Temple as Catalyst

Renovation and Religious Merit in the Field

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

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

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

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

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

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

EKLIŃGJĪ'S GATES

Historical definitions of repair found in inscriptions reveal the amount of physical change and new building considered to be a renovation and not something entirely new. In 1489 CE, Mahārāṇā Raimal repaired the Śri Eklińgjī temple and made land grants.[10] Buildings in the Nāgadā-Kailāśpurī region had been largely destroyed when the Guhila dynasty was taking refuge at Kumbhalgarh in the preceding century (fig. 2.1). Mahārāṇā Raimal's inscription suggests that "repairs" often meant completely rebuilding on a sacred site. The Śri Eklińgjī temple dates
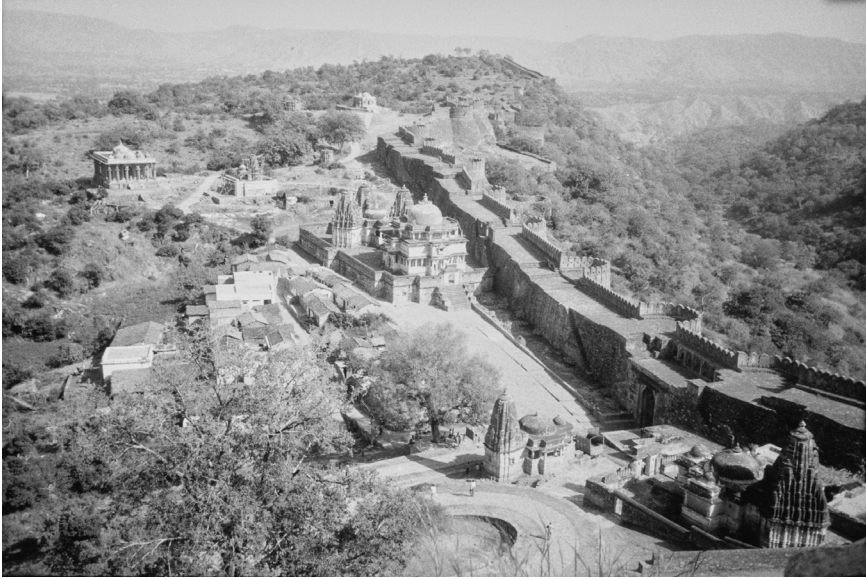
FIGURE 2.1. Kumbhalgarh fortress. © Deborah Stein.

to his era (see fig. 0.2). The icon of the god Śri Ekliṅgjī might even date to his time, even though the four-faced black stone is considered to be a self-revelatory "*svayambu*" icon that had been taken to Ekliṅgjī by Bappa Rāwal. Verse 90 of Mahārāṇā Raimal's inscription reads:

> That which is eternal can never be an object of creation, that which is boundless can never have limit, and that which is *Çtmanipada* [confined to one's self] can never be *Parasmaipada* [transferred to another]; but king Śri Rajamalla does make extensive gifts of gold, does encompass all religion, and allows all to stand free and happy.[11]

This verse is rather vague: it does not make explicit the exact object and architecture being donated. It could be a subtle way of referring to the installation of a new icon without negating the eternal existence of Śri Ekliṅgjī and his abode. At the Ambikā temple in Jagat there are no inscriptions referring to the donation of the goddess Ambikā, even though more than one icon has graced the main niche over the past forty years. The lack of precise written records when a new icon was installed comes as no surprise, since to mark a beginning for an icon is to take away its eternity and, hence, its divinity.

