

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GROWING A KINGDOM: THE GODDESS OF DEPTH IN VIZIANAGARAM

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The priest sits carefully in a makeshift wooden seat attached to the very end of a fifty-foot pole, a tamarind tree with its bark and branches removed, rubbed golden yellow with turmeric (*pasupu*). On his lap, wrapped in silk, are three elongated pieces of wood. A fourth, slim and attached to a squarish rectangle, he clutches firmly in one fist. The pole swivels against its upright wooden fulcrum, itself set into a wheeled carriage. Dressed as a king, wearing a royal turban, the priest is tied into the seat with new saris. Self-contained, reserved, he is surrounded by police who shape the great crowds into a semblance of orderly flow. At the signal, as the crowds shout and pelt the priest/king with bananas, hundreds of thousands of them, the pole is raised high at a forty-five degree angle to its carriage. With its precariously dangling figure ensconced on his seat, the tree top reaches forward, into the sky, as the carriage begins its trundling journey down the packed, narrow thoroughfare toward the Kota, the Fort, the palace of the king, some hundreds of yards away. The tree is the goddess, Paiditalli, the Golden Lady, who some two and a half centuries earlier was the younger sister of Peda Vijaya Rama Raju, the king of Vizianagaram. As she carries the king aloft, Paiditalli begins the *Sirimanu Jatra* ('Goddess Tree Movement'), the climactic event of some five months of ritual acts that, in our words, grow the kingdom of Vizianagaram (and its kingship). Before Indian Independence, Vizianagaram was a little kingdom in northeastern Andhra Pradesh, in the region called Southern Kalinga; the *Sirimanu Jatra* continues, perhaps because growing the kingdom was related intimately to the growth rhythms of cosmos, and cosmos continues.

Growing kingdom and kingship is our problematic: How is this done? What kind of cosmos potentiates the growing of kingdom? What are the implications of growing cosmic kingship for the little kingdom in this region of India? How does the growing of kingdom resonate with the growing of rice? With the growing of the Goddess? And, within all such questions, though we can touch on this theme only briefly in this essay,

what is the nature of the Telugu tie between sister and brother, one through which the male is himself shaped and formed by the female with whom he has an organic relationship? To grow a kingdom and its kingship quickly comes to imply growing a cosmos in all its complexities, with 'growth' not a metaphor for these dense connectivities but rather a continuous dynamic through which cosmos re-forms itself within itself as it proceeds through itself, spatially, temporally. Our immanent concern is to explore this cosmos through its Goddess, its ritual, and its history.

1. *Prologue: Every King Needs a Goddess.*  
*On the Curved and the Flat, Wilderness and Civilization*

Every Andhra king needs a goddess, but not every Andhra goddess needs a king. Moreover, a king needs a goddess who is a sister to him, comforting, consoling, protecting, and saving him without asking questions, without setting conditions. The goddess who is (like) a sister to a king is a goddess to kingdom and kingship precisely because she is (like) a sister. Kingship needs nurturance; it needs to grow, organically, from depth into depth, from depth out of depth, like a field of rice. And like a rice field, kingdom and kingship need to be fed, watered, and protected from mishap, assault, and disease. Like rice, then, kingdom and kingship must find the rhythms of being planted, transplanted, grown, harvested. The goddess of kingship and kingdom, Paiditalli, grows these rhythms, and she herself grows into these rhythms as she grows them. Therefore she herself is grown or, more precisely, she grows herself together with the cosmos that is her kingdom. As the goddess grows, so does kingship. This too is the nature of the sister/brother tie—a linkage of deep organic affinities (unlike that between husband and wife, more a forced conjunction of opposites). This means that, whatever they do, sister and brother naturally activate, affect, and effect one another, as do goddess and king. The yearly growth of the Goddess is that of the self-organization, the autopoiesis, of her Vizianagaram cosmos.

We argue that in the little kingdom of Vizianagaram, kingdom and kingship are grown organically, like a crop of rice. Together with rice, kingdom and kingship grow into maturity—rice the sustenance for human beings, the others the organizers of sustenance, yet themselves sustenance for cosmos and goddess. Kingdom and kingship are grown during the annual growth cycle of rice, dependent on the great southwest monsoon of June–July. The monsoon rains that grow rice are brought by the Goddess,

Paiditalli. Simultaneously, during and after the monsoon season, kingdom and kingship are grown by the Goddess as she herself, once the younger sister of the king, grows and matures. Perceived in this way, kingdom and kingship become a created and creative endeavor, made fertile within the growing cosmos of the goddess and growing together with, indeed through, cosmic rhythms. Sirimanu jatras are widespread in the farming communities of this region of Andhra, though they usually are held in January and seem exclusively focused on agriculture. In Vizianagaram the Sirimanu was adapted to kingship by binding together the kingdom, the rice-cycle upon which sovereignty depended, and the bond of brother and sister, a protective and nurturing nexus of Gajapati kingship. We will have more to say on the Sirimanu and kingship in the conclusion.

Like the rice field, kingdom and kingship need to be made fertile, watered, transplanted, grown, harvested. Both rice field and kingdom must be opened into depth, deepened into the spaces within which the creative impulse is generated, intensified, germinated. This is the doing of Paiditalli, who opens and deepens cosmic space within which the kingdom is prepared and shaped and within which kingdom and king are joined to one another. These dynamic depths are crucial for creative growth, whether of plants or kings, Tantric Yogis, wrestlers, poets, or Ayurvedic healers—all of whom flourished in Vizianagaram in the not distant past. Paiditalli is, we may say, a goddess of depths. Yet Paiditalli herself must be persuaded to appear within her cosmos, within the shallower surfaces inhabited by human beings and, once there, to grow herself as this cosmos, to take root deep within it, as her presence matures here. As the goddess grows, transforming surface into depth, so are kingdom and kingship prepared for growth; and as kingdom grows, so does rice, the sustenance of kingdom.

In this cosmos, growth of any kind occurs only within depth, emerging from inside, from within the interiority of interiority. The space of interior depth enables the forming of form, the intensities of forming that no less make form different in and from itself (Deleuze 1994: 252). Concomitantly, an increase in the intensities of qualities of form changes that form from within itself. Such change is basic to growth.

Growth needs space/time in which to grow; and, appositely, the energy of growth, of increase, the intensity of its qualities, opens space/time into its own evolution. Depth is fluid, labile, and in depth there is the fluidity that is transformation, the fluidity of forming and forms that take shape through one another. *Change is the condition of depth.* What is often referred to as 'wilderness' in India, supposedly on the peripheries of 'civilization,' is

where depth exists in its natural cosmic condition. Put differently, wilderness is a greater concentration and intensification of depth. In or close to regions of greater depth—seas, lakes, streams, and forested mountains full of caves, whose fluidity or inward-turning of form curves them more naturally—are the abodes of depth-specialists: fishers, hunters, healers, and of course, goddesses. Depth-specialists are experts in transformation, entering depths and there joining with the interior dynamics of cosmic process. Depth specialists modulate the intensities of qualities of form, thereby altering these. The dynamics of cosmic process are interior—it is there, through deep and pervasive flowing, that form is forming, that growing is begun and form begins before it emerges onto the surface.

On the surface are kingship, kingdom, cultivated fields, all identified with the more rectilinear, stable, centered building of civilization by males. These are *flatter* dimensions of existence. They are flattened and hardened, one might say, by the gravity of sociocentric hierarchy, by its more hard-and-fast social categories, by its complex divisions of space and labor. So, too, fields that are not prepared for fertile growth will flatten, collapsing into themselves and compacting, since without growth they have no depth; they do not reach upwards, as it were, into depth. They will dry out, losing whatever interiority they possess, becoming increasingly dense, static, stuck, overly stable and therefore sterile. If fields are opened into the depths of furrows and into the heights between furrows, sown with seed, filled with water as it rains and flows from the depths above and is raised from the depths below (by well irrigation), then we can see the dynamics of growth and florescence. This is true for kingdom and kingship as well.

Goddess, waters, mountains, rice fields, kingdom, and kingship continuously grow into one another. Their relationships are deeply recursive, as the entirety of cosmos continues to develop and takes shape, folding into itself through them, enclosing itself within itself. This curvature is profoundly *fractal*, since the curves of these folds create themselves through themselves and therefore create themselves as similar or, perhaps, as harmonically resonating with one another, thus as fitting with, indeed into, one another.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, the natural locales of depth (in wilderness, wherever this appears) and the agents of depth-making and growth (in civilization) are never really distant topologically from one another,

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<sup>1</sup> This joining of fractal and fold is influenced by Deleuzian thinking, developed through analyses of ritual. See Handelman 2005.

even though they may be separated from one another in topographically linear terms. As cosmos curls into itself, these fractal-like relationships are embedded dynamically in every ongoing moment and portion of the curvature. We will argue that there is no principled cosmological-topological distinction between height (of mountain, of sky, of furrow edge) and depth (of bodies of water—streams, lakes, seas, and the puddles between furrows).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the mountains in this area of Andhra are porous, full of caves and tunnels, so that mountains, like water, can be said to be full of interior movement. Both mountain and water are deep, and the depth of a mountain fits into the depth of a lake, while the interior of a mountain (with its swirling caves and twisting tunnels) can take in the sea.

Consider the great mountaintop temple of Simhacalam, close to Vizianagaram, the abode of the god Simhadri Appana (Vishnu as Varaha-Narasimha, the combined Boar and Man-Lion), where the last Raja of Vizianagaram, P. V. G. Raju, died as a poor pilgrim. The *sthalapurana* of the temple, its myth of origin, describes its mountainous heights as a ‘mountain of rain within the ocean.’<sup>3</sup> Were cosmos to be entirely folded into itself, mountain would fit into water, and water and lake into mountain. The same could be said for sister and brother—for the sister who makes her brother deep enough to fit into her own depths, thereby enjoining her care and protection. In some sense, this occurs during the climactic moments of the Sirimanu Jatra.

The city of Vizianagaram is positioned on flatland between a set of craggy mountains holed with caves and a smallish lake (called Big Lake)—that is, between wilderness of height and wilderness of depth.<sup>4</sup> The mountains descend to the fields and the town and then farther down into the lake. The depth of the lake mirrors the depth of the mountains reaching into the sky. Turn the spheroid cosmos on its head, and the waters of the

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<sup>2</sup> Our references to topology are not to the formal mathematics of space but rather to what may be called ‘relational dynamics’ of space/time in the ways in which cosmologies are organized. For example, some scientists think of time that, as topological mapping, is sometimes referred to as ‘rubber sheet geometry’ (Assad 1999: 41), in which time curls, folds, twists, so that any point of time may meet any other.

<sup>3</sup> According to one story on the place of origin of the Simhacalam temple, Simhadri Appana hopped from one mountaintop to another, looking for one strong enough on which to build his temple. In finding the right one, his feet went deep into its mountaintop and he could not extricate himself. There, Simhacalam was built. So these mountains too have inner space, pores, perhaps with mud and ooze within them.

<sup>4</sup> Even in the height of the dry, hot season the lake never dries up, providing irrigation to a considerable area and supplying numerous wells (Francis 1907: 336).

lake will fall on human beings and flatlands like rain, as rainwater tumbles down the mountains into the fields. Moreover, such resonant reflections occur no less in the tiny scales of cosmos, in the harmonics of scale among variant topologies.<sup>5</sup> Thus in the plowed field (unlike the dry flatland), the space between one furrow and another is a high mountain, while the furrow itself filled with water is a deep lake (as is the well). The topological dynamics of irrigation and the coming of the monsoon are fractal harmonics of one another.<sup>6</sup> Such harmonics are deeply present in the rituals of Paiditalli and her cosmic re-creation.

And when the lake waters ripple? When fluid turbulence twists on itself, when the wave becomes a higher fluidity, a mountain, the mountain becoming the outerness of wave, a crusted fluidity, stone full of fluid space? Water and mountain, height and depth, are distinctive features of Vizianagaram topology, intimately and dynamically related, perhaps turning into one another, continuous with one another. The convex curve of mountain turns into the concave curve of sea with its own convex curve of ripple and wave (that together are like the furrows of a plowed field). Such is wilderness in Vizianagaram. It is from such a dimension that cultivation, kingship, and kingdom come, through the goddess who dwells within the depths of wilderness, deep within herself, yet who emerges to form herself in order to form cultivation, kingship, state.

The continually rounding cosmos of water and mountain, below and above, thus differs sharply in one respect from the flattening cosmos of kingship and kingdom. The spheroid cosmos is fully continuous with itself, within itself, without sharply delineated interior boundaries or other hard-and-fast distinctions. This is why the depth of seas and lakes and that of mountains reaching into the heavens curve into one another. For that matter, *depth depends on continuousness*, on an ongoing deepening, depth going deeper, going elsewhere, yet also curving back through itself so that mountains enter sea and lake, just as water inundates the heights during the rains only to flow down into itself. In this regard, wilderness inevitably

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<sup>5</sup> We eschew the commonly accepted distinction between macrocosmos and microcosmos in favor of a notion of harmonic resonances among different scales of cosmos that, in a dynamic sense, enable these scales to enter into and to become one another with continuity. The Vizianagaram cosmos of Paiditalli is one of immanence rather than transcendence.

<sup>6</sup> The dynamics of interiority are at one with themselves, emerging from, intensifying, and shaping phenomenal forms that existentially are these dynamics. In other words, we deny any significance in the Vizianagaram cosmos to the commonly accepted academic distinctions between form and content, structure and process, and the like.

surrounds the cultivated domain of fields, of human beings, because wilderness curves and is thus continuous, unlike the discontinuity of the cultivated, of kingdom constituted through neat divisions and separations. Little kingdoms in this region of South India are dots in a wilderness.

This continuousness of cosmos is identified with topological formations outside of civilization and cultivation, yet deeper than these (so that they appear within civilization as its drying and flattening). The denizens of wilderness often differ from those of civilization and kingdom. People of the wilderness enter into and are specialists in the flowing, recursive depths of cosmos. They are fishermen who plumb the currents and depths of water, like those who, as we will see, aid in the creation of the goddess Paiditali. They are hunters who roam the steep heights and depths of mountains, about whom myths abound. They are healers who plumb the deep interiors of human beings (and deities). Fishermen, hunters, healers are integral to the holism of the cosmos; they *safeguard* this holism by continuously mending discontinuities as these appear. Stated differently, the continuousness of cosmos that is identified with wilderness makes these people continuous also with boundaries between wilderness and civilization. Their plumbing of depths situates them within boundariness and enables them to influence and control the bounded domains. This faculty, together with their affinity with the depth, is what makes possible their mending of rupture, their activation of the movement necessary to the well-being of cosmos. Ammavaru, Mother Paiditali, has a special feeling for such people, for the Scheduled Castes (Dalits), the Madigas, for the Besta and Jalari fishermen, the Talaiyar oil pressers, for the bards and drummers, for the Uppara well-diggers, basket makers, and fix-it men. These are the ones who, as they bring goddesses from the wilderness surrounding villages into their middle space, also bound and bind the village, regulating it so that no other goddesses (*ammās*) or cholera and pox can penetrate and enter. So, too, these people are responsible for bringing Paiditali from her watery depths, mythically and, to a degree, annually; they have the task of carrying her around the city and they join in her leaving.

Paiditali, too, is a healer of kingdom and kingship, a healer who quickens time and opens space. During the dry season, when she is distant from humankind, disease flattens human beings, sickening and killing them. In the searing heat and absence of water, the earth shrinks and atrophies; growth is slowed and stunted. The world of human beings slows down, flattens even further into itself, becoming discontinuous with itself. Paiditali brings rain, ending the hot season, opening depth and accelerating

time for fruitful growth, shaping the world as whole again in its fullness. Paiditalli is the healer who rescues the human world from self-sterility.

Kings, on the other hand, venture into wilderness at their peril. Kingship grows out of cosmos; it does not impose itself on cosmos. Yet without the continual transposition of wilderness into discontinuity, civilization will not exist. With discontinuity, time slows, its fluidity enchained, marking stops and starts at innumerable boundaries.<sup>7</sup> Civilization depends on discontinuities that generate the organization of clean-cut categories, divided and separated from one another in order to be connected through limited operations or functions (of governance, of taxation, of the rule of law, and so on) that can be turned on and off. Rectilinear borders, regardless of their permeability, block the dynamic fluidity of movement. Therefore such borders also dry out, flatten and compact whatever they enclose. Boundaries order and regulate, making whatever they contain distinctly different from whatever is outside—more fixed in place, more congealed, more static. Thus kingship, kingdom, and civilization exist because order is created through discontinuity, through hierarchy and status, through distinctly demarcated caste groups and their living areas, through controlled cultivation. Kingship is the apex of the force and power of social discontinuity. Despite its surface powers, kingship is denied depth and its corresponding fluidities, and thus kingship may be perceived as flat and superficial in its topologies. Therefore every king needs a goddess to heal and rejuvenate him.

