjī temple has been stretched to

include reinstating the one-thousand-year-old Lakulīśa temple. This administrative, legal, and literal co-opting of archaeological space from the nation follows a long feudal tradition in Mewār of maintaining regional independence in spite of empire or state. Although the uses of these archaeological sites are often new inventions not based on ancient history, the sites have always served as places to stage political power and to define identity.