Although ancient renovations enjoy a certain romantic authenticity, modern renovations are often dismissed as garish intrusions. The Ekliṅgjī temple complex has witnessed a long history of preservation under various mahārāṇās, whether under Kumbhā and Raimal in the fifteenth century or under Śri Arvind Singh

FIGURE 2.2. Rampart, fifteenth century, Ekliṅgjī. © Deborah Stein.

and his father in the twentieth century. But the preservation efforts of these kings differ from those of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). For the mahārāṇās, preservation has often not been far from creation. Mokal added a rampart to the complex, whereas Raimal may have replaced the icon itself (fig. 2.2). These innovations are now ancient history. There is little difference between the authenticity of the tenth-century Lakulīśa shrine as a historical site (see fig. 1.1) and the authenticity of the fifteenth-century Śri Ekliṅgjī temple (see fig. 0.2). But if we turn to some of the renovations in plaster and concrete on temple roofs throughout the complex (see fig. 0.7), or to the row of shrines to the left of the main entrance, some may argue these newer repairs detract from the authenticity of the archaeological site. The newer renovations lack the period integrity of the tenth-century Lakulīśa shrine and the fifteenth-century Śri Ekliṅgjī temple.

Regal renovations at a site like Ekliṅgjī may produce intense aesthetic shifts; however, the spirit of housing a living being—understood to be the ruler of Mewār—suggests an alternative form of continuity. Like the mahārāṇās of Mewār, the ASI also repairs and occasionally restores archaeological sites. In some ways the ASI is more or less forthright about its projects. It often attempts to perfectly maintain the color and texture of the ancient stone, making it quite difficult to distinguish from the original structure. This creates a visual harmony that is historically discordant. In contrast, mahārāṇās visually delineate and make repair records of the changes they make to the site. Although the regal renovations may

be less aesthetically harmonious, to a large degree they better preserve the meaning of the site as the valued home of a divine ruler. The combination of innovation and creation thus serves as a type of preservation since it maintains the home of a living deity. Whether maintained by the mahārāṇās in the name of family prestige, or by the state in terms of historical patrimony, it is a fantasy to imagine that this form of renovation preserves the past exactly as it was.

Alternately interpreted as either revivalism or ritual continuity, descriptions of worship in inscriptions seem strikingly similar to rituals in the twenty-first century. The *Cintra Praṣāsti* inscription commemorates the consecration of a five-headed Śiva liṅgaṃ on Monday, January 20, 1287, in the Late country (Gujarat).[12] This inscription is a very important document for the Pāśupata sect since it mentions Bhattaraka-Śri-Lakulīśa, who dwelt in Karohana (Karvana, central Gujarat), and lists his disciples.[13] Moreover, verses 47–72 describe the money allotted for various aspects of temple ritual: The gods were cleansed daily. They were fed and dressed with sandalwood. They were offered two hundred white roses and two thousand oleander blossoms. They were provided betel nuts and incense. The Pāśupata fetched offerings and performed worship. The God received rice and ghee cooked by the pupil. Verse 67 mentions Śivratri when betel nuts and leaves are procured along with garlands, coconuts. The temples and deities are worshipped, and all is repaired.[14]

Several aspects of Pāśupata ritual in the thirteenth century resonate with the daily pūjā performed for Śri Ekliṅgjī. Five centuries before a mural of the Mali gardener-caste women selling flowers was painted in the eighteenth-century monastery at Ekliṅgjī, we find a reference to thousands of blossoms used in worship. No reference is made to the labor behind procuring those blossoms, but the history of the god is a history of his ritual—and a history of his ritual is a history of those who perform it and of those who supply the performers. The *Cintra Praṣāsti* inscription also mentions the festival of Mahāśivrātri, which is still observed at the Śri Ekliṅgjī temple in the twenty-first century. Performed throughout the night, this special set of pūjās was already the main Pāśupata ritual of the year in the thirteenth century. Besides the worship of temples and deities, the prominent feature was repair. Part of thirteenth-century pious practice was to maintain and repair holy sites and their icons.

While the value of repair has remained constant over time, the definition of repair has changed. In the fifteenth century at Ekliṅgjī, repair meant reconstruction at a site that had been destroyed and neglected while the dynasty was in exile for years. During the centuries when the Ekliṅgjī temple complex could not be actively maintained, there is no record of a functioning monastery or of any ritual such as Mahāśivrātri. But the mention of Mahāśivrātri in the *Cintra Praṣāsti* inscription suggests the observance itself is quite old. A pilgrimage made by a Pāśupata disciple described in the inscription took him to the Himalayas, to Allahabad, to Rewa, and to the Narmada. No mention is made of Ekliṅgjī, which would certainly

have been on the way.[15] So while Pāśupata observation of Mahāśivrātri rituals dates to the thirteenth century, and the importance of repair dates at least to that era as well, we do not have any exact records of ritual and renovation in the thirteenth century at Ekliṅgjī. Raimal's inscription suggests heavy rebuilding in the fifteenth century, after a period of dormancy at Ekliṅgjī. Dormancy and rupture do not negate any claim of ritual continuity. The site was repaired according to *dharma* (kingly duty), and then put back into worship. The vestiges of the Pāśupata ritual conducted at the site in the twenty-first century seem to reflect forms of Pāśupata ritual already practiced just south of Ekliṅgjī in the Lata region (modern-day Gujarat) as of the thirteenth century. Although the rhetoric of perfect, unbroken continuity is often subject to debate regarding ownership by the state of Rājāsthan, or by the Śri Ekliṅgjī Religious Trust, a looser interpretation suggests continuity in the political and religious motivation of the mahārāṇās.

Ironically, the fifteenth-century temple and deity that are the focus of most worship at Ekliṅgjī today are located in the lower part of the complex open to the public, whereas the tenth-century Lakulīśa temple mentioned in previous chapters has been jealously guarded in recent decades. It is via this upper archaeological level of the Ekliṅgjī complex that the mahārāṇā exercises his exclusive right to worship Lakulīśa, the founder of Pāśupata-Śaivism. One might imagine that the lower level in active ritual use would be the focus of the religious trust's attention, whereas the upper level—with ruined ancient temples, tenth-century architecture, and a tenth-century historical inscription—would be left to the administration of the ASI, as it was thirty years ago. And yet it is archaeology at the heart of twenty-first-century kingship. This upper level is where the mahārāṇā takes private darśan from Lakulīśa, a large black schist icon of the patron saint of Pāśupata-Śaivism. No one may photograph this deity or any other deity in the complex. The public is denied access to the upper area, which previously was administered by the ASI.

A photo in the archive of the ASI in New Delhi shows the entire site under ASI control as of 1965 (see fig. 0.3). This image of Śri Ekliṅgjī himself reveals two things: the site was used for worship then, as it continues to be in the twenty-first century, and the ASI was able to take a photo of the main deity, as is no longer possible today. Only on the mahārāṇā's death in the early 1980s did the site fall into a religious trust and become the subject of fierce debate over who held the rights to ownership. The future of Śri Ekliṅgjī and his temple then became a dispute about historicity, authenticity, continuity, and rupture.

By constructing the site as an unbroken Guhila link with the past, the mahārāṇās of Mewār claim to own the right to administer the site. In contrast, if the site is being reinvented—with building projects and forms of worship that did not take place under recent ancestors—then perhaps, according to the state, the historical evidence of a greater India is being erased by the present. This tension between preservation and creation often lacks even the clarity of the Ekliṅgjī debate. At many sites in southern Rājāsthan, such as the Ambikā temple complex in Jagat,

state-owned temples are neglected because of scarce resources. Locals then fill the vacuum to renovate the temples as they see fit—as living sites of veneration.

PRATIṢṬHĀ: GODDESS INSTALLATION IN JAGAT

Whereas silver and marble make palatable the negotiation of authentic renovations at Ekliṅgjī, renovation at the Ambikā temple in Jagat raises a question: consecration or desecration? Early inscriptions suggest that the same claim to historic authenticity found in renovations at Ekliṅgjī can be made even more compellingly at Jagat. The shadow of poverty heightens the contrast when new metallic paint—distasteful to the scholarly elite—replaces expensive silver, only a few hundred years old itself. Would the goddess Ambikā judge the piety of her devotees based on whether they use real silver or metallic paint? On a column inside the Ambikā temple, the earliest inscription refers not to a dynasty but to a "renovator":

> In 955 CE at the Ambikā Devī temple, Valluk, the son of Sambapura, constructed a bridge. He came here every day to worship the goddess Ambikā. The renovator of the Baori, the well, the pond, the garden and the Roop Mandapa will get the blessings of the goddess on a par with the founder (responsible for the original construction of the temple).[16]

According to this inscription, easily read from the clear Kuṭila script that remains in situ, the one who renovated the site of the Ambikā temple in the mid-tenth century deserved equal religious merit to the one originally responsible for the temple's creation. This merit equation suggests those who renovate this same tenth-century temple in the twenty-first century deserve equal religious merit to those who originally constructed these archaeological sites. To earn merit on a par with the original builders, one might imagine that renovation may have included complete replacement with a "new" temple.

Why, then, did it come as such a shock to visitors in May of 2002 to find a sign painter from Jagat painting the inner sanctum of this ancient stone temple with metallic gold (see fig. 0.11), as part of an elaborate eight-day ceremony to install a new goddess icon replacing an ancient statue stolen in 2000? No, it is not legal, but why are we really so uncomfortable? On the one hand, this archaeological site is "protected" under the auspices of the Rājāsthan Archaeological Survey and Rājāsthan state law.[17] On the other hand, the sign painter and the village *thakur*, who sponsored his metallic painting, were renovating the temple as a way to honor the new icon of the goddess they were about to install. "Renovation" derives from "renew," to make new. Twenty-first-century renovations at Jagat left ritual residue for future generations.

The word "patrimony" raises interesting questions about who should have responsibility for a site like Jagat. In *Archive Fever* Jacques Derrida explains how

the process of creating an archive is somewhat akin to death.[18] In India the ASI created a taxonomy of two-dimensional photographs to permanently preserve India's patrimony. The photographs objectified and substituted for the actual buildings. The archive drew the life out of the buildings, transforming them into monuments. According to Derrida's Freudian argument, the death of the father allows for his immortality in memory. Thus, heritage as patrimony is appropriately named. Should the Ambikā temple be preserved as a memory for the future, or would its preservation condemn it to death? And, in turn, if renovation crosses the boundary into desecration, what kind of new life is the temple given?

By the nineteenth century, both in India and in the United States, many educated viewers of ancient Indian temples had inherited from John Ruskin a European notion of heritage based on the emergence of bourgeois leisure activities, such as tourism and museum-going.[19] The British created the ASI under this optic, and the preservation of archaeological sites all over the world continues under these assumptions. The transformation of ritual space into historical evidence usurps the agency of a site and its users.

The ASI included many Indian nationals in addition to the British, under whom its direction began. Unlike the World Heritage Site at Angkor, Cambodia, which was maintained by the French, after independence Indian nationals were able to take over the direction of the ASI in order to control the management and to publish research on their own heritage.[20] Indians already formed an integral part of the organization under British rule. After 1947 the ASI continued on the trajectory established by British ideas of preservation stemming from nineteenth-century notions of patrimony and empire.

In this vein R. C. Agrawala declared in his article entitled "Khajuraho of Rājāsthan: The Temple of Ambikā at Jagat": "This tenth-century edifice, dedicated to goddess Durgā-Mahiṣāsuramardinī, was first discovered by me on 22nd May 1956."[21] The title of the article referred to the most well-known tourist destination after the Taj Mahal. Khajurāho, an eleventh-century temple complex with many buildings covered in erotic sculpture, has sparked the imagination of many visitors and authors. Responses have ranged from an interest in ritual to ideas about architecture, to orientalist fantasies. Agrawala's article, published in *Arts Asiatiques* during a sabbatical year at the Museé Guimet in France, was clearly an attempt to put Jagat on the tourist map. Moreover, his introduction suggests the rhetoric of discovery typical of someone who has dedicated his life to research and the preservation of archaeology. As the Udaipur Archaeological Museum superintendent, Agrawala removed several important works of sculpture from Jagat to safeguard them in the museum. Taken out of their original context, the remains were saved from the rampant looting that has continued to take place at temples in southern Rājāsthan since his retirement.

A tribute to the benefits of the preservation model, Agrawala's research and dedication to the archaeology of southern Rājāsthan left behind some of the only

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

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

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

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

FIGURE 2.5. *Śubhamaṇḍapa*, archival photo (1950s), building foundation, c. eleventh century; brick layer, c. 1800s–1900s, Jagat. © Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). My sincere thanks to all of the ASI officers who worked together to efficiently provide me with copies of relevant photographs.

Preservation often left good records but rarely succeeded in maintaining archaeological material in situ. At Jagat, preservation involved the removal of material considered historically irrelevant. A photograph of the *śubhamaṇḍapa* (approximately fifty feet in front of the entrance to the Ambikā temple) taken in the 1950s by the ASI (fig. 2.5) reveals that the building originally had a second story of brick.[26] A stone staircase from the lower level of this structure leading up to what is now a roof indicates a second story was always an integral part of this structure; holes remaining in the stone suggest masonry to support it (fig. 2.6). The fate of this brick structure is unknown. Traces of white to the right of the portal in the photograph may indicate this structure was originally plastered or stuccoed by the ASI. The *śubhamaṇḍapa* suggests how preservation colors our understanding of a site's history. Although preservation implies permanence, sites do change during restoration. While archaeological sites may die as living monuments, they do not remain unchanged.

Periods of dormancy and renovation at Jagat are not limited to recent history. A three-hundred-year hiatus was followed by a flurry of inscriptions in the eighteenth century. These inscriptions refer to *yatras* (pilgrimages) made to Jagat and

FIGURE 2.6. *Śubhamaṇḍapa*, Jagat. Holes in the masonry suggest the second story may have originally been built of wood. © Deborah Stein.

reveal a diverse temple audience. Tours of 1744 indicate that royalty chose the site for pilgrimage and that Sunday was already an auspicious day for the goddess by the eighteenth century. Inscriptions of 1744 and 1745 commemorate the pilgrimage of architects belonging to the Sompurā and Nāgadā guilds. These guilds link this temple to an important set of Mewāri temples to the north. Pilgrimages were jointly recorded by several different castes, including Bhils and Meenas, and not just royalty. An inscription of 1792 lists the names of nine commoners, one of whom may have been a woman, Roopajaa. Renunciants, nobles, Bhils, women, and masons all wanted to leave their trace on the stone temple.

Like inscriptions, legal documents attest to the uses of temples. The Ambikā temple at Jagat falls under the jurisdiction of the Udaipur Archaeological Department. When the sanctum was painted gold, my field of inquiry turned to the archaeological department, where the only legal document in the museum dates to the colonial period. The Jaipur Ancient Monuments Act of 1941 makes two claims: (1) a place of worship must not be used for "any purpose inconsistent with its character"; and (2)

when a protected monument is used for religious worship, it should be protected from pollution or desecration.[27]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FIGURE 2.8. Perishable *maṇḍapa* built for the goddess installation in May 2002, Jagat. © Deborah Stein.

paralleled the form of a perishable maṇḍapa constructed for the new goddess installation at the Ambikā temple (fig. 2.8). Locals asserted their independence from any local, state, or national archaeological administration by staging this ceremony to direct the future of their patrimony.

The Hindu goddess Ambikā was installed just after violence broke out in Gujarat. Months of riots followed an attack at the Godhra railway station on February 27, 2002, that burned Hindu activists who were returning from a pilgrimage to Ayodhyā.[31] As the sacrificial fire burned in Jagat, the anguish had not been extinguished in neighboring Gujarat. Hundreds of Muslims were living in refugee camps, and the state government was doing little, even participating in the wave of unmitigated killing. In Rājāsthan the threat of violence forced Udaipur, the capital city of Mewār, to close for a seventy-two-hour curfew. Rājput boys in Jagat called on their warrior ancestry, hoping when they grew up either to run for political office or to fight the terrorists.[32] This anxious atmosphere may have contributed to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) victory in Rājāsthan, while the left-leaning Congress Party won the national election.

This branch of the Hindu right exercises a democratic rhetoric that shallowly masks complacency toward the violent pull of communalism in northern India. After the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque on December 6, 1992, the BJP's alliance with extreme groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the

Vishwa Hindu Parishad became more explicit.[33] Ten years later, in 2002, the same communal violence that began with the Hindu right's destruction of a mosque in Ayodhyā, the legendary birthplace of the Hindu hero Rama, continued with an attack of a train full of pilgrims returning from Ayodhyā to Gujarat. Approximately eight hundred Muslim deaths, out of one thousand total deaths, suggest that the rhetoric of revenge and parity was political rather than factual.

Ironically, the Ambikā temple did not see more use with a new icon. The first Navratri nine-day goddess holiday after the installation did not even include the usual buffalo sacrifice. The eight-day installation ceremony of May 2002 culminated in a final fire sacrifice on the last day and the actual placing of the image in the sanctum. Important Rājāsthani luminaries and people from villages around Jagat attended this ceremony. The prince of Jagat, who now runs a heritage hotel in Udaipur, and the Rājāsthan home minister were among the speakers at what appeared to be a right-wing BJP rally delivered to the locals attending the fire ceremony.

The focus of the goddess installation was anything but ritual for the majority of participants. A diagram of the social space of the ceremony reveals (1) ritual taking place between the Ambikā temple and the *śubhamaṇḍapa*, (2) a political rally for village men to the side of the *śubhamaṇḍapa*, (3) distribution of *prasād* to women and girls to the side of the temple, (4) a cluster of boys behind the women and men, and (5) the researcher on a (polluting) pile of shoes just outside the temporary maṇḍapa, where she had been given permission to film (fig. 2.9). Although men saw the ritual under the contemporary maṇḍapa, they clearly were listening to political speeches being broadcast in their midst. The women were chatting while nibbling *prasād* far from the ritual. Only those conducting the ritual paid attention.

The installation of a new icon restored the honor of a stolen goddess. Men and women who paid little attention to the installation ritual now use the temple, while Rājputs, priests, and politicians who were staging their power rarely or never return to the site. The quotidian and seasonal celebrations at the site remained completely unchanged by the presence of the new icon. In fact, if anything, the Ambikā temple seemed even less a focus of attention once the new icon was in place. The anticlimax satisfied the hope of reestablishing honor to a site marred by theft. Complacency replaced desire. The collection of money and power along with the ensuing enactment of the goddess installation answered a call to restore the honor of a stolen goddess. Once her honor was restored, her maintenance was turned back to the cluster of Bhil and Meena women who pray to her and to her hilltop sister, Mallar Mātā.

As an alternative to preservation, temple use protects the temple from death even though it cannot offer unbroken continuity. A romantic interpretation assumes that if local people control the thousand-year-old Ambikā temple, continuity is maintained—somehow they form an unbroken chain with the past. This

Ambika Temple Entry

Village Elders

P R I E S T S

Thakur & Wife

Fire Pit

Priest

Large Tent

Local Men from Jagat and surrounding villages

Me with a video camera and the Drummer (AV section?)

Subha-Mandapa

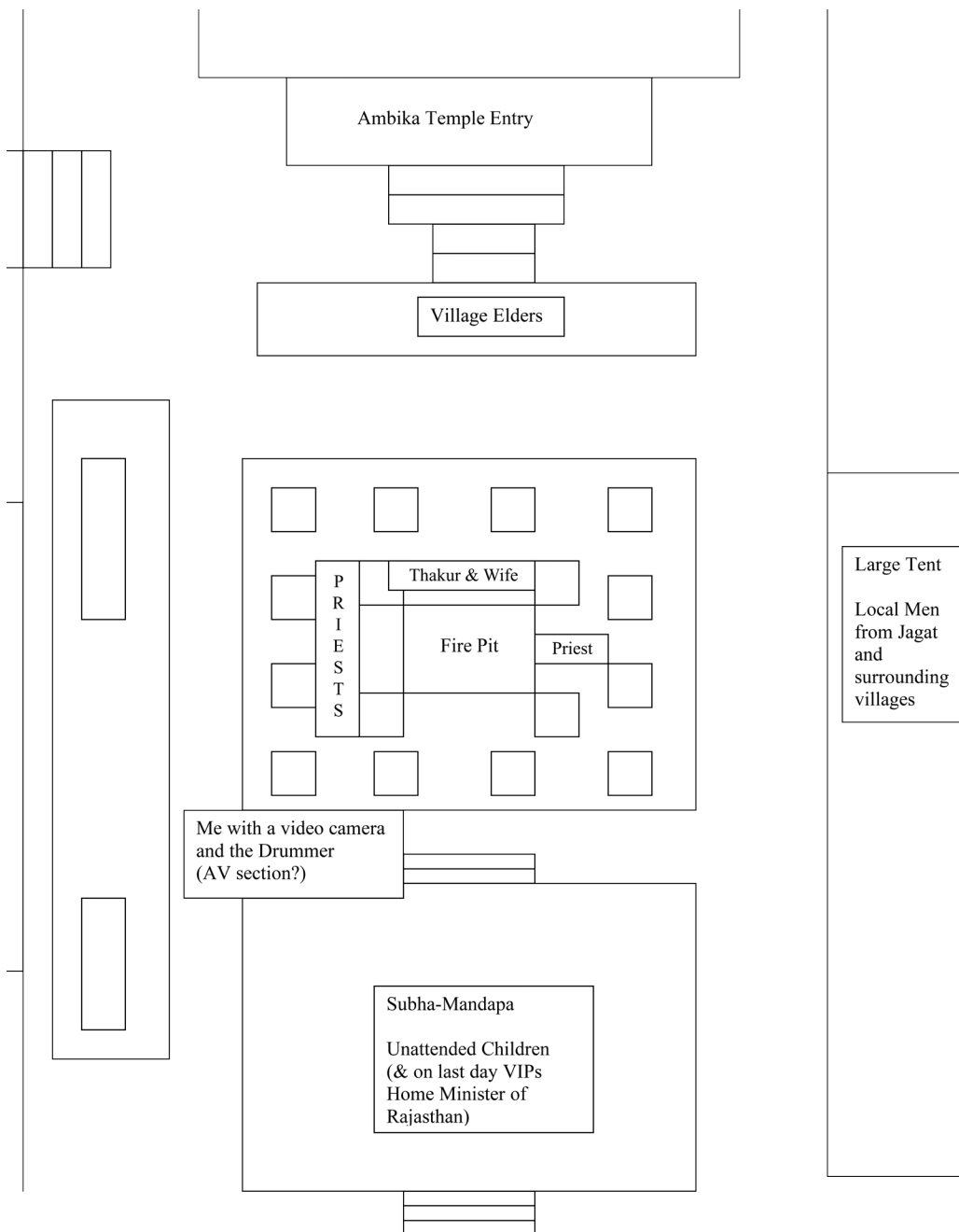Unattended Children (& on last day VIPs Home Minister of Rajasthan)

FIGURE 2.9. Diagram of the social space of the ceremony. © Deborah Stein.

myth bespeaks orientalist models that associate modernity with the West and timeless ahistorical eternity with the East. The Ambikā temple has not been in continuous use since its conception. Each new use is a construction of identity and history, an invention of the present and a creation of the future. Although use does not suggest continuity, this alternative to preservation refuses the Derridean death of relegating the temple to a historical monument. The current use of the Ambikā temple as a form of praxis is predicated on a model of the building as being alive.

CONCLUSION

As a catalyst for social interaction and praxis in the speech of human actions, the Ambikā temple establishes power. Nationalists inherit an orientalist model of timeless continuity, a story of Hindu history, Muslim invasion, and reestablishment of a Hindu nation. The *thakur*'s family struggles to stage control of numinous power as a substitute for political power, lost when India moved from a quasi-feudal system to nationhood. Both are involved in a form of theft. They wrest the temple discourse from the Rājāsthan State Archaeological Department, from tourists, and from historians to put it in the hands of politicians in the name of the local villagers. The Ambikā temple has become a commodity: it changes hands to be reused, recycled, and reinvented.

Because of the expense of guardianship and the remoteness of sites, the ASI's dominion is hard to administer. In a country where many do not have enough to eat and where drought makes water a commodity sold for two rupees a bucket, the task of maintaining a site such as Jagat is daunting. Past curators "stole" sculptures from the sites to house them in local museums.[34] This tactic saved many pieces from theft and the international art market but also removed the sculptures from their programmatic context. Were the objects left in situ, those that were not stolen would be in use, such as the icons in figure 2.10, housed in a mud-brick shrine at Āmjhara. The process of modern use involves the application of foil, vermilion, and ghee, thus rendering the object of veneration ritually animate while covering over its historicity. Keeping sculpture in situ often leaves the pieces open to theft or destruction, but it is the only way to maintain their historical value.

Archaeological sites in southern Rājāsthan face problems similar to those found at a UNESCO World Heritage Site, such as Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Extreme poverty of local populations, lack of necessities for survival, no opportunities for improving their social status, an abrupt shift from a collectivist state to a capitalist market economy, a highly centralized budget leaving few resources and little power to local governments, and government departments that are overstaffed and have outdated equipment are just a few of the difficulties to be overcome.[35] Beyond these challenges to creating a system of sustainable archaeology, it

FIGURE 2.10. Mudbrick shrine, Āmjhara (near Dūṅgarpur). © Deborah Stein.

is highly unlikely that such a small regional site as the Ambikā temple would ever qualify as a World Heritage Site. Even if it did qualify, a complex negotiation of preservation and use would surely ensue. New forms of rather unregulated free-market patronage promise a radical shift in the aesthetics and ethics of archaeological sites, but for now temple trusts determine for whose praxis the ancient sites of southern Rājāsthan are used.[36]

Ekliṅgjī is an example of a complex negotiation of ownership of an archaeological temple site. The history of renovation suggests that the construction of history through rebuilding is a timeless art. But the historical contexts of each period of renovation yield specific information about the political concerns of a particular time and place. In the twenty-first century, clergy, nobility, and devotees at Ekliṅgjī hold fast to a *svayambu* story for the main icon, despite convincing evidence to the contrary. The politics of Raimal's renovations echo hundreds of years later through the stone residue of this mahārāṇa's praxis. This historical echo reflects present choices about how Mewār's history should be depicted. The increasingly restricted access to the most ancient upper levels of the site mirror control exercised via privatization.

Private organizations increasingly fill the vacuum of resources available to state organizations, such as the archaeological departments. This privatization of archaeology is a symptom of a larger shift, away from social, collectivist forms

of government and toward capitalist participation in a global market economy. In the same way Raimal's renovation colors present politics at Ekliṅgjī, future generations' uses of archaeological sites will be informed by the aesthetic residue of present actions, such as the icon left behind by the goddess installation at Jagat in 2002.