These relationships are no less temporal than they are spatial. Within the kingdom, time slows the continuousness of cosmos by setting it in distinct places marked by borders and division. Time is divided (by royalty, law, caste rights, land rights, and so forth) and thereby slows down. By contrast, wilderness, entering the kingdom, accelerates temporal dynamics.<sup>8</sup> The slowing of time has something to do with the flatness of

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<sup>7</sup> One classical view of time, beautifully articulated by Bhartrihari (fifth century) and exemplified in Kalidasa's great essay on kingship, the *Raghuvamsa*, sees temporality itself as constituted by two countervailing aspects—a blockage or bunching, *pratibandha*, and a opening or release, *abhyanujna*. Far from an even, steady flow of identical Newtonian units, this kind of time progresses snail-like, with differential intensities, each occlusion eventually giving way to break-through, as drought gives way to flooding. One of Bhartrihari's images to convey this movement is that of the waterclock and its small, tenuous opening (*nalika-vivara*), through which water flows unevenly. See Shulman (in press) and Nidbach 2013; Bhartrihari, *Kala-samuddesa* 70.

<sup>8</sup> Wilderness may generate temporality. The ancient Vedic year was conceived as two months of monsoon and ten months of growth. These two months were a time



kingdom, the acceleration of time—its maturation or ripening—with the depth of wilderness. We might describe this contrast in terms of “dimensionality”: depth has greater potentialities for movement, for formation from within itself, than does flatness. As time accelerates, there is, as it were, more exploration of the potentialities that are depth. This is the creative power of depth. The traversing of flatness is more lineal, more enumerative (as in measures of land and population, of property taxes, of the layout of a field, of a city, of a house), emphasizing the intersection of angular surfaces. Yet the traversing of depth has many forms that take shape through involutions, through odd routes and formations (like the movement of Paiditali as the Sirimanu tree).

In South India, longing and desire seem to be primarily a function of fullness, not of emptiness or absence. It is fullness that has no bounds, that is moving through its intensities, expanding, opening space and time for the growth of greater desire.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, fullness makes fullness, especially, perhaps, in a watery world (what is fuller in its density than fluid?) that is depth on all sides of flatness. Fullness never empties but rather expands further *into* its own fullness. In Vizianagaram, the fullness that is depth is the desire and longing for growth and creativity whose primary medium in the kingdom is Paiditali. In the climactic Sirimanu Jatra, fullness is *felt* tangibly in all its dimensions.

Nonetheless, kingship is responsible for the well-being of the kingdom. Therefore, every king needs a goddess through whom to reenter the fluid fullness of cosmos, perhaps to save kingship from itself, from its overweening drive for power and conquest. (The Gajapati kings of Vizianagaram called themselves *Manne Sultan*, the Lords of the Wilderness.) The integrity of kingship depends upon its relationships with wilderness beings—those who can mend and heal the cosmos—and above all with goddesses and, therefore, with the brother-sister bond, a tragic yet triumphant force in the myths of Paiditali’s origin.

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of non-differentiation—between earth and water, sky and land and, in a sense, height and depth—that may be likened to wilderness, from which emerged the ten months of growth.

<sup>9</sup> This sense of fullness seems to relate to cosmos integrated from within itself, as we argued for South Indian Saiva cosmos (Handelman and Shulman 2004). Cosmos integrated from within itself seems not to be encompassed from outside itself [by God], and, as such, not to have external boundaries or limits. The absence of external limits speaks to how such a cosmos is integrated from within itself through its intra-relatedness [rather than its inter-relatedness]. See also Handelman and Lindquist 2011: 23–35.

## 2. *The Birth of Paiditalli*

Who is Paiditalli? How did she become the present-day goddess? How did she become so intimately related to wilderness and enmeshed in kingship? There are various versions of her origins, their appearance sensitive to context and to the identity of the narrator. The two accounts of immediate relevance here are related to the trauma of the destruction of Vizianagaram kingship and to its resurrection. These are no less accounts of the organic relationship between sister and brother. We first present the base narrative that is most directly related to kingship<sup>10</sup> and, following this, aspects of the account obtained from Bairagi Nayudu, Paiditalli's chief priest in Vizianagaram at the time of our fieldwork and a servant of this goddess since 1976 until his death in January 2010. Bairagi Nayudu's account highlights the bond between sister and brother. Historical and cultural information relevant to these accounts is discussed in detail in the following section.

In 1757 the Vizianagaram ruler, Vijaya Rama Raju, together with French and Hyderabad troops, attacked the neighboring little kingdom of Bobbili, destroying the earth-walled palace-fort and its defenders who had assembled there in a last-ditch stand. Seeking revenge, the Bobbili hero, Tandra Papaya, slipped into the French camp at night and killed Vijaya Rama Raju.<sup>11</sup> Vijaya Rama Raju had a younger, unmarried sister named Paidimamba.<sup>12</sup> Paidimamba was a devotee (*daiva-bhakturalu*) of Vijayavada Durga (Kanaka-Durga, the Golden Durga), and was only fourteen, a generic age in South India for girls on the near edge of puberty, still virginal, though their marriage has been arranged. Vijaya Rama Raju and Paidimamba were motherless and fatherless. They had only each other<sup>13</sup> and Pativada Appala Nayudu, who was both bodyguard and minister; they

<sup>10</sup> This version is current in Vizianagaram both orally and in various printed versions, e.g. the 1994 brochure entitled *Mrokkina varamul' icce callani talli sri sri sri paiditalli amnavari katha caritra*, available in the Square Temple (pp. 5–6).

<sup>11</sup> See discussion of the historiographical sources in Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 2001: 24–92.

<sup>12</sup> To a degree we are assigning categories to the names of the Goddess—Paiditalli, Paidimamba—somewhat arbitrarily, here and elsewhere, in order to ease description. These and other of her names are largely interchangeable, without fixed referents or boundaries. The most prevalent way of referring to this goddess by her devotees is to call her Ammavaru, Our Mother. Naming the Goddess has no consistent usage that we could discover. She is also called Paidiyamma or Cinnamma (Little Mother).

<sup>13</sup> By the time of the Bobbili war, however, Vijaya Rama Raju was married, though childless.



15. Bairagi Nayudu (David Shulman).

grew up under his guidance and protection. Appala Nayudu was like a foster-parent to Paidimamba—when she was small she sat on his lap and he carried her on his shoulders. (Bairagi Nayudu understands Appala Nayudu as his ancestor.) Paidimamba had warned her brother not to go to war with Bobbili, yet he had paid her no heed. As Bairagi Nayudu commented, ‘She was, after all, only a small child, not old enough to advise her brother. He merely smiled at her words.’<sup>14</sup> After the king left for Bobbili, the Goddess of the Vizianagaram kings, Kanaka Durga (Golden Durga), came to Paidimamba in a dream, telling her what was to befall her brother. (Some say that the dream came to Paidimamba while she was sick with smallpox, *masūci*.)<sup>15</sup> Determined to prevent this, she rode off for Bobbili, accompanied by Pativada Appala Nayudu. As Paidimamba rode past Big Lake (*Pedda Ceruvu*) on the outskirts of Vizianagaram, news arrived of her brother’s death. Paidimamba told Appala Nayudu that she was about to become one with the Goddess (Durga), to ‘lose herself’ in the Goddess, but that she would return, and that then her image should be worshiped on the other side of the lake (that is, away from the city, in the wilderness). She flung herself into Big Lake and drowned.

Some time after her death, she came in a dream to a low-caste Jalari fisherman, telling him to raise her image from the bottom of Big Lake. Jalaris dove into the water and found her image in the muddy bottom.<sup>16</sup> Untouchable Madigas and Malas recognized her image and took her in procession around the city. The image was established in the Wilderness Temple (*vanam gudi*), the original temple of the Goddess, across the lake from Vizianagaram. From then on, Paidimamba, the younger sister of the dead king, became the Goddess, Paiditalli, the protectress of the kingdom. The two were one. Paiditalli did have another shrine, a tiny one leaning against three tightly intertwined trees of three different species (Banyan, Neem, and Fig) growing together virtually as one not far from the Kōta,

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<sup>14</sup> Vijaya Rama Raju’s anger at the king of Bobbili resulted from a cockfight that the former lost. The cockfight in Andhra, very much like a Deleuzian singularity, explains the sudden occurrence of a phenomenon for which there is no explanation. In this regard, the micro-dynamics of a cockfight (like the beating of butterfly wings in Chaos Theory) have unpredictable, probably destructive cosmic consequences (see Roghair 1982).

<sup>15</sup> Paiditalli ammavari katha caritra, 6. Note that smallpox is classically the disease of the goddess in south India.

<sup>16</sup> In this narrative, Jalari is used as a generic term for fisherman. The Jalari are sea fishers living on the eastern coast, north and south of the major port of Visakhapatnam (see Nuckolls 1996). The Besta of Vizianagaram are fresh water fishers (today, they are mainly tailors by caste occupation) and say that they were the ones who took Paiditalli’s image from Big Lake. The Besta participate as a prominent group in the Sirimanu Jatra.

the royal palace-fort within the city. Paiditalli, it was said, would sit on a square mat beneath these tree(s). The small area of the trees is called *Balalayam*, the Temple of the Young Female. Indeed, it may well be that these trees are no less the Goddess. In 1924, during digging in this area, an image of the Goddess was unearthed and installed in a temple, the *caduru gudi*, the Square or Courty Temple, the temple of the square mat (*caduru*), redolent with referents of royalty,<sup>17</sup> built in front of the tree and its tiny shrine.<sup>18</sup> The annual re-birth of the Goddess begins in the vicinity of the *vanamgudi* and shifts to the *cadurugudi*.<sup>19</sup>

Kingship collapses in its very expansiveness, in its outward-moving predatory character that includes the king's inattention to the sage advice of his younger sister to remain within the depths of interiority of the Goddess-sheathed kingdom. However, the movement of the king could be characterized as 'flat.' He moves in a linear mode from Vizianagaram to Bobbili, and this trajectory turns into the vector of his destruction. The sister-brother tie is clearly related to the difference between female and male; it situates itself somewhere between the vectors of conservation and fragmentation, between a curvature that strengthens the interior flows of cosmos and a shallow linearity that moves along feebler surfaces. No less important is the concomitant contrast between the potential for fertility (Paidimamba is an unmarried virgin) and the deadness of sterility (apparently the king dies without offspring). The desire of the male, the brother, is to move outward into destruction; while the female, his sister, counsels inwardness. Within the depths of interiority is the protection and salvation of kingship, ruined through the shallowness of exteriority. When Paidimamba receives the news of her brother's death out there in the kingdom of Bobbili, as foretold to her by the Goddess, she throws

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<sup>17</sup> 'Square' likely also refers to the *mandala* according to which Vizianagaram (like so many other cities in South Asia) was built.

<sup>18</sup> Ramalingesvara Swami, an Ayurvedic doctor and close friend of Anand, the present rajah-who-would-have-been, connects the Square Temple to Indira Gandhi (despite the discrepancy in dates). One late night, on his way home from his clinic, he saw a car pull up in front of the tiny shrine of Paidimamba. His friend the last Raja got out, followed by Indira Gandhi who had just lost an election. Later he asked the Raja about what had transpired. The Raja had told Indira Gandhi that if she wanted to win the next election, she would have to do something for Paidimamba. So Indira prayed to Paidimamba and built her the new temple we see today. A midnight visit by Indira Gandhi to Square Temple (in the year in which the Congress Party split) was confirmed by Bairagi Nayudu who was introduced to her there by the last raja.

<sup>19</sup> Both temples are those of the Kapu (agriculturalist) caste. Paiditalli's priest, Bairagi Nayudu, was a Kapu.

herself into the lake, into wilderness, into depth, into interiority. Her death is undoubtedly tragic—the sister’s self-destruction because of the needless loss of her beloved brother—but is it suicide, as an untempered response might suggest?

Suicide, after all, is usually understood as the end of self, the intentional destruction of self-interiority. Yet Paidimamba has announced that her intention is to unify with the Goddess and to return. Therefore her death should be understood as transformative, indeed as self-transformative through a self-sacrifice in which Paidimamba gives up her own particular selfness to become integral with Durga, the Goddess of Vizianagaram kingship. Goddesses, we are arguing, are denizens of wilderness, while wilderness is integral to the deep interior holism that *is* a goddess. Paidimamba, as a woman, is linked to wilderness and civilization. Her femaleness funnels her into the state of a goddess and, therefore, into wilderness; while her kin status relates her to kingship. Yet her kin status in relation to kingship is demoted on two counts: she is both female and a younger sister. Her self-sacrificial death ruptures the ambiguous relations among wilderness, femaleness, and kingship. Becoming Paiditali, she is transformed into the protectress of kingship. The younger sister to the king, junior and ignored, is now, in a sense, an older sister to kingship, impossible to ignore. Through this transformation of sister into goddess, kingship is woven more and more tightly into the interiority of the goddess, into her cosmos, from within which kingship emerges and grows. The deaths of the king and his sister generate the re-creation of kingdom as space that should open into depths of creation (the locus of the goddess) from which growth emerges, with deep roots and deep heights (the cosmos of the goddess).

Most significantly, the transformation of Paidimamba occurs within wholly fluid depths. The lake is a natural container of cool fluid depths opening smoothly in all directions, perhaps a womb of the goddess within which Paidimamba moves into Paiditali and is reborn as the unity of both. The king dies in his flat trajectory skimming shallowly along the earth. The fate of the flat, whenever its thinness is pressured, is to fragment; it is brittle, with minimal resilience. The sister, by way of contrast, unites with the goddess in the cool depths where the goddess is continuous with herself. It is in the violence of death that Paidimamba inflicts upon herself that she discovers depth, and this may imply the discovery of self-cultivation, the discovery of depth-in-selfness by entering wilderness with all her being. This outcome is quite distinct, we argue, from being wronged, assaulted, raped, or murdered (the ordinary traumas of many South Indian goddesses), since her movement is inward, into selfness.

The effect of the transformation is an even closer tie between the goddess and kingship, the tie of sister-goddess and brother-king. The goddess apparently does not give birth to kingship, but she does nurture it. Yet Paidimamba insists that on her return she be worshiped across the lake from the city, on the other side, distant from the civilization that she has returned to nurture and protect. So in her return there is a gap, perhaps a rupture that will have to be mended or sealed, in order for her to fully emerge and develop as this protectress. This gap or distancing may be integral to the rhythms of cosmic surface, of decline and re-growth; it leads annually to her rebirth and maturation. It is here that human beings enter, helping to nurture the Goddess into presence within civilization, so that she will foster the human—that is, the kingly—portion of her cosmos. Her rebirth is the coming into infancy of some aspect of hers that must be shaped, grown into presence, in order for her to perform her own nurturing role. The holism of her cosmos is not a given—it is not a static nor a homeostatic whole, one automatically renewed through mechanistic ritual. Paiditalli's cosmos must be practiced into existence (with all the emergent uncertainties this entails) in order for its evolution to become auto-poetic, that is, self-organizing. As she grows into presence within the human portion of her cosmos, she comes closer to human beings and their world, acting powerfully within it. No birth, not even Paiditalli's birthing of herself, is certain as the cosmos seeks its own dynamics of origination within its own, often murky, uterine depths.

As Bairagi Nayudu tells the story of Paiditalli's origins, she and her brother had neither mother nor father. They grew up under the guidance of Appala Nayudu. He was like a foster-parent to Paidimamba. After Paidimamba jumped into Big Lake, Appala Nayudu searched for her. 'They looked around and saw bubbles coming up from Big Lake. As soon as they saw the bubbles, someone jumped in and pulled her out. She was at her last breath [*kona upirito undi*]. "What has happened to my brother?" she asked. In such a situation, you can't tell the truth. Appala Nayudu lied, "He is alive." She refused to believe him. As soon as she said that, he burst into tears. Then she understood the truth. She died, breathing her last in Appala Nayudu's lap [*odilone*] . . .'<sup>20</sup>

Appala Nayudu became sick at heart. He was now near the Wilderness Temple; he stayed under the neem tree there. When people told him to

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<sup>20</sup> It is also said that Paidimamba 'left her breath.' An English speaker would commonly say that 'her breath left her'. Might there be implications, perhaps yogic, that in leaving her breath, Paidimamba separated from herself, from her self, rather than suicidally killing herself?

go home, he said, "I want no *aihika-sambandham*, no connection to the affairs of day-to-day life. I'll stay right here." That night the girl appeared in his dream and said, "Appala Nayudugaru,<sup>21</sup> I have become Ammavaru [the Goddess]. The image relating to me [*na taluka vigraham*] is in the lake. Bring it out and perform puja to it." Next morning they looked for the image, but in the first attempt they could not find it. They sought the help of the Jalaris, who looked for it and found it. Appala Nayudu prayed to Vijayavada Kanaka Durga: "What have you done to this devotee of yours? You made my stomach ache. From the lap of her mother she came on to my lap. That's why I can't bear this suffering." Kanaka Durga said, "Establish the image of this girl and I will bless her from the top of the *dhvaja-stambha*, the flagpole. That flagpole is the Sirimanu."

In Bairagi Nayudu's version, brother and sister, orphaned, are aided and succored by his ancestor, Appala Nayudu. She dies in his lap and returns to him as the Goddess, coming in a dream, telling him to find her image and install it. Appalu Nayudu is something between mother and midwife to the young Paidimamba, as is clear from the role of the lap in Bairagi Nayudu's story. Appala Nayudu holds her on his lap. She dies in his lap. He complains to Kanaka Durga, 'You made my stomach ache (*kadupu sokam pettavu*). From the lap of her mother she came on to my lap.' The lap is commonly associated with womb (the same word can serve for both); the girl 'swings' from the lap of her mother to that of Appala Nayudu.<sup>22</sup> In Bairagi Nayudu's version, Appala Nayudu is also the first to be carried by Paiditalli in the Sirimanu. So, too, in the (re)birth of Paiditalli, discussed below, Bairagi Nayudu has something of the role of midwife; and as he is carried aloft by Paiditalli in the Sirimanu, he is the priest who enables in a 'motherly' way the emergence of king and brother—Paiditalli brings him to his home, to the Kota palace-fort that is the heart of the kingdom.

So far our discussion of the Vizianagaram cosmos implies that there is a dimension of intimacy in the goddess's relations with human beings. Her sense of intimacy and caring is an interior quality that relates to the depths of others or, more accurately, to the deepening of these depths. The well-being of human beings matters (perhaps more than before) to the transformed female. Paidimamba's intimacy with the goddess is perhaps most evident in her self-sacrificial rebirth within the depths of the goddess,

<sup>21</sup> *-garu* is a Telugu honorific suffix.

<sup>22</sup> The swing plays an important role in closing out the presence of Paiditalli, two weeks after the Sirimanu.



and her self-intimacy will be emphasized further through her annual (re)birth. Most telling, this deity is female, endowed with an intense sense of intimacy axiomatically denied to most males, who traverse and build atop shallow surfaces and flat lands.<sup>23</sup> Qualities of intimacy need to be highlighted here in order to understand, further on, the annual (re)birth of Paiditali and her evolving relationships with Vizianagaram.

### 3. *Historical Excursus*

We know something of the foundation and rise of the Vizianagaram state in the first half of the eighteenth century (although the Pusapati dynasty traces its origins back to one Madhava Varma in the seventeenth century, from Pusapadu, near Vinukonda in the southern delta).<sup>24</sup> Devotees of the golden goddess Kanaka Durga of Vijayawada, the Pusapati kings set off—allegedly with the blessing of the distant Mughal dynasty in Delhi and its nominal subordinates in Hyderabad—to seek their fortune in the wilderness (*manyam* or *manne*) of southern Kalinga, that is, the northern Andhra coast.<sup>25</sup> Officially, the Pusapatis became tax-farmers within the Hyderabad-Mughal system and consequently won the high-flown title of *Manne Sultan Bahadar*, “Sultans of the Wilderness.”<sup>26</sup> In reality, they were largely independent competitors in the century-long tug-of-war among a host of local *pallegallu* rulers for control over the region’s rich resources. By the early years of the eighteenth century, this struggle had eliminated all but a few major players: the Pusapatis, ruling from Kumili; a tribal kingdom centered on Madugula, but with its ritual center situated at Paderu

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<sup>23</sup> This generalization does not include the depth specialists within civilization—playwrights, poets, Tantric yogis, Ayurvedic healers and, occasionally, perhaps kings. All healing involves the opening up of depth in order to repair—whether human beings, kingdom, or cosmos. There seems to be hardly any way of healing on the surface without discovering interiority, the hidden, the vital, the speedy and the accelerating. Healing is done from within, not from without. Consider, too, the poet as depth-specialist, creating through the involution of language; think of the interiority of yoga; note the bodily entanglements of wrestlers. On the cosmology of wrestlers in North India, see Alter (1992).

<sup>24</sup> See *Pusapati rajulayokka purvottaram*, 1; discussed by Berkemer 1993: 252. Our thanks to Velcheru Narayana Rao for reading the Vizianagaram *kaifyyat* with us and commenting upon it.

<sup>25</sup> According to the *Ranga-raya-caritamu* of Dittakavi Narayanakavi (1.115), Madhava Varma came to this region together with a Mughal adventurer called Sher Muhammad Khan; for his services, Madhava Varma was rewarded with the Vizianagaram kingdom. See Narayana Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam 2001: 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Pusapati rajulayokka purvottaram*, 4.

in the high hills of the Eastern Ghats; and the low-land fortified city-states of Sringavarapu Kota, Golakonda, and Bobbili, mentioned above with reference to the origin myth of Paiditali. Our sources, mostly kaifiyyats written by village accountants (*karnams*) at the request of the famous Colonel Mackenzie in the early nineteenth century, allow us to reconstruct the final stages of this regional conflict; largely through the ruthless machinations of a wily Diwan, Burra Buccanna, a paradigmatic figure for this newly crystallizing polity, Vizianagaram succeeded in dominating its rivals and drawing them into an emergent fiscal and military system operating from the new capital of Vizianagaram—founded in the second decade of the eighteenth century, according to tradition on Vijaya Dasami (Victory Day) in the autumn Navaratri festival celebrating Durga as Mahisasuramardini, her killing of the great Buffalo Demon, in the Vijaya (Victory) year 1713–1714.

Several traditions speak of the founding of this aptly named “City of Victory” (more properly transliterated Vijayanagaram; we have retained the Anglo-Indian spelling in order to differentiate it from the well-known imperial state far to the south in the western Deccan, at Hampi). The site was, not surprisingly, chosen for security considerations; large hills protected it to the east and north; to the west was the village of Devulapalli; the fort-palace was constructed on the edge of a lake fed by mountain rivulets.<sup>27</sup> Originally, there was nothing here but wilderness and a small village called Rega; the area was full of tigers and subject to predatory raids by Muslims (*mlecchulu*). Still, after the founding of the fort by the first truly regal figure, Peda Vijaya Rama Raju, the entire Pusapati clan, with its women and children, marched there from Kumili in four days.<sup>28</sup> Some say that Peda Vijaya Rama Raju first discovered the site on a hunting expedition; to his amazement, his hunting dogs were savagely attacked there by the rabbits they were hunting. The king asked a Muslim ascetic, Denkha Shah Wali Baba, who was meditating in the shade of a tree, about the meaning of this strange reversal. Denkha Shah said: “Kumili will be ruined. Build a new fort here. Heroic manliness (*paurusham*) is in the soil.” So Vijaya Rama Raju moved his kingdom to Vizianagaram and built the first, mud-walled fort.<sup>29</sup> An oral account collected by Georg Berkemer

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 9–10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The present day fort is ‘a great square erection of brick and stone measuring about 250 yards each way, surrounded by the remains of a ditch, and having a big bastion at each corner’ (Francis 1907: 336).

insists that the founders of the fort—two royal brothers<sup>30</sup>—deliberately ignored the Muslim saint's directions for building the fort nearby, instead constructing it precisely on the spot where the hunting dogs were attacked by a (single) hare; as a result, the new state lost its chance to conquer the entire world.<sup>31</sup> Denkha Shah's tomb is situated today about halfway between the royal fort and the Square Temple (*saduru gudi*) of Paiditalli.

This myth of origins fits a pattern attested from all over south India in this period; but we need to emphasize again the self-perception of this polity as a wilderness kingdom, only one step removed from tribal polities such as Madugula and Jeypore,<sup>32</sup> remote from the more settled and stable political systems of the delta and the interior and permeated by the unpredictable powers of the undefined. This is a kingdom of tigers and tiger-like warriors whose peripheral domain is alive with sorcery, magical Yoga of a distinctive character, tribal deities, fishermen, hunters, and goddesses at home in the wilderness. Conspicuous by their absence are the Brahmin communities usually associated with patterns of political homeostasis in south India. Although we do hear, occasionally, of royal land-grants to Brahmins,<sup>33</sup> and we can also trace the rise of large-scale Sanskrit temples (at Mukhalingam, Rama-tirthalu, Srikurmam, Padmanabham, Palukonda, and so on) that were drawn into the orbit of Vizianagaram patronage and control in the course of the eighteenth century, it seems that the Vizianagaram state managed quite well without Brahmin authority or assistance. This state rested on quite distinct forms of legitimation and generative power, the kind of power that derives from alchemists, itinerant magicians, musicians, poets, pandits and grammarians, wrestlers, tiger-dangers, and unconventional Tantric Yogis. But it was Paiditalli, above all, who provided, in a sense, a practical experiment for the preservation and enhancement of the political domain, including the annual renewal of kingdom and kingship as a going enterprise. We return to the character of this 'experiment' in the conclusion.

As we have already seen, a major crisis overtook Vizianagaram in 1757 with Charles Bussy's raid into the Northern Circars and the Bobbili war, ending with the destruction of the Bobbili fort and the consequent

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<sup>30</sup> This seems to be a memory of the historic rivalry between the brothers Peda Sitaramaraju and Peda Vijaya Rama Raju.

<sup>31</sup> Berkemer 1993: 275.

<sup>32</sup> See Schnepel 1996 for a study of this kingdom situated to the north of Vizianagaram but linked in many ways to the historical evolution of Pusapati kingship.

<sup>33</sup> Thus an early king, Raghunatha, is said to have given two or three agraharams—tax-free lands—to Brahmins: Pusapati rajulayokka purvottaram, 3.

assassination of Vijaya Rama Raju, the Vizianagaram king, by the Bobbili hero Tandra Papayya (whose immense sword is still on display in the Bobbili palace). Somewhat surprisingly, this traumatic event is “celebrated,” one might say, in Paiditalli’s autumnal Sirimanu procession: out of the brother’s tragic death comes the sister’s full emergence into divinity. But the initial tragedy at Bobbili was only the opening scene in the drama of Vizianagaram’s imperial decline (perhaps self-immolation would be a better term). Vijaya Rama Raju’s successor, Ananda Gajapati, abandoned the French connection and prudently threw in his lot with the British, who indeed gained full control over all of northern coastal Andhra by 1765. Over the next decades, the Vizianagaram kingdom maneuvered rather desperately, with some initial successes, in the hopes of surviving the remorseless expansion of British power and control. By 1794, the last fully independent ruler of Vizianagaram, yet another (China) Vijaya Rama Raju, had had enough; faced with the British demands for ever greater payment of revenue/tribute, he decided to make a heroic last stand on the field of Padmanabham, not far from the capital. He was, predictably, cut down in a suicidal battle with the English forces, under the command of one Lieutenant-Colonel Prendergast, on July 10, 1794.<sup>34</sup>

Vizianagaram’s final loss of military power and absorption into the British system was not, however, the end of its creative political role. It is something of a cliché in modern historiographies that such little kingdoms compensated for their reduction to subservience by hypertrophied investment in the cultural domain, and in rituals of display (Dirks 1984; Waghorne 1994)—as if such rituals were not, in any case, the very substance of south Indian kingship and the stuff of power. In the case of Vizianagaram, we would perhaps do better to speak of a natural intensification of the inward-directed existential experimentation proper to life on the cusp of the wilderness. The exercise of brute military force and the play of imperial politics were probably never Paiditalli’s primary concerns. Her extrusion of interiority to overcome loss in the surfaces of civilization probably was. Nineteenth-century Vizianagaram transformed itself into the most vibrant cultural center between Calcutta and Madras, a site of

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<sup>34</sup> On the battle of Padmanabham as recorded in Chatrati Lakshmi-narsa-kavi’s *Padmanabha-yuddhamu*, see Narayana Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam 2001: 79–92. For the turbulent power struggles of the 1760’s, 1770’s and 1780’s at Vizianagaram as masterminded by the Diwan Sitarama Raju—a man fashioned in the model of his predecessor, Burra Buccanna, mentioned above—see Sundaram 1946. See also Sarma 1994 for an overview of Vizianagaram history.

truly astonishing creativity and, ultimately, the arena where what might be called a fully modern awareness first came to be articulated in Telugu. This highly specific version of “modernity,” associated with the names of the beloved ruler Ananda Gajapati (1850–1907) and the poet-dramatist Gurajada Apparao (1862–1915) (Rama Rao 1985), emerged organically out of the peculiar cultural-political configuration of the northern Andhra coast, whose somewhat volatile components we have already listed, including a strong notion of introspective self-cultivation in the Kalinga style of Tantric Yoga.

Vizianagaram remained throughout the nineteenth century, indeed remains still today, a wilderness kingdom, held together by a wilderness goddess slowly ripening and fermenting for half of each year in her shrine proximate to the royal palace—a goddess brought every year into the heart of the kingdom and then sent back to the depths just beyond it. The modern history of this kingdom is thus not only, or even primarily, the record of military defeat, dynastic decline, and the slow refashioning of collective selfhood in a new mode, within the terms of a transformed political system.<sup>35</sup> It is at least as much the history of a goddess intimately known, indeed nurtured and grown, year after year, through ritual and aesthetic means, within the institutional and spatial core of the state. Put differently, modern Vizianagaram history is largely the history of the ongoing inner life of this goddess, her moods and changing conditions, her somewhat unpredictable states of mind, her internal shifts and necessary periods of disequilibrium, her evolving awareness, and her unfolding imagination of herself in relation to her subjects and devotees.

#### 4. *Goddesses are Grown (Gods are Not)*

We have stressed the notion of intimacy as integral to Paitalli. Intimacy with goddesses is highly layered, intensified, and textured within the home, and in order to foreground this notion we turn to another venue in Andhra Pradesh—in the near past and not far from Vizianagaram. Many homes in the villages of the Godavari Delta, where M. V. Krishnayya grew

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<sup>35</sup> Indeed, it is our strong impression that Vizianagaram kingship today is recognizably continuous with its roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, despite the formal abolition of the royal role in independent India, the royal family’s successful transition to democratic state politics, and the death of the last king, the beloved P. V. G. Raju V, in 1995. See further discussion below in section 8.

up, have a goddess living in the kitchen. Her name is *Taravani*, a certain kind of rice-gruel.<sup>36</sup> Raw white rice is always washed before cooking. If the water used for washing rice is poured into a large pot, sitting in the auspicious north-east corner of the kitchen, this fluid will begin to ferment into the presence of the goddess. Arranging the location, establishing the conditions, beginning the process of fermentation—all these are the results of human action. In this sense *Taravani* is *enabled to grow into presence* in the north-east corner, across from the hearth and its fire in the south-east corner.

Yet the goddess who is grown is not a construct of the human. The human provides an entry point—the vessel, its fluid contents, its fluid depths—into which the goddess flows, configures, takes shape, intensifies. The vessel, the pot, is then something of a womb *of* the goddess, within which she grows herself. Human beings provide the conditions for growth, but the coming into presence of the goddess occurs wholly on her own terms, as do her effects within the home. There is no way of forcing *Taravani* into a (family) kitchen where she does not belong, without inviting trouble.

The north-east is an auspicious direction, the right place for the well in the courtyard, from which water is raised from the depths. The *Taravani* pot sits in the north-east corner of the kitchen on a *kuduru*, a low, round, ring-like stand made of woven palmyra leaves. The form of the pot, *kunda*, is that of completeness curving into itself, without angles, without corners, without rupture. The word *kuduru* means ‘grounding’, ‘settling’, ‘matching’—the goddess settled in a stable, harmonious mode of being suited to the particular family. Put otherwise, *Taravani* is made to feel at home within the female domain of the kitchen, living there in the proximity of family members. The north-east corner of the kitchen is a shrine to *Taravani*: the *kuduru* stands on flattened earth covered with white floral designs (*muggulu*) of lime, intended to entice her in. On the wall above the pot the face of the goddess is painted in turmeric (*pasupu*), a circle divided into three parallel segments, with a dot (*bottu*) of vermilion (*kunkum*) in each segment.

The essences of the goddess, indeed of all females, are said to be *pasupu* and *kunkum*, respectively of golden and red color. Gold is thought to be the solid closest to liquid. Turmeric, though applied to the exterior of the female, to her skin, enlivens her interior life, *layering* her from within,

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<sup>36</sup> *Taravani* is identified with Lakshmi, goddess of bounty and prosperity.

adding depth and texture. She glows more intensely from within, a self-shining burning with the brightness of life-force, itself focused by the dot of vermilion on the forehead. Her self-shining seems also to signal the *intensification* of coherence and integrity, the qualities of selfness, the qualities of depth. Turmeric is thought to open space for the creation of life within the female. In our terms, turmeric creates depth, opening space for the vitality and beauty it generates from within. Turmeric and vermilion open, focus, and intensify space and depth for the goddess in the human world. She enters into this domain, becoming (gently) present in the human world, comfortably at home here. Thus the goddess grows from within herself into the space and depth opened up by turmeric and vermilion. Turmeric enables the *self-layering* of the interior of the goddess, thus rendering her interior more complex. Turmeric is a crucial agent in the growth and development of the goddess in the human world, indeed of the female generally. For a mature woman not to have turmeric is inauspicious and dangerous. Vermilion, on the other hand, gives to a woman the honed feeling that she is specifically whoever she is. The *bottu* dot, directing itself inward, is a focus for female interiority; directing itself outward, it absorbs and nullifies evil aimed at the female from the glances and thoughts of others—these are drawn towards the vermilion dot. A woman without a *bottu* lacks focus, essence, significance.<sup>37</sup>

Through the essences of turmeric and vermilion, goddess and woman overlap, periodically, momentarily. Every morning, after bathing, each married woman in the house smears her face with a light coat of turmeric paste and arranges the vermilion dot, thus participating in the being of the goddess. All married women share this condition and form.<sup>38</sup> Again, turmeric and vermilion seem to add *layers* to the core being of the female, and this *layering*, to which we refer below, indexes the ongoing maturation of these female qualities. *Pasupu* and *kunkum* intensify these qualities, attracting them, drawing them from the interior space of the female to her surface, to the interface of her interaction with others.<sup>39</sup> Layering and intensification are dynamic properties of goddesses and married

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<sup>37</sup> Marriott (1998: 299) comments that, in India, females have 'greater fluidity and internality' than males, and thus, 'greater inner-bodily space'. By contrast, males are of 'putatively harder, cooler, less open natures.'

<sup>38</sup> Unmarried girls and widows do not do this. The essences of the female have not yet awakened in the unmarried girl and are to be extinguished in the widow, who in many ways becomes one of the living dead.

<sup>39</sup> The Telugu term, *pasupp'ekkinadam*, 'applying pasupu', could also be translated as 'intensification.'

women. This is why they, and not unmarried girls, apply turmeric and vermilion. For married women the intensification of these qualities has its own temporal rhythm: these qualities come in the morning and wear out by late evening, to be re-created or re-born the next morning. At night it is important for the housewife to revert to her entirely human nature; she sleeps beside her husband not as a goddess but as a woman. A husband would be terrified to find a turmeric-bedecked goddess in his bed. A married woman is a kind of sequential divine-human combination: a goddess from early morning, a human being from late evening onwards.

Within the uterine pot, the fermentation of the goddess is understood as her self-distillation, her self-intensification, her presence in the home becoming more and more vibrant, lucid, focused, and, not least, fully female. These dynamics are spoken of explicitly as *layering*, which is also of direct relevance to the (re)birth of Paiditalli. We can describe this process as her coming into presence from deep within herself toward her interface with the human world in order to emerge here within womb-like depths, in the kitchen, the domain of women. To develop through these trajectories, the Goddess needs the proper conditions for interaction with her immediate environment. When these are satisfactory, she self-develops, self-intensifies, emerging within herself within the household as wholly herself, with refined capacities for helping members of the household. This dynamic of *intensification*—of coming into being as wholly herself, and thus as fully harmonic with the cosmos that she is<sup>40</sup>—points to the fullness of her cosmos and, indeed, of herself. Intensification increases intimacy with herself—as self-feeling, self-knowing—and with others as they take her (her cosmic harmonics) into themselves, or into their selves. What, after all, is more intimate than this movement?

The presence of *Taravani* in the kitchen cannot be taken for granted. Her vibrating presence requires continuous concern for any change in her condition of becoming. If attention lags and turbulence ensues, the goddess will be gone. She can be broken, her continuity of self disrupted, her equilibrium disturbed. The housewife must consistently calibrate the

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<sup>40</sup> South Indian deities must be persuaded and cajoled to emerge from their depths, to intensify in the human world (see, for example, Chapter Three in this volume). This happens on a daily basis in temples, as the deity is awakened, washed, dressed, shown to herself in a mirror, fed, and thus made fully present to receive worshipers. Joyce Flueckiger (n.d.) suggests that covering the visage of the goddess, Gangamma, in Tirupati, with pasupu is integral to a process by which the goddess recognizes her true self (visvarupam). One could add that when the goddess *layers herself*, she then recognizes the fullness of her own deep interiority, without limits, that is her true self.



intensities of the goddess, scrupulously making necessary adjustments. Moreover, the relationship of feeding is reciprocal. Whenever food is cooked, a part is presented at the base of the pot, a gift to the goddess, while the rest is eaten as her *prasad*, her gift of bounty to the people of the household. Within this local yet most pivotal of domains, the kitchen is a micro-temple, the housewife something of a priestess.

Therefore, great care is taken to observe the needs of *Taravani*. Like all goddesses, she is not to be rudely disturbed, and great sensitivity is shown in all contact with her. On Tuesdays and Fridays, 'goddess days' in Andhra, she is not to be touched, for she is deeply within herself in a condition of non-activity and self-absorption, distant from the human. But if at any time she is touched inappropriately, abruptly, she becomes angry, and the fermenting water spoils, becoming sticky, semi-solid, with a bad smell. Then the liquid must be thrown out, the pot washed, and everything re-arranged in the ritually correct ways. The mother of the family is the only person who handles *Taravani*, cleaning her pot, reworking the earthen floor with cow dung and *muggulu* florals, repainting the goddess on the wall. Before attending daily to *Taravani*, the mother of the family must bathe, as she would before entering a *puja* room or before performing a *puja* in a shrine. The profound closeness of deity and human is crucial in this organic, densely intra-related cosmos. Deity and human are different from one another, yet not in any abrupt or absolutist way; their presence, indeed their co-presence, is mutually and densely intra-woven.

Within the intimacy of family, the deity is present to help (especially to protect children from disease). As she ferments, as she grows into presence within the fullness of the uterine pot, she is consumed, drunk, often daily, by all members of the household (and especially in times of disease by neighbors of all castes). The drink gives *calladanam*, coolness, cooling the body's system like a purgative. The fluid entering one's inside is not a byproduct of growing the goddess—it is the goddess herself as sustenance entering one's intimate interior, spreading throughout one's body-being. Nurtured, interacted with, matured, distilled, tasted, internalized, digested, the goddess is in intense relationship with the home. Once she has been ingested the goddess protects and heals. Consider that drinking and eating are among the most intimate of human actions. They take place at the interface between the interior of person and the exterior world. One must take the exterior world into oneself in order to drink, eat, survive, in the most mundane and taken-for-granted way. Yet there is always potential risk in this, even with the most zealous and careful of preparations. There is always in eating and drinking a powerful element of trusting the

exterior. This is probably no less true for the Goddess who exposes herself to the ministrations of human beings as she intensifies into presence.

The idea of inner coolness, *calla*, located in the stomach of the human being, is widespread in the Telugu-speaking world. *Calla* implies anything cool, comfortable, secure, free from anxiety—a matter of existential well-being, the most sought-after state. Inside one's stomach the presence of the goddess feels good, a continuous, heavy force that is the pleasure of ongoing anticipation, a harmonics of gravity, holding one intimately to the earth, connecting, rooting in this center. Yet *calla* is not always perceptible or accessible. A goddess may be required to activate it or to allow for awareness of its presence, and so to have contact with it; and there is anxiety lest this inner, foundational *calla* be lost. External heat can almost eradicate it. Human interaction threatens it. Food affects it—hence the concern to eat cooling foods. A person from the outside can dislocate, disembowel, diminish or extract one's interior coolness, indeed one's inner cool. And the very existence of the interior *calla* may be the necessary condition for prayer, meditation, healing. The goddess amplifies the inner *calla* and insures against its being wasted or lost, thereby enhancing the innate immunity of the human being to harmful intrusion. The process of fermentation in the *Taravani* pot is itself a *calla* condition, intensifying the goddess's own inner dynamics of being in the human world, of becoming present to human beings. Fermenting is perceived as distilling, as refining and condensing the being of the goddess, enabling heightened contact with her. By distilling the goddess, human beings go beyond their narrowness, weakness, and fragility. They impact upon and shape *her* life, and therefore their own.<sup>41</sup>

As we return to the rites of Paiditali, consider once more the profound fluidity in this Telugu cosmos. The dynamic of fluidity is that of continuous movement—in other words, of fluid intensifying itself, continuously flowing into and through itself in ever-shifting eddies and currents,

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<sup>41</sup> When the local goddess (whoever she may be) comes to visit a neighborhood, lane by lane, house by house, she brings coolness, *calladanam*, in the form of big pots carried on the head. She is offered Taravani fluid. The two goddesses, two distinct authorities with differential responsibilities, happily join together and enjoy a certain companionship through the exchange of Taravani. They enrich each other, recharge one another at different levels. The active fermentation at the right consistency is a critical medium for this kind of interaction between deities, enabling them to make contact with one another through one another, without going outside each other. A certain sense of elation accompanies this meeting—also in the spectators, the householders who are paying close attention to what happens at such moments.

perhaps fermenting and self-distilling. Water inherently has depth in this cosmos (even when it appears shallow) because it must flow through itself in order to continue to be the fluid it is. This water inherently intensifies itself. The fluid totally fills whatever space it flows through. Consider now that Paidimamba plunges herself into the fluid domain of Big Lake—and drowns. She does this in order to become one with Durga. Implied in this sequence is a vision of the Lake as a medium of wilderness, an entry into the self-intensifying fluidity of the goddess within herself, that is, into her deep coolness. Big Lake is something of a continuous container within the topology of the human world. Paidimamba's choice of death is eloquent and profound: she enters the healing depths of the Goddess, 'losing' her self there. Perhaps Paidimamba's desire is indeed to *intensify* herself through Durga by joining the goddess through self-sacrifice. Death by drowning is the taking in of fluid until one is filled utterly (and can no longer breathe, 'leaving one's breath'). The cool waters of depth, of Durga, fill the interior of Paidimamba, and she joins the Goddess, becomes intimate with the Goddess, becomes the never-ending movement of the Goddess in the ooze of the lake bed. In the process the Goddess too is changed, becoming closer to, more intimate with, perhaps even more beneficial to king and kingdom. Though only implied, the logic of this configuration seems quite similar to that of Taravani in the houses of the Godavari Delta.<sup>42</sup>

Yet there is a cosmic caveat to the interior fluidity of Paiditalli, or of Big Lake as the topological interiority of the Goddess. Once she leaves the Lake, leaving the wholeness of her interiority within herself—within the

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<sup>42</sup> In contrast with female deities in this area, male deities have difficulty with what we are calling depth and its creative, healing potentials. Consider the greatest of these male deities, Simhadri Appanna, the Varaha-Narasimha form of Vishnu, whose mountain temple of Simhachalam was included in the territory of the kingdom of Vizianagaram for some two centuries. The kings of Vizianagaram used Simhachalam as a retreat whenever the British forced them to leave the city. In one prominent myth, a hunter came upon the god in his Varaha (boar) *avatara* form rooting in the forest of the mountainside. The hunter shot a poisoned arrow into the boar, only later realizing that this was God he had wounded. The hunter, like many other people of the depths, was also a healer, and he offered to cure the god's wound by applying balm—but he also noted that a scar would remain. The god angrily rejected the offer: "What use is healing that leaves a scar?" In the *garbha-griha* of Simhacalam, Simhadri Appana stands, his feet stuck in the earth, unable to move, his head and body covered entirely by an oval of sandal paste said to salve his wound. Tradition tells us that the wound has been infected from the day the hunter penetrated the god, and that it suppurates, so that the priests must regularly drain it of pus. Only once a year is the sandal paste removed from the god. On the one day a year when he comes out of his temple and rides his chariot around his cosmos (the temple), the chariot is unable to begin moving unless fishers, again people of the depths, pull it.

greater cosmos that is her self—she begins to acquire fixity of form and the desire of intentionality within the human world. This fixity of the Goddess is initially related to the relative solidity of earth and to the rootedness of natural form in earth—and then, as we will see, to the uprooting of natural form from earth, to its acquiring motility in the human world, even as this fixity of form moves again toward distance from the human, as the Goddess returns to the greater fluidity of her own deep interior. Paiditalli's cosmic career as she surfaces from Big Lake joins water to earth through her changing being. And, though Paidimamba entered Big Lake with the declared intention of re-turning and re-surfacing, the annual transformation of Paiditalli from the fluidity of interiority to the relative fixity of form on the flatness of the human world cannot be taken for granted. The transform is not mechanistic; rather, it is a moment of high ritual uncertainty, since Paiditalli is at times resistant to emerging from within herself. Her coming should be understood as a cosmic lurch through discontinuity, perhaps a self-sacrifice of some part of her fluid selfness.

##### 5. *The (Re)Birth of Paiditalli: The Ritual of Devara Pandaga*<sup>43</sup>

The year of Paiditalli is composed of two periods, roughly six months each. The goddess is re-born in the Telugu month of Vaisakha (April–May), at the height of the dry season, yet towards its end, in the depths of Big Lake close to the *vanamgudi*, the Wilderness Temple. As she enters the human world, she acquires form that is quite formless; and initially, perhaps, she has little intentionality. Months later, as her active mode reaches its highest intensity during the Sirimanu Jatra in the month of Asviyuja, her form is sharply delineated, aimed with direction, force, momentum. During the intervening period she is given optimal conditions to grow her form, to form herself, to intensify her presence, to hone her intention. Two weeks after the Jatra she returns to the *vanamgudi* for six months. Within wilderness and its depths, understood in manifold ways, her presence fully enters her self, once again distant from the flat surfaces of the human world, undisturbed, uninvolved in human affairs, until she is asked, or pleaded with, to come forth once more.

In the month of Vaisakha, as agriculturalists get ready to plant the first seeds of rice, the staple food crop of the region, the coming of the great

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<sup>43</sup> Our observations of the Devara Pandaga rite were carried out in May 2004 and May 2006.

south-west monsoon rains is essential. Paiditalli will bring the rains, and much more besides, for the growth and fruitfulness of kingdom and kingship . . . if she appears. Paiditalli's coming is an event of creation in its own right, independent of anything that has gone before. Such events are self-generating, dependent on their own cosmic impetus; thus the goddess must desire to emerge from within herself into the flat world of human beings. We have likened Big Lake to the womb of the Goddess within which, or through which, she gives birth to herself, perhaps through a sort of parthenogenesis in which her infant and mature selfness will exist simultaneously, overlapping, the former poised on the lip of the human world, the latter distant and deep within.<sup>44</sup> Since she is cosmos, the whole, she is simultaneously all of herself and any portion of herself, the whole curving within the whole. Nonetheless, that infant portion of herself that she will entrust to human beings is vulnerable, and so there is potential trauma, or indeed actual trauma, in her birthing—though the form(s) she develops during the months after her self-birth will gain strength, power, and self-assertion and are akin to the evolution and maturation of cosmos, or at least that portion of cosmos in which human beings live.

These perceptions may be somewhat distant from those of her priests and worshipers. People know and feel the hot season as a time of desolation, the heat searing vegetation, burning life; a time of destruction, of disease (more so in the past), of disease-bearing goddesses, of death, especially the death of the vulnerable young that is the death of future. A flat world of hard, dry surfaces. A time of waiting, of hoping, for the resurgence of life. The farmers know well that nothing is guaranteed, certainly not the meeting of rain and earth in fruitful union. In a way, the hot time is an end-time, a period during which Paiditalli is absent from the human world, deep within the potential fruitfulness of wilderness that is most separated during this time from the human world. Yet this period of destruction also seems to clear the human world of detritus and debris. If this end-time is to pass, then the rains must come to melt the flatness of earth, to open the potential for growth that only exists within depth. For the rains to come, Paiditalli must come. For Paiditalli to come, she must be drawn out of herself into the human world, where she will be born out

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<sup>44</sup> To explicate this: Paiditalli, her cosmos, overlaps with herself. Paiditalli does not disappear from the Vanamgudi, but continues there deep within herself. So there is no end to cosmos, no rupture and then a new beginning. Rather, there is an attenuation of the interior fluidity of cosmos as an aspect or qualities of this rise to Paiditalli's own surface, acquiring forms, while she, her ultimate true form, stays fluid, deep within.

of herself, and where she will become increasingly present, increasingly vital, more and more herself like a pregnant woman (though always a virgin) ready to give birth to life. Such birth-from-depth is a dynamic through which life emerges from within itself, until its impulse for emergence is momentarily suspended (however lengthy that moment may be).

Remember that, first and foremost, Ammavaru is female in a social order in which the birth and nurturing of offspring may be the greatest personal joy a woman will have during her lifetime. When we come to discuss the growing of rice, it will become evident that this dynamic of emergence from the depth, that is, of growth as pregnancy, birth, and nurturance is understood in precisely these terms by farmers of this region.

Like ritual complexes generally in India, that of Paiditalli is activated by positioning its elements so that they interact, generate, and self-organize their potentialities. Persuading Paiditalli to give birth to herself in the human world is not quite a straightforward ritual matter. Though she cannot be coerced through ritual, she can be drawn into the nexus of family, into warmth and intimacy, and shown how much, how deeply, she is respected, loved, appreciated. In this way one may awaken her to the needs of her human worshipers and their world. She has, of course, a particular affinity with women, and it is the women of Bairagi Nayudu's household who open the way to her coming by visiting her in the *Vanamgudi*, the Wilderness Temple, where she is said to be resting. This visit occurs one week before the *Devara pandaga* ritual at Big Lake.<sup>45</sup>

The day before their visit, they and the men visit Paiditalli's original shrine within the *uru*, tucked into the three-species tree in back of the *Cadurugudi*, the Square Temple. Inside the tiny shrine are a series of almost aniconic wooden carvings, the *Pellu*, each with a crude face, a new one added every year, cut from the Tamarind tree that was Paiditalli in the previous year's Sirimanu Jatra. The *Pellu* (who are both Paiditalli and her younger brother, Potu Raju) have a crucial role in the *Tolellu* rite on the evening before the Sirimanu. Family members smear *pasupu* on the figures within the tiny shrine, decorating them with vermilion *bottus*, stirring the Goddess of past Sirimanu Jatras, at the apex of her evolution in the human world, to meet the Goddess who they hope will emerge in the near future, newly born, from Big Lake. One may surmise that they also stir the deep connectivity between older sister and younger brother. Then they go to the palace-fort, the Kota, to visit the mysterious Kota-Sakti

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<sup>45</sup> In 2006 their visit took place on May 8th.

(who seems never to leave the fort and who is the continuous protector of kingship there) and to perform a puja to her, inviting her to be present when newly-born Paiditalli arrives. Paiditalli, the goddess of kingdom and kingship (*illavelupu*) and the Kota-Sakti of the royal palace have their special closeness, and guests should be invited personally, as to a wedding. Printed announcements (*catimpu*) of the imminent arrival of the Goddess are distributed; the various functionaries and those who will wear guises (*veshalu*) in the processing of the Goddess are informed of the coming event, as are the households of the neighborhood lanes where Bairagu Nayudu lives and through which the procession will move.

When the announcement of the intention to bring Ammavaru is made, the uru—the original city built on the plan of a mandala—is tied (*uru kattaḍam*) or bound. This is done by a member of the oil-presser caste (Talaiyari). Water is mixed with turmeric and the oil-presser spills this as he walks the boundary of the uru, marking and sealing this.<sup>46</sup> This binding of the boundary can be understood as the activation of the original mandala for the period of the goddess' presence there. This is done, people say, so that Ammavaru will feel cool (*calladanam*) and comfortable; so that she will not suffer any potential threat, for she is very vulnerable while in the uru, especially so when she is an infant.

The day after visiting the tiny shrine in back of the Cadurugudi, Nayudu's wife, his eldest daughter, Nirmala, his youngest daughter, and three young unmarried girls (one the daughter of Nirmala) pile into an auto-rickshaw on their way to the Wilderness Temple. Bairagi Nayudu's youngest son, Venkat, follows on his scooter. Some days earlier Nirmala had said that they would go to Ammavaru to tell her that shortly she would 'have to move house'. Indeed, she has her own room, her own home, in the Wilderness Temple. But as this visit develops, this imperative, or even the declarative, will be absent. All the women are beautifully dressed in saris and jewelry, with *pasupu* on their faces. With them are steel vessels full of cooked food for the Goddess. In 2006, Nayudu himself is too ill to participate. They arrive at the Vanamgudi at around 1 P.M. There are few people about, apart from four priests who clear the entire temple space for the visitors.

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<sup>46</sup> In past times in villages in the area, once the boundary was sealed no marriages took place during this period; there was almost no interaction with the outside world; and if someone did have to leave, this person would first offer turmeric and vermilion to Paiditalli.

The women perform a puja to Ammavaru, familiarly playing with the her *murti*, decorating her, touching her the way a bride is touched by her female kin. The mood is happy, even joyous. They offer Ammavaru *pasupu* and *kunkum*, camphor and incense, flowers, bananas, coconuts, fresh mangos, a new sari and blouse, and red bangles, a color she enjoys. They interact with Ammavaru as with a living person, a vital presence, a human- divine being with whom they have an intimate, touching relationship. This is a family get-together as the Nayudu women lay out a feast on stitched leaves (*maḍapa*). On each leaf are placed lentils (*pappu-java*), *paramannam* rice with milk and jaggery, *pongaḍālu* sweets, *mulagaku* curry with *telaga-pindi* (night-shade and crushed sesame seed-husk, left over after crushing the seed). They say that this curry and sesame dish is a special favorite of Ammavaru. With warmth and affection, the three married Nayudu women put *pasupu* and *kunkum* on Ammavaru's *tali* and then touch their own *talis*, enhancing the longevity of their married life (*saubhagyam*). The women now burn the *sambrani* incense on a brazier.<sup>47</sup> Dense smoke fills the room; nothing is visible through the haze apart from two hanging lamps.

M. V. Krisnayya describes his response during those moments as one of total ecstasy. A scholar of Western philosophy, he says that he was utterly beyond its logic. All reservations left him, and distinctions between men and women, young and old, disappeared, as did all negative emotions. Within Ammavaru's home the thickness of the incense plunges the participants into the reality of her interiority, where she is (wherever that is)—into the great density of her cosmos with its continuous flow, where rupture and difference are absent and the holism of togetherness (of that which Durkheim called effervescence) fills all space/time. It is from this perhaps infinite self-interiority that ancient Ammavaru must be persuaded to emerge into the human world, to be born there as a vulnerable infant, to put herself in the hands of her human kindred, the family of Nayudus, one of whom will become in the course of her evolution the Raja, her brother.

The women return to the main Temple hall where they perform pujas to the other two goddesses whose shrines are inside—Durgamma and Mutyalamma—and then at the margosa tree in the back courtyard where until recently a third goddess had resided. After some fifteen minutes the cloud of smoke dissipates and the women re-enter Paiditalli's room. Now

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<sup>47</sup> This is guggulam, the resin of *shorea robusta*. Paiditalli loves its smell.



they pray out loud to her, appeal to her at length, their message being, 'We are bringing you next Tuesday, please come (*miru tappakunda raavaala*), take care of us, protect us.' All the preparations will be made to receive her, but the choice to come is hers and hers alone. If she comes, she will enter this nexus of kindred, just as she initially left the human world when her most powerful kin tie shattered with the death of her brother, the king. The Nayudu women are asking Paiditalli to entrust her unformed, vulnerable baby-self to the Nayudu family whose head is her chief priest in the Square Temple.

The resistance to appearing within the waters of the lake that the Goddess sometimes demonstrates indicates that this may not be an easy birth, that the rupture at this time between the watery depths of female deity and the flat, dry, exoskeleton of the human world is profound; this rupture may even be disturbing to her, even though this region is part of her cosmos. In our understanding, self-birthing presumes that the Goddess is conscious of this tear; that is, conscious of human beings as within her yet as exterior to her deeper selfness, so that emerging on to the surface of this brittle, fragile portion of her cosmos may diminish her. In any event, self-birthing assumes self-consciousness. Otherwise, how would she know that parts of her must begin their evolution on the hard dryness of the human world? If she appears, she will emerge at the bottom of the very lake in which she drowned herself as the king's younger sister. There are no touchstones here, only liquid loci.

The Telugu term *karya-kramalu* recurs often during the coming events. The term refers to what we would probably call 'ritual'; literally, it means 'sequences of things that have to be done', that is, acts/actions to be done in the proper order so that they will be efficacious in accomplishing or achieving what the 'ritual' is intended to do in terms of transforming cosmos. These sequences thread through and thread together Paiditalli's coming, maturation, harvesting, and departure.

One week after the Nayudu women's visit to the Vanamgudi, the preparations for bringing Paiditalli are in full swing. The various elements and aspects of the Goddess are assembling on an early Monday evening. The locus is a large empty lot of some two hundred square yards, hemmed in by houses on all sides, accessible by a dark narrow lane that abuts on open sewers, with the low eaves of house roofs almost covering it, only a few minutes' walk from Bairagi Nayudu's home. He owns the space. This is the *Ammavari sthanam*, the Goddess Place, her special space, indeed her home in this neighborhood of Hukumpeta. The Goddess Place is now well-lit; music—a *suprabhatam*, a morning wake-up song for Paiditalli—



16. Paiditalli Pots in Goddess Place, Night Preceding Devara Pandaga (David Shulman).

blares. The space is full of people, numerous women with their children in tow, many unmarried girls, and a few men. The atmosphere is happy, vibrant, peaceful.

In the auspicious north-east corner, on a *saduru*, a low, square cement platform with a low wall around three of its sides, are eight metal pots in three rows. The cement is covered with red cloth, and *muggulu* are painted on the ground in front of the pots and along the narrow top of the low wall. The pots have been in storage at the Vanamgudi since Paiditalli left the Cadurugudi after the Sirimanu of the previous year. Also present is the *utsava murti*, the moveable *jatra* image of the goddess from the Vanamgudi Temple. The pots are a major presence during the Sirimanu ritual complex. These pots *are* Paiditalli, the containers of Paiditalli, the multiple modalities of Paiditalli, the wombs of Paiditalli, the continuous presence of Paiditalli in the human world. In the back row are two large five-metal (*pancaloha*) pots, each with a cover in the shape of a cone (*garagalu*).<sup>48</sup> These two are

<sup>48</sup> The metals are gold, silver, copper, brass, and bronze. The eight pots are also six plus one doubled, in other words, seven, that corresponds to the presence of the Goddess as seven sister goddesses, a prominent presence in this area of India.

the 'main pots', called Ammavaru Ghatalu, the pots of our Mother (Paiditalli). These two are the Goddess doubled. A goddess does not go around by herself, but always with another, and the two are understood as sisters. These manifestations are not, perhaps never, the ultimate being of the Goddess (her *visvarupa*), within her infinite depths, but rather forms closer to her surface that nonetheless are the Goddess in every respect. In the middle row there are four smaller brass pots, also with cone-shaped covers; and in the first row, two middle-size brass pots, cone-less but with plates with lit wicks covering their openings, their exteriors coated with turmeric and with many *aksintalu*, grains of uncooked rice. In front of them sits the *utsava murti* of Paiditalli.

The pots are the infrastructure of the goddess in the human world, used now to show the goddess just how dearly she is respected, desired, loved, and needed. From her distant though vibrant quiescence she is being brought, slowly, easily, intimately, back into the human world, among kindred and friends, and made to realize on some level of consciousness just how adored and valuable she is to people. The women crowd around this corner, briskly arranging and adorning the pots with deft movements. The pots and *utsava murti* have come first to Nayudu's home, where a lustration (*harati*) was performed for them, and from there into this special neighborhood space. This journey is also an intimate visit in return for that made a week before to Paiditalli at the Vanamgudi. The women present are of the neighborhood. They are dressed festively, fresh from their bath, wearing new or newly pressed saris, flowers in their hair, *bottu* on their foreheads. The married ones have come for *perantam*, a visit of auspicious, fertile women who come to bless and to receive blessing. They clutch their children as they approach the goddess. They touch the goddess, the pots, the feet of Nayudu, making their offerings to her of food, poured into the pots in the front row; bringing new saris, blouses, bangles, to show her and to have her bless them. The tone is intimate, emotional, exuberant, joyful. Their husbands are remote, keeping their distance, behaving with a sense of modesty as befits a man before a woman. The children shout, jump, play. The heavy heat blankets everyone.

Three bards, *Jamukulavallu*, arrive and seat themselves. They are in high spirits, full of smiles, though sleep-deprived and tired—this is the goddess-ritual season and they are in high demand. They sing Paiditalli's song in an archaic, very rustic Telugu, almost impossible to understand. For Nayudu, his family and neighbors, the focus now shifts to his home where a festive meal begins, to which ritualists, bards, drummers, and relatives are invited. During these hours of feeding, the women continue to throng to the Goddess Place, visiting Paiditalli. From there, in the later

evening, the pots will be processed to the Cadurugudi, where they will remain until after the Sirimanu in October, and where the newborn Goddess should arrive in the early morning hours of the morrow.

By 11 P.M. the drumming increases, the police are in evidence, and the first guises, *veshalu*—of tribal Koya dancers—appear in the neighborhood lanes. In the Goddess Place the pots have been lifted onto peoples' heads. The entourage slowly emerges from the enclosure, through the narrow defile, into the street. Women line the doorways, expectant, excited; many reach out to touch the pots that together with the festival image are at the back of the procession. Men dominate the procession, and only men dance. At the front are the *veshalu*—tigers, Koyas, transvestites, stick wrestlers (*samugaridivallu*), and the guise sometimes said to be Paiditali's own true form, the *Kalika-vesham*, usually meant to be wrathful, frightening, unpredictable, suddenly appearing and disappearing. It has long black hair, a peacock-feather headdress, a trident resting on one shoulder with green limes speared onto its tines, a skull on the other shoulder, a red-cloth breastplate, a green skirt, bells tied to the guiser's ankles, and green limes in his hand. There are also free-lance dancers (*janaka janakalu*), dramatic in their movements, bounding and leaping through the streets to the beat of the drums, intended to enhance the enjoyment of the Goddess.

In the middle of the procession is a ragamuffin band—a clarinetist, a classically trained Nagaswaram-player, and a hurdy-gurdy harmonium mounted on a cart—filling the night with music. Bairagi Nayudu, who has been holding the *utsava murti* of the Goddess, passes it to his younger son, Venkat. There are perhaps a hundred people altogether in the procession, but the atmosphere is electric, celebratory. The happiness in the more familial Goddess Place now spills and flows through the streets, as the procession moves very slowly, meandering carefully through the narrow lanes, stopping almost house by house so that the householders can greet the Goddess. There are more police, and more of higher ranks, monitoring the movement. A few isolated raindrops fall, the air is suddenly cooler, and a sweet wind fills the streets, the sky full of lightening flashes. Everything is being done to encourage Paiditali to come into the human world.

About 2 AM the procession reaches the Cadurugudi, and the pots and image are taken inside and installed in the *garbha gr̥ha*, the inner sanctum of the deity, with its permanent image, the *mulavirat*. The door to the *garbha gr̥ha* is locked, as is the temple door. The Goddess pots await within the coming of the newborn. Outside the temple the main thoroughfare, Three-Lantern junction, looks like a war zone in the darkness empty of people; the day-time crust of human beings in continuous,

uneven motion has been peeled away, revealing the entire length of the main road as a chaotic jumble of potholes, rubble, loose piles of bricks, collapsing facades, mounds of dust, broken steps, all swathed in the grime of sweat, doggedly and grimly mysterious.

Around 2:30 AM a small procession sets out from the Cadurugudi for Big Lake. But instead of the pots there is a winnowing basket (*jangidi*) carried on the head of Paidiraju, a Talaiyari (oil-presser) and a great servant of the Goddess. A red canopy bordered in orange, its middle pushed upward with a long stick, is held over him by six men, a makeshift roofed dwelling in motion. In the procession of perhaps a hundred are the drummers, the bards, many more Harijan-Malas and others of low caste, with the noticeable presence of women. This time the procession goes directly to the lake, its ebony waters dotted near the shore with algae and lotus pods, arriving shortly after 3 AM. Along the length of the lake are many small clusters of people waiting, again many women and Harijans (Dalits) who frequently attend the Cadurugudi and who have a special relationship to the Goddess. The location chosen for the Devara pandaga ritual is about halfway between the Cadurugudi and the Kota on one side of the lake with the Vanamgudi on its other side.

As the drumming intensifies the *jangidi* is brought down to the lake along a narrow footpath and placed on the slippery muck a few inches from the water's edge. The women and Harijans take control of the rite. Paidiraju's wife cleans the ground of debris, and dry palmyra leaves are collected, to make a fire for *harati* after the goddess arrives. Paidiraju's brother digs a hole in the mud at the water's edge. Some dozens of people gather around the *jangidi*. The basket's concave inner surface has been rubbed intensively with *pasupu*. In the center of the basket is a largish circular bed of *kunkum* surrounded by white flowers. On the *kunkum* bed is a circular metal vessel filled with camphor, in which is a long, lit wick and a raw mango. The whole *jangidi* is formed as female. The winnowing basket is rubbed with *pasupu*, as is a woman's face in process of intensification. The basket is marked with the *bottu* of *kunkum*, as is the female forehead. In Andhra the winnowing basket is also strongly associated with the womb and female fertility (Handelman, Chapter Three), and the mango with the vagina and the birth of goddesses. Thus: face within womb, vagina within the face, a lit lamp on the forehead, a mark of respect and worship. The female turns into and through herself, interior becoming exterior, exterior becoming interior. The goddess gives birth to herself, first in the lake and then onshore, at the water's edge, in the *jangidi*.



17. Awaiting the Birth: The Jangidi at the Big Lake (David Shulman).

We note the dynamic condition of the Goddess. If she comes, emerging from within herself to the lip of the human world, she will then implode once more into self-interiorization. If she comes, the newborn amorphous infant (of mud) will be placed simultaneously within the female form (the *jangidi*) yet also on its intensified (and therefore deeper) surface, from which she will continue to emerge and mature within the human world. Perhaps we can say that, coming from deep within herself, she will be placed deep within herself on the shore of the waters of wilderness; thus she will emerge from within herself in a two-fold dynamic, phase by phase. First, she comes out of the fractal depths of wilderness to reach its shore; second, she enters into the human forming of the female that is the *jangidi*, still on the shores of wilderness. Later she will emerge further in the Square Temple of the *uru*, in the crux of civilization. Earlier we referred to the entire dynamic as one of parthenogenesis ('virgin creation'), self-birth, self-generation, self-creation. In the relationship between lake and *jangidi* and, too, within the basket itself, Paiditalli is at once inside and outside herself, and thus she gives birth to herself without ever leaving herself. In this sense she shifts modalities of selfness, permitting human beings

to shape her in relation to their need to create life and depth within the flatness of civilization.

What occurs within Big Lake? On an earlier occasion, Bairagi Nayudu told us that he stands in the water, entreating the Goddess to come. This ritual process can be difficult and may take hours of begging, coaxing, cajoling, and scolding the Goddess, telling her she is disinterested in the welfare of her people, and the like. If all else fails, they curse her, arousing her awareness of them but also her anger, with powerful effects on those who await her. Eventually a light, a spark, or the end point of a lightning flash, coming from the direction of the Wilderness Temple, will appear in the dark sky, fall into the water and come to rest in the mud, its colors those of golden turmeric and vermilion. This is Paiditalli, the golden goddess, coming with great force, knocking consciousness out of Bairagi Nayudu and from others standing in the lake as they grasp the mud on the lake bottom. In 2006 he described what happens somewhat differently: 'We go into it [the lake]. We take mud from it. A spark will come into my hands. I will be like this [his hands are cupped; he already has scooped up the mud and holds it in his hands, awaiting the strike of the spark]. Then I close my hands [over the spark]. In my hands there will [now] be [the colors of] turmeric and vermilion. If not, that means the goddess has not come.'

In May 2006, Bairagi Nayudu is too unwell to enter the water and rests in the ethnographers' car. His place is taken by his son-in-law, Srinivasa Rao, a priest in the Wilderness Temple. Srinivasa Rao and three other men—Venkat (Bairagi Nayudu's younger son), the Talaiyari, Paidi Raju, and the Mala, Appa Ravu—enter the water, accompanied by drummers and the *Jamukulavallu* bards. They wade some 150 meters in, the water reaching their waists. They stand randomly but quite close to one another. Some 50 meters behind them another group stands in ankle-deep water—mostly young men and boys, helpers and onlookers, ready to carry the four out of the water when they lose consciousness at Paiditalli's arrival. Both groups face east, toward the Wilderness Temple diagonal to them on their right, across the lake. On the shore the Paidi Raju family women and a few others huddle around the *jangidi*. Behind the winnowing basket are two of the goddess's great acolytes, Satyanarayana and Bhaskar Ravu, seated on the soggy ground. In a half-circle around them stand another thirty or so onlookers. Farther back, closer to the road, are more groups of spectators, strung along the lake front. In the car on the ribbon of road, Bairagi Nayudu waits. The sky is alive with lightning, the air deliciously cool, the burning heat of the dry season forgotten.

The night is quiet, as all wait in the gentle silence (so unusual in South India). The backs of the four are dimly visible in the black waters, against the dark sky lit by fiery flashes. The mood on shore is easy, relaxed. There is a subdued sense of anxiety, though people are mostly happy, serious, expectant, waiting with patience as the minutes pass. A deep serenity pervades the scene, a softness quite unlike the intense nervousness and frenetic activity of the Sirimanu Jatra, which marks the climax of Paiditalli's growth and maturation in the human world. Once in a while a ripple of movement is visible among the men deep in the lake. More minutes pass. The water below seems to join with the sky above. Suddenly the boys in the water are running, crying, '*Ocestunnaru*' [They are coming!]. They have jumped the gun. More waiting. David Shulman, watching from the shore, has the feeling that he is present at the birth of time, time that will open to swallow everyone. But as the Goddess emerges from the watery depths, bringing wilderness into civilization, she also speeds up time, creating a time of growth and ripening of the fruits-to-come. This faster time is continuous, with fewer breaks, fewer of the stops and starts that are the hallmark of civilization and its organization. So, too, the spaces the Goddess will move through will become more continuous with one another, brought together, *intra-connected*, with a lessening of boundary markers and internal divisions. Time and space will be in-fused with the liquid qualities of Paiditalli's presence. Her coming will join together four of the five basic elements of which the Hindu cosmos is constituted—fire (the lightning), air (through which she will pass), water (into which she will plunge), earth (into which she will enter on the lake bottom).

Again there is movement in the water. The boys standing in the rear rush forward, the small group of men disappear into the water, and a series of soft cries pierce the darkness: 'Jai Paidimamba.' There is splashing, a flurry of movement. Srinivasa Rao is dredged out of the water, his cupped hands heavy with amorphous greyish-black clay mud. He is unconscious. Then Paidi Raju, Venkat, and Appa Ravu are dragged onto the shore, all drenched, muddy, beyond communication, their eyes shut, their hands clasped tightly around clay. The Goddess has arrived with force and been brought to shore, one of the men says, by Srinivasa Rao. People force the men to sit up, and gradually they return to themselves, opening their eyes. As if delivering an infant, the women, working quickly and efficiently, take the mud from Srinivasa Rao's hands with infinite tenderness into the *jangidi*, cleaning and washing, making order, mixing the goddess (who has arrived with her own turmeric and vermilion) into the turmeric and vermilion within the winnowing basket, kneading, molding



and feeding her within this exterior womb on the surface of the human world, an exterior womb that is no less a cradle.

While a puja (of the variety performed for village goddesses) is being performed for Paiditalli, the women and Satyanarayana cover the winnowing basket—the amorphous infant within—with their hands. The women, particularly Paidiraju's wife, perform a secret ritual over the infant. *Kunkum* is applied to a pile of white rice, turning it red, so that it looks like the blood-rice of a *bali* sacrifice. One corner of the basket is opened, and an egg, an onion, and other food are placed inside to feed the infant.<sup>49</sup> Various substances are passed quickly from hand to hand. Seven raw eggs, other foods, turmeric and vermilion, are buried in the hole dug earlier by the water's edge. This, it is said, is to ask forgiveness of Paiditalli in case any mistakes were made. The winnowing basket is placed atop this covered hole.<sup>50</sup> A fistful of mud is taken from the basket, a lit oil lamp placed on it, the mud then placed atop the basket. Again, as in the growing of Taravani, this ritual is spoken of as 'the making of *layers*', that is, the self-intensification and focusing of presence, the opening of depth and space within the infant on the flatness of the human world. In the ritual the elements of the goddess are placed under the earth (deep in the hole), in the (deep) womb of the *jangidi*, and (into the depths of height) atop this winnowing basket. So, too, the infant is nourished on each of these layers. Paiditalli, coming as water and earth, will evolve and expand within human flatness, deepening it, opening its earth to the rain waters, making it fertile.<sup>51</sup> During the puja, people stand around and talk of the coming of the goddess. This year, they say, she has come quickly and easily, 'without any trouble'. She is very innocent, they say, 'a cool mother'—innocent

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<sup>49</sup> The food is simple peasant fare of the kind used to feed village deities.

<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, the number seven, here intimately related to Paiditalli's re-birth, reminds strongly of the seven sister goddesses, of whom Paiditalli is at times one.

<sup>51</sup> The food and substances placed within the *jangidi* and those placed in the hole, then covered by the *jangidi*, seem to be quite similar—close to being mirror-images, one entering Paiditalli's limitless interior, the other entering the human world. We could extrapolate here that the 'making of layers' is literally the making of a simultaneously present three-tier cosmos as Paiditalli emerges from the waters. The lowest level is beneath the surface, propitiating and feeding her within the mud before she emerges onto the surface. The mid-level is that of the infant Paiditalli who has emerged onto the flat surface and who is being fed by the water's edge. The upper level (the fist-sized bundle of mud topped with a lit lamp atop the *jangidi* basket) is higher, perhaps a dimension of futurity that will come into play with Tree-Paiditalli. This rite, then, incorporates the simultaneous existence of these domains and moves between depth and height, as does Paiditalli during her ritual presence in Vizianagaram.

in the sense of being unheated by the experiences and influences of the human world. Let us call her in this form “Mud-Paiditalli.”

The first bird-cries of dawn, a rush of wings, the cock’s crow, people stretch and gather themselves; the procession is prepared again. Bards and drummers to the front, then Paidiraju carrying the *jangidi* on his head under the red canopy (now a baby dwelling), they start on their way to the Cadurugudi, the Square Temple in the *uru*, the Old City. The route is specified: certain lanes are important, and there people make traditional offerings. Saris are spread on the road, all the way to the temple, so that the goddess does not touch the ground. As the procession passes through neighborhoods, mothers come into the streets and lanes with their small children, prostrating in front of Paidiraju, making him step over their little ones. When the *jangidi* reaches the Square Temple, Mud-Paiditalli is placed on a mat next to her little shrine tucked into the three-species tree, outside and in back of the Square Temple. Some say this is the original square mat on which she sat long ago next to the tree, before her tiny shrine was built.

The mud is brought into the *garbha grha* of the Cadurugudi, the Square Temple. A small amount is placed at the feet of the Mulavirat, the permanent image of Paiditalli. The rest of the mud is spread on the *capa*-mat in two clumps, to act as ‘cushions’ (*kuduru*) for the goddess who comes as the two five-metal pots (*talli-ghatalu*). On each side of these two is placed one of the two largest metal pots. And on each side of these two are placed two of the small pots. Some mud is placed under all of these pots. The pots sit like this in the *garbha grha* for fifteen days. In addition, a lamp is lit which must burn for an entire twelve months until Mud-Paiditalli returns.

On the fifteenth day (of course a Tuesday) all the mud, now exhausted and devoid of the pasuppu and kunkum energy of Paiditalli, is carefully scraped up and put back into Big Lake. The area in which the pots stood in the *garbha grha* is then ritually cleansed. On that same Tuesday, two new pots (*kuti-ghaṭālu*) made of a particularly soft clay (*liguru-maṭṭi*), such as one finds on the bottom of Big Lake in particular spots or in a riverbed, are brought into the *garbha grha*. They too come in twos and are meant to collect food for the goddess from neighborhood households.

For the next months, through August, the infant Paiditalli, amorphous in form, matures in the human world, transferring her essence, her energy, to the pots, to this more definite, intense, focused form of goddess, as the pots regenerate, soaking up her youthful presence. Yet in an important sense, the spheroid pots too are her own womb within which she grows, as the *jangidi* was her womb, as was Big Lake itself. She continues to grow,

to develop within herself, evolving her layering and her complexity, even as she moves from womb to womb. She shifts into wombs that are also products of civilization more compatible with the transformative tasks she has embraced here—such as the task of infusing the dry, shallow land with her inherent fluidity. She is the golden goddess and, as we have said, gold is the solid closest to the fluid. Even as her form acquires a measure of solid presence, she continues flowing with herself. In this regard she has flowed to the Square Temple, there to flow into herself as pots that will carry her pregnant fluidity into the city, deepening and filling its arid cysts of cosmos, sowing them, preparing them for harvest.

Paiditali comes out of the waters, emerging from herself to become watery earth on land. Even though she came easily in 2006, more usually persuading her to come forth requires great effort. She may well not want to come, not want to leave the depths of cosmos where she is most at one with herself, deep within herself. There, self-consciousness as this is understood in the human world may not exist. Praising and cursing her, singing her qualities, telling her story, are all attempts to awaken her to herself, to self-recognition, by awakening her to the existence of human beings. Eventually she comes for the sake of her people, yet she does so with great force, itself often understood as *anger*, striking unconscious the priest and his helpers whose task it is to remove her from water to flat land. Moreover, her coming is the force of creation, always the re-forming of form. She appears in the depths of herself as primordial mud infused with her essence of golden yellow pasupu and vermilion kunkum, quint-essentially female in its first moments of self-awareness, awakened as she enters the watery depths.

There seems to be a change in her being as she arrives. Coming with force, perhaps fury, she seems fully adult. Yet becoming mud on the lake bottom, she becomes quiescent, more like a slumbering infant. As soon as she is onshore she is worshiped. Yet she is not mature—perhaps “evolved” is a better term, relating to awareness—and will not be for a long time. She is described as ‘innocent’, as prepubescent, her malleable form amorphous, placed in the womb-like, cradle-like winnowing basket. Her coming echoes the myth of Paidimamba who returned from these same waters, this same womb, as the protectress of kingdom and kingship and therefore of the kingdom’s own growth and maturation that is linked inextricably to agricultural growth and maturation, especially that of rice.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In some sense too, the priest and his helpers ‘die’ in the waters, losing consciousness, returning to life, to consciousness, on the banks of Big Lake, on the edge of wilderness.

The configuration of male seed germinating in female earth is widely present in South Asian agriculture (Balzani 2003: 159). Stutley and Stutley (1977: 278; see also Balzani 2003: 162–165) citing the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* v. 2, 5, comment that in ancient India, ‘at the beginning of each sowing season, twelve furrows representing the months of the year, were ritually plowed by the king or chieftain in the first field . . . As the repository of the seed, furrows were regarded as the earth’s female generative organs.’ Indeed, ‘the word *bija* may refer to both seed and semen’ (Balzani 2003: 157). In coastal Orissa and likely in northern Kalinga, ploughing and sowing the earth is homologous with sexual intercourse (see Apffel-Marglin 1981: 160).

### 6. *The Growing of Rice*

Rice was the main crop of the kingdom of Vizianagaram, a staple that must have timely and sufficient water. The major source of water is the great southwest monsoon that should end the dry season, usually arriving around mid-June (*Mrgasira* month). This is when rice is planted. The periodicity of cultivating rice is intimately related to the cycle of *Paiditalli*’s self-birth and evolution. Farmers in villages around Vizianagaram speak of rice in the language of a woman growing to sexual maturity, becoming pregnant, maturing to parturition, and then ‘drying out’ after childbirth.

The rice-plot (*āku-maḍi*) must be ready before the first rains. The rice-plot is a small corner of a larger field. As Moreno (1992: 151) comments, farmers draw ‘homologies between human bodies and the earth as a divine body of the goddess *Bhudevi*; it is clear that agriculture in India has the characteristics of bodily sacraments (*samskara*) and that the farmer occupies the position of custodian of the earth’s potential for “reproductive prosperity” (*sri*).’ The land is plowed a number of times and the furrows manured.<sup>53</sup> Around early July, after at least a few days of rain, so that one can step into the water in the field up to one’s ankle, the rice-plot

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<sup>53</sup> Commonly in the Hindu world, plowing and sowing are understood as sexual acts through which *Bhu Devi* is impregnated—while, for example, the transplantation of rice seedlings may be thought of as ‘merely altering the seedlings’ location within the already pregnant goddess’s womb’ (Daryn 2006: 195). Daryn (2006: 194–219) has an especially insightful discussion of how among Hindu farmers in central Nepal this pregnancy develops to fruition.

In the villages of Orissa, indeed in North Kalinga, during the ritual time of *Raja Samkranti*, the earth, that is, *Bhudevi*, menstruates; and during this period (sic.) farmers refrain from any action that would cut the earth (Apffel-Marglin 1981: 161). But *Bhudevi* menstruates in

is planted with seed. After the paddy seeds are spread, the land is flattened with a board and covered with thorny bushes to prevent the cattle from wandering over the surface. After six days the first tiny white sprouts (*molaka*), three or four inches long, appear. The sprouts continue to grow for another fifteen days or so, turning bright green in color. Then, usually at the end of July, sometimes in early August, the sprouts are removed, made into bundles, and transplanted (*dammu*) into the larger field.<sup>54</sup> Commonly, the farmer's wife will do the first transplanting in the auspicious north-east corner of the field—also the last transplanting (unless she is menstruating, in which case the farmer does it).

Planting and transplanting are folded into local rituals of fertility and protection. Before the transplanting, the farmer takes the farm animals to an anthill in the fields and performs a puja there to a local goddess for the well-being and fertility of the animals. Sometimes blood-offerings (of chicken) are made. The event is called the Cattle Festival (*Pasuvula pandaga*). With the first transplanting, the farmer's wife performs a puja to Bhudevi, who is ultimately responsible for the growth of the rice. This is followed by the women's worshiping the village goddess (the *grama devata*), asking that crops grow in abundance. When all the farmers of the village have completed their transplantation ('not even one left behind'), the village as a whole celebrates the Village Deity Festival (*grama-devata-pandaga*). Even as the first shoots are grown and then transplanted, Mud-Paiditalli is germinating in the *garbha grha* of the Square Temple, transferring (perhaps one can say 'transplanting') herself from mud into pots, her presence evolving in the human world, from womb to womb. This language of germination, *vittanam nāṭṭu*, is common to rice and to sexual activity—a language infused with the feeling of sexual dynamics.<sup>55</sup> For example, the sensuality of thrust ('Did you feel the thrust?' [*bāgā nāṭṭindā*]) and the proprieties of timing (for the wedding, for first sexual activity) apply equally to rice cultivation. So, too, after the seeds are spread in the north-east corner, the farmer watches carefully, day by day, anxious to know whether they are good enough—just as after the wedding everyone is anxious to see if the seed sprouts, if the new wife becomes pregnant. The farmer must see to it that the depth of water in the furrows is

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the 'hinge' between the dry and the rainy seasons, showing her fertility as the agricultural rhythm thrums from barrenness to sowing and growing (Apffel-Marglin 2008: 21).

<sup>54</sup> The Telugu word for transplantation, *siddham ceyadam*, means making something ready, fine-tuning it.

<sup>55</sup> See also Gold 2003: 259.

appropriate, not too much, not too little, around two to three centimeters. Water flows from one plot to another, but each rice-plot has water gates to save or drain water, and levels have to be continually adjusted.

The first tangible, visible stage after transplantation is called ‘becoming a stomach’ (*poṭṭa rāvaḍam*), as pannicle buds (called the ‘little stomach’) start forming inside each of the shoots or sheaths of the plant. This is akin to the beginnings of female pregnancy. Within seven to ten days, as the pannicle bud swells into maturity, becoming the ‘stomach’ (*poṭṭa*) emerging from its sheath, the flower (*pūvu*) is visible. By late August, as the stomach is growing, the new clay pots, full of Paiditalli, begin making their daily rounds from the Square Temple into the lanes and streets of Old Vizianagaram.

The dynamic of flowering is internal, secretive, unseen. The flower is like a ‘soft downiness’ (*nuguru*), ‘a hairy covering of leaves on stalks of some plants’ (Gwynn’s Telugu-English Dictionary). In Telugu, this flower (*pūvu*, *pūvāram*) means a compact tenderness that has to transform further. It has *pūta* in it, a kind of painting on, rubbing on, applying. In this there may be intimations also of intensifying, perhaps of layering. During the time of flowering, the plant’s male and female reproductive organs are pollinated together by the wind. After a further seven to ten days, the flower turns into seed (*ginja*), and when a bunch of seeds come tightly together, the farmers call this the backbone (*vennu*). The fertilized flower develops a quasi-protective hull that fills with liquid starch and protein, and as the flower falls away this milky fluid becomes visible. This is the most significant stage for the farmers, proof that the soft, green seed is a viable offspring. They call this stage the milk-pregnancy (*pāl-posukovaḍam*). ‘The flower becomes pregnant with milk’; literally, ‘the flower pours itself milk [within itself]’ (*pūvu pālu posu kondi*). A standard phrase used for women’s pregnancy is “She has poured water for herself” (*āviḍa nīllu posu kondi*).

The parallels between these pregnancies are vivid. The plant is successfully pregnant within itself as its seeds develop; it then turns hard and yellow (*pasupu*), ripe with maturity (*paṇḍe tappadu*), the shoots heavy with rice bending back and down (*ongaḍam/vangaḍam*), ready for harvesting. The significance of the milk-pregnancy is underscored by the Stomach-offering sacrifice, the offering for the success of the ‘pregnancy’ of the rice plant, that may be held at this time: a *potu* male-sheep is slaughtered, its blood smeared on cooked rice offered to the goddess in the hope that nature will be cooperative. The crop is not harvested until it has ripened itself, cooked itself, to the *pākam* moment, to the right point. Farmers

may check their fields three times a day for this right moment, when the liquid in the hull hardens to form a starchy inner grain. As soon as this moment is reached, they sacrifice chickens to Bhu Devi and harvest the crop. The first cut—‘holding the fistful’ (*piḍi antaḍam*)—is offered to Bhu Devi and kept in the north-east corner of the field. Usually, harvesting is in November, in the month of Kartika, some four months from the spreading of paddy seeds in that auspicious north-east corner. After harvesting, the paddy has to dry for one week (*eṇḍāli*) before it is brought to the threshing floor and, following that, winnowed. In parallel terms, after delivering her infant, the mother has to be dried out (*ārāli*). She is called raw, uncooked, undried (*bālintālu*). She is dried out with special foods (for example, preparations of betel leaves [*kāyam*]) that generate body heat.<sup>56</sup>

The annual rice cycle in the region of Vizianagaram is related intimately to the opening of space and depth—in seeding, the extrusion of shoots, ploughing furrows, filling them with water, transplanting, the protrusion of the stomach in the extruding plant, the forming of the milk-pregnancy, the birth of the mature *pasupu*-colored rice. The dynamics are those of interiority, of depth, exteriorizing itself through emergence onto the softened, now-receptive, indeed welcoming surface of the human world. As we have noted, it is within the space of opening and the fullness of depth that desire is profound and change is made. The dynamics of exteriorization are primarily female, a matter of generating new life from within life. The generation of rice and the generation of life through female pregnancy are, as we have said, intimately related.

Yet more powerfully than this, once again the parallels seem to suggest a very high degree of fit in this cosmos. To say this is to emphasize the depth and breadth of homology among different domains—the emergence of the goddess, the emergence of the human child, the emergence of rice—so that these domains can be said to emerge from one another, just as we argued earlier for the relation between water and mountain, one emerging from and turning into another. So, too, these domains fold into one another to a large degree. The goddess emerging is an infant, as is the human child, as is the newly born rice before it is processed. All undergo processes of maturation within the human world that make

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<sup>56</sup> Among Tamil rice-farmers, the traditional Tamil New Year of Tai Ponkal is marked by the cooking of raw ponkal rice that in these moments of transformation and passage from one year to the next, the opening of cosmic space, condenses the entire dynamics of the rice-growing cycle, from planting to harvest, within the cooking pot-womb of Bhu Devi (Good 1983: 236).

them fit and able members of *this* portion of cosmos and that shape their capacities for particular interactions and accomplishments.

### 7. *Pot-Paiditalli Furrows and Sows*

During the period that the stomach, the flower, and the milk-pregnancy appear in the rice plant, the two *kundalu* clay pots of the evolving Paiditalli begin to move from their location in the *garbha grha* of the Square Temple. During the evenings of August and September the pots go in procession into Old Vizianagaram. Let us call this shaping of the Goddess "Pot-Paiditalli." The Old City is built according to the form of a square *mandala* with thirty-six streets to a side.<sup>57</sup> Every Tuesday evening during this period Pot-Paiditalli goes to visit the royal Śakti, sometimes identified with Kanaka (Golden) Durga,<sup>58</sup> who seems never to leave the depths of the Rani's quarters in the Moti Mahal, or the Round Mahal, of the Kota palace-fort and perhaps the Durbar Hall in the adjoining building, where court rituals were held.<sup>59</sup> On Thursday evenings during these weeks the pots go to the Goddess Place in Hukumpeta, there to be worshiped by the women of Bairagi Nayudu's family and the women of the neighborhood. On other evenings the pots follow a set pattern that during these months will eventually take Pot-Paiditalli into many or most of the streets, lanes, and byways of the capital, into its nooks and crannies as she goes from home to home, to be met by family members, especially women, making their offerings and asking for her blessing. This worship night after night, street after street, is akin to *furrowing* the flatlands of the city, opening space for the depth of presence of the goddess within home after home. So, too, one can think of these movements of the goddess as *sowing* the coming of kingship in every corner of the furrowed *uru*. The climactic harvesting will occur during the Sirimanu, as the king is brought anew to his palace, thereby renewing this integrative core of the kingdom.

There are, then, three vectors through which, during this period, Pot-Paiditalli opens, sows, and energizes the city: that of kingship in her journeying to the Śakti of the Kota; that of kindred, in her journeying to the

<sup>57</sup> This is the mandala in abstraction. On the ground, the Old City has far less than the 1296 streets the mandala would generate.

<sup>58</sup> In South India, and in Kalinga, Durga is the great protectress of kingship. See Schnepel 2002: 255–292; Dirks 1987: 39–40, 285 f.; Waghorne 1994: 215.

<sup>59</sup> The Round Mahal, indeed round in circumference, may have taken its name from the royal marriage bed, which was perhaps round in shape.



Goddess Place in Hukumpeta; and that of kingdom, in her journeying through the byways of the Old City. Though kingship and kingdom were abolished in 1949, their presence is integral to Paiditalli and the Sirimanu. In practice, royalty is an almost-presence, its niches embedded in the rituals and in the teleologies and efficacy of their practice, yet rarely if ever actualized. The primary royals are the two sons of the last Raja. The eldest, Anand, the Raja-who-would-have-been, is treated as the Raja. He is always expected to appear at Paiditalli rites yet rarely does so in person, though sometimes he sends a representative; and he makes the gifts expected of him in his royal capacity. Though he has a great house in the city, its appearance is that of shuttered abandonment, its yards hardly cared for. Introverted, private, he lives much of the time in a modest home in the mountains, within sight of the great temple of Simhachalam.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, it is crucial to note that in all the Paiditalli rites the king himself is not the focus. Paiditalli's re-birth and relationship to the kingdom is the focus. The king's presence should touch these rites at certain points, yet the person of the king is not affected by them. We return to this in the conclusion.

The Tuesday visits of the *kundalu* pots to the Kota Śakti during this period of deepening the city with the blessings of Paiditalli are crucial to this ritual complex: they mark the venue for harvesting kingship within the furrowed kingdom. The Indian State abolished Vizianagaram kingship, but the Kota Sakti has never left the palace-fort. Were there still a kingdom, its deepest interiority would be in the palace-fort. In the Kota the Śakti's home is within the Moti Mahal, the quarters of the Raja's consort, the Rani, and in the Durbar Hall. Traditionally the Gajapati kings (including the last Raja) were crowned in the Moti Mahal. Not only has the Kota Śakti not deserted the palace-fort, to our knowledge she never goes out of this interiority of the kingdom-that-was; to some degree she still has a part in the growing of kingdom and kingship that the ritual performs. The stable presence of the Kota Śakti attests to the powerful male presence of the palace-fort. As we have seen, Vizianagaram tradition claims that

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<sup>60</sup> By contrast, in the neighboring former little kingdom of Bobbili, where the Gajapati king of Vizianagaram met his death in the eighteenth century, the rajah-who-would-have-been (now deceased) maintains a royal, or at least noble, lifestyle, as the protector, guardian, politician, and sometime provider for various populations in the area. During our brief visit to his palace, he sponsored the annual Ayudha-puja ritual for those who gave him allegiance, and he received a delegation of local tribal people who presented him with a beautiful, white, garlanded kid as a sacrificial offering (he accepted the kid, adding to us that he certainly would not sacrifice it).

the Kota itself was built on a spot recommended by the Sufi Pir Denkha Shah Wali Baba<sup>61</sup>—because it was a location replete with male strength.<sup>62</sup> According to Bairagi Nayudu, even now there is a small stone image of Kota Sakti in the Fort, perhaps in the Round Mahal, where the last Raja lived until 1958. The image is said to look like a post (*koyyabomma*). Until the end of the reign of the last Raja, the Queen Mother, Amma Sarkar, saw to it that all the rites of the Kota Sakti were carried out. The Raja-who-would-have-been, Anand, said that at night the Kota Śakti walks the walls of the palace-fort, always on guard. The identities of South Indian goddesses are at times highly specific and at other times highly amorphous. Sometimes they are quite singular; sometimes they proliferate and multiply. Sometimes hardly any distinction is drawn between the Kota Śakti, Kanaka Durga, and Paiditalli, and they are referred to as overlapping; at other times, this is not the case.

Who is the Kota Śakti? Like Paiditalli, like the generic goddess, the generic female, the Kota Śakti is depth as well as the potential power of fertility, creativity, generation and growth that comes from depth. At the middle point of the kingdom, the palace-fort, and within this point at the still deeper middle of the Moti Mahal or the Durbar Hall, the Kota Śakti is the constant presence of depth in space through time. Her very name, *śakti*, tells of her intensity and concentration of power and, if one can put it this way, her responsibility for activating the king as ruler of the kingdom. Put differently, she is female sexual fluid (*rajas*) embodying potency which is the essence of *śakti* (Apffel-Marglin and Hudson 2008: 83). The Kota Śakti is the female principle that activates maleness, whether male divinity or its derivative, male kingship. Apffel-Marglin (1981: 178), writing of kingship in coastal Orissa, says that, ‘The power of the king is essentially a female power, a power of fertility and a power of arms. That power is called *śakti*...’ Without the *śakti*, kingship is without creativity, without strength, without force. In this regard, *śakti* is an elemental presence where (and when) kingship relates first and foremost to itself. At Vizianagaram this presence of *śakti* is within the palace-fort, probably in the royal throne (*gaddi*) in the Durbar Hall, or in the cushion which supported the

<sup>61</sup> The Pir was said to walk on air, one foot above the ground.

<sup>62</sup> According to another story, while the foundations for the fort were being dug, the image of Paiditalli was uncovered and became the sthala murti of the Caturugudi temple. This image is small, of black basalt, her head angled to the right, with an angular face set in an expression of wonder and surprise. Thus one of her images, that in the Vanamgudi temple, came out of the water, and one, that in the Caturugudi, out of the earth.

king on the throne (see Mayer 1985; Balzani 2003: 3). In Vizianagaram this śakti would be the Kota Śakti, which may be why she never leaves the Kota. The power and protection of the Kota Śakti are ever present for royalty; and her presence does not wane. She enables kingship, yet she does not shape the annual growth and florescence of kingdom and kingship. This is Paiditalli's task, accomplished through her own annual regeneration and growth.

On the other hand, the presence and power of Kanaka Durga has generic aspects of the goddess (at times the same statement will apply to the Kota Śakti and to Paiditalli). In Vizianagaram the time of the Sirimanu is synchronized with and activated by Durga's great victory over Mahishasura, the Buffalo Demon. In this region there is a great profusion of goddess shrines, yet very few shrines of male deities.<sup>63</sup> Paiditalli journeys to the Kota Śakti on Tuesdays, the day of the week when the presence of Telugu goddesses is closest to the world of human beings—a creative and potentially chaotic time when cosmos may up-end itself. So, too, the Sirimanu will be held on the first Tuesday after Vijayadasami, the day celebrating Durga's triumph which takes place at the end of Navaratri, the nine nights of Durga. As Paiditalli journeys to the Kota Śakti, she strengthens their relationship, their complementary protection of kingship, thereby opening and deepening the vector of kingship in Vizianagaram by coalescing the female powers of transformation and protection. This coalescence reaches its climax in the Sirimanu, as Paiditalli carries the resurgent king, her brother, from her Square Temple to the Kota, giving his activation and care over to the protection of the Kota Śakti (perhaps especially during the lengthy period when Paiditalli will be absent, immersed within herself in the Wilderness Temple).

The interiority of the Goddess has changed since she left Big Lake in May. Mud-Paiditalli emerged from her own womb as an unaware infant in order to become her own womb again, Pot-Paiditalli, now pregnant with fertile energy. She is now, we believe, fully self-aware in the human world. Rather than her worshipers needing to attract her attention, to make her aware of them, she now goes to them daily, seeking them out in the nooks and crannies of their living spaces in order to bless and care for them. Perhaps this is her own transplantation, from her Square Temple,

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<sup>63</sup> M. V. Krishnayya reports on a survey of temples in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam, some sixty kilometers southeast of Vizianagaram, in which there is a multitude of goddess shrines, yet hardly one major shrine dedicated to a male deity.

her interior, into the kingdom, household by household, each one opened up by the furrows of worship. She has shifted within herself through a series of cosmic interiorities, moving from her cosmos of utter continuity lacking all distinction toward her full presence in that portion of her cosmos that is marked by human discontinuities—deep and shallow, flowing and encysted, female and male. Thus she has moved from within her own middleness, where the self-awareness that depends on otherness is superfluous, into the womb-like depth of Big Lake; then into the womb-*jangidi* on the hard, flat surface of the human world; then into the womb-like pots at her own Chaturugudi. Now she is actively moving into the thin hardness of a kingdom in need of healing.

As Pot-Paiditalli's sowing of the city moves towards completion, she reappears elsewhere in a distinctive but no less dramatic mode, announcing her readiness to become the Sirimanu. In the second half of September, Paiditalli comes in a dream to Bairagi Nayudu. She tells him that she is growing in a tamarind tree (*cinta cettu*) outside the city, and she tells him in which direction to look for it. She tells him to come for her. For this purpose the tree will be higher and heavier than the usual tamarind.<sup>64</sup> Once he locates the tree, Bairagi Nayudu goes to the family, to persuade the farmer who owns the land to part with his tree. Commonly, the family resists giving up the tree, in which case the goddess turns on them in fury, bringing them disease until they acquiesce. In 2002 the goddess tree was located in a grove of tamarinds (*cinta toppu*) some two hundred meters from a road that meanders among paddy fields, about fifteen kilometers west of the city, in the blue shadow of the Eastern Ghats. The farmer whose land this was did not agree to part with his tree, but Paiditalli appeared to his mother in a dream as a snake. Frightened, the mother convinced her son to give in.<sup>65</sup> The tree was marked with a *bottu* (*ammavari cett' ani bottu petestam*) and awaited her devotees.

#### 8. *The Tevadam Rite: Bringing the Sprouting Goddess Out of the Earth*

Since her (re)birth, the rites of Paiditalli have extended their social circumference as she emerges toward the climactic Sirimanu. Before her (re)birth, the women of the Nayudu family visited her in the Vanamgudi

<sup>64</sup> Bairagi Nayudu says the tamarind is a rare tree in this area, because of its height. The tree can grow up to 20 meters and gives fruit. Its wood is hard and dense, its heartwood dark red, its sapwood yellowish in color.

<sup>65</sup> He is the eldest of six brothers who in common own the grove and, thus, the tree.

and in an intimate family rite asked her to return. Her (re)birth, including its prelude in the Goddess Place, opened ritual space to her devotees—women of the Hukumpeta neighborhood where the Nayudu family lives, devotees of her Caturugudi temple, and people who have made special vows to her. Now a different, heterogenous crowd gathers on the appointed day at the beginning of October, to carefully remove Tree-Paiditalli (for so we shall call her here) from the earth.<sup>66</sup> By eight o'clock in the morning, people are standing in the grove next to a tree that has been marked by turmeric powder smeared around its lower trunk, vermilion dots plastered atop the yellow, and garlands of yellow and white flowers laced around the trunk. This is Tree-Paiditalli. This time she has come not from wilderness, as she did in emerging within Big Lake, but from close to farmland, to rice paddy cultivation at a time when the rice plants are giving milk to themselves. She is a growing plant, emerging from earth, thrusting high and deep into the heavens.

A long rope is tied to the top of the tree and fastened to another to control the descent once Tree-Paiditalli has been brought out of the earth. Another tree has been cut, minimally dressed, and loaded onto a bullock-cart; this tree will become the *irusu-mānu*, the base to support Tree-Paiditalli on the Sirimanu car. Other bullock-carts are waiting to transport her, hours later, into Vizianagaram. The strong, white bullocks have been garlanded, decorated, the length of their vertebrae smeared with turmeric paste, with dots of vermilion applied on top. For the time being, these bullocks move freely in and out of the open space around Paiditalli.

Musicians play Carnatic *kritis* and devotional songs from Telugu films. Seated before the musicians on a broad reddish carpet is a distinguished-looking peasant family, the donors of Tree-Paiditalli and the *irusu-mānu*. Milling about in the open space in front of the tree are local politicians, one of the temple trustees, journalists from the local TV station and Vizianagaram newspapers, and various prominent businessmen and citizens of the town. The police too are present—initially two policemen, but soon ten and more. A kitchen has been set up to feed breakfast and lunch to the guests. The atmosphere is gentle, intimate, cozy, quiet, devotional. Bairagi Nayudu disappears to perform a puja to the local village goddess, whose consent must be given to what is to follow.

Increasing numbers of people, especially women from the surrounding villages, many holding coconuts to be broken, press forward to worship

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<sup>66</sup> Bairagi Nayudu and others often call her Ammavaru's Tree (*ammavāri ceṭṭu*).



18. Hugging Tree Paiditalli (David Shulman).

Paiditalli. They bring new saris and blouses which they offer to the goddess for her blessing, wrapping them around the tree or touching them to the trunk before taking them back for their own use. Some families from Vizianagaram who have Paiditalli as their personal deity (*kula-devata*) or family deity (*inṭi-devata*) have come to pay their respects. The ground around the base of the tree becomes a thick, muddy paste of red, yellow, and brown from all the offerings made to her. She is touched tenderly, people putting their palms on her, pressing against her. More garlands are tied around her, her upper trunk covered with flowers. By now women are pushing for openings to reach the goddess. The Vizianagaram visitors send their shouts into the air—‘Victory to Paiditalli’ (*Paiditallammaki jai jai*) and ‘Victory to the Mother’ (*jai jai Paidimamba, jai jai mata*)—their cries echoed by the crowd.

Excitement swirls and intensifies around the tree. The mood becomes one of rapt attention and subdued exhilaration. The puja activity—offering coconuts, touching the tree, circumambulating it, all at the correct astrological moment (*muhūrtam*)—becomes more frenetic. Bairagi Nayudu is standing next to the tree, his bare feet immersed in the red-yellow mud. He holds a small book of stotras for the goddess and begins to call out her epithets one by one, as the crowd responds: “Gauridevi, Bhavani, Paraśakti, Mahesvari, protect us . . .” The front of the tree has become a space only for men, with some women standing behind the tree. The men conduct the official rites—performing puja and felling the tree—while the women comprise the bulk of individual worshipers. At the edges of the crowd, numerous chicken heads fall to the ground, their blood daubed on her lower trunk. Yet more garments are tied around the trunk along with a golden sari with gold-embroidered *jari*. Paiditalli is becoming more alive, more restless, a goddess in her fullness, decked with *boṭṭu* forehead dots and garlands. A sense of jubilation crests through the crowd. Most conspicuous of all is the way everyone tries to touch the tree with his or her hands, placing palms flat against her trunk, holding them there, caressing her, holding tight, pushing towards her, leaning against her. Women in particular want to keep this contact going. Some grab the lower leafy branches of a neighboring tree as they lean toward the goddess. As the women embrace the goddess, their solidarity with her is palpable.

Bairagi Nayudu and his entourage circumambulate Tree-Paiditalli three times (as they would in her shrine). He takes an old iron axe with a small head, its long handle covered with turmeric and marked by two slender circles of vermilion, and makes the first cut, lightly, gently. Others of status follow, slicing lightly, tenderly. Now everyone, in a frenzy of activity,

rushes to grab the axe, though at this stage only those at the top of the social and institutional hierarchy are allowed to wield it. Later anyone who wants to wield the axe lightly is given a turn, including the policemen and many of the women. This will go on for hours. The strokes are mild. Tree-Paiditalli's trunk is never seriously chopped; later her roots will be exposed and cut through. *Harati*—lustration with camphor lamps in coconut shells—is performed. The musicians have resumed playing. Now people take *bandaram*—the paste of *pasupu* and *kunkum*—from the base of the tree and apply it to their foreheads. Great quantities of *pasupu* (still used, by the way, as an anesthetic) are poured on her base, perhaps putting balm on the wound being inflicted on her (though she herself has demanded it).

The frenzied mood abates. Breakfast (*uppama*) is served as *prasadam* from the goddess. Media interviews take place. Packets of *pulihara* are given to the villagers. People say goodbye to one another, as the crowd disperses, yet buses are still on their way from Vizianagaram. Neither of the last Raja's two sons—the eldest, Ananda Gajapati Raju (as noted, still referred to as the Raja); and the younger, Ashok, the finance minister of Andhra Pradesh—has put in an appearance despite their assurances to Bairagi Nayudu, though an official-looking jeep parked nearby attests to the likely presence of an emissary.<sup>67</sup>

Under the direction of the Assistant Commissioner of the Religious Endowments Board, workers with long iron poles clear away the soil around Paiditalli's base, exposing her roots sunk deep within the earth. The roots are cut away from the trunk slowly and painstakingly. She is taken out of the earth, intact, with as little violence to her as possible.<sup>68</sup> By the late afternoon, Tree-Paiditalli is loaded onto a bullock cart and taken in the direction of the city with a brief stop for a *puja* at the Wilderness temple, and then on to Bairagi Nayudu's home in the Hukumpeta neighborhood where she will rest, perhaps to gestate until the Sirimanu, some ten days hence.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Anand told us he has never attended the Tevadam rite.

<sup>68</sup> The participants do not say that they are 'cutting' or 'cutting down' the tree. They say that they are 'bringing' Ammavaru. In other words, they use a language of emergence, perhaps of fullness coming into being in their world.

<sup>69</sup> Navaratri—the Nine Days festival in the autumn—celebrates kingship and its relationship to Durga in the little kingdoms of South India. The Sirimanu Jatra, on the Tuesday after Vijaya Dasami, the tenth day, is pervaded by ties to Durga. Paidimamba was a devotee of Durga before her death; and, as we will note, Durga will appear to Bairagi Nayudu before the Sirimanu; moreover, Paiditalli invites Durga to join her on the Sirimanu. Durga





19. Worshipping Tree Paitalli in the Street (Boaz Amichay).

In contrast to Mud-Paiditalli, Tree-Paiditalli is neither cajoled nor cursed into becoming self-aware and so entering into the human plane. Her desire is tangible—she insists on coming, on sacrificing herself again (being cut, being injured); she demands to be taken into the city. After the more reluctant Mud-Paiditalli has grown in the Caturugudi, and after she has sown the capital city with the coming presence of kingship, she eagerly, pointedly, deliberately, reappears as a tree, her roots growing deep into the earth, her crown growing deep into the heavens. Tree-Paiditalli is the Goddess evolving further, her cosmos preparing to harvest and deliver kingship within the Old City energized and prepared by Mud-Paiditalli. Perhaps, as the sower, Pot-Paiditalli may also be growing herself as Tree-Paiditalli. Mud-Paiditalli has matured within the Caturugudi, Pot-Paiditalli returns daily to the *garbha grha*, but Tree-Paiditalli immediately and entirely becomes her own shrine, independent of any fixed location, first growing out of the earth but eventually becoming fully mobile as the Sirimanu, her human world entirely within herself as she acts upon it and

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asks how she should come and Paitalli suggests that she come as a bird, perched atop the Sirimanu tree and echoing what she told Appala Nayudu (Bairagi Nayudu's ancestor), that is, that she would bless Paidimamba/Paiditalli from the top of the 'flagpole', the Sirimanu tree.

shapes it. She now contrasts fully with her condition between November and May when, deep within herself, she is recursively and wholly continuous with herself, perhaps without self-awareness as we experience it. Now she is utterly self-aware, extruding and protruding into the human world within herself.

9. *Nearing the Sirimanu: Ratham, Swing, and Tolellu—the First Furrow*

Tree-Paiditalli lies quietly at the side of the street, around the corner from Bairagi Nayudu's home. Her rounded base is smoothed into a ball-like shape (*kundalaga*) likened to a pot by Bairagi Nayudu, broader than her trunk, with deep grooves where her roots had been. These grooves are said to 'open' Paiditalli. From her very top, three slender pieces, each eight to ten inches in length, are sliced away. And then, one more, the fourth, even slimmer. The longest of the three is given a crude visage, but the other two remain without identifying marks. The three are the head-body of Paiditalli and her two arms, yet no less the head-body of her younger brother, Potu Raju (the Buffalo King), more of which later. The fourth is also Paiditalli.<sup>70</sup> The three pieces, Paiditalli ~ Potu Raju, have a prominent positioning in events the evening prior to the Sirimanu Jatra. After the Sirimanu, one or more of the pieces (but certainly that with the visage) are placed in the tiny shrine next to the three-species tree at the back of the Caturugudi, where she ~ he joins other such presences of herself ~ himself from previous Sirimanus. These slivers retain the presence of Tree-Paiditalli after the Jatra. Similarly, the light lit when Mud-Paiditalli arrives at the Caturugudi, remaining lit until she returns the following year, keeps her presence alive there. Thus these aspects of Paiditalli never leave completely after the Sirimanu Jatra. And, as noted earlier, the three trees are the original shrine of Paiditalli when she emerged from Big Lake. Moreover, it is likely that the three-species tree is no less Paiditalli herself.<sup>71</sup>

Meanwhile, the full tree-length of Paiditalli lying at the side of the street is not exactly ignored, yet is hardly attended to, as she seems to gestate

<sup>70</sup> Sometimes these two side pieces are referred to as her two servants or her two guardians, in other words, Potu Raju.

<sup>71</sup> In 2009 or 2010, while the tree foliage was being trimmed, an image of Paiditalli was uncovered curving through the bark of one of them. This image was venerated at once and ever since.

horizontally in this world for the next ten days.<sup>72</sup> During this period there is continual bustle in the small square shaded by a giant tree in front of Bairagi Nayudu's home. Here the wooden vehicles that will participate in the Sirimanu are being assembled. Their parts have been stored in a shed that abuts the house. Now they are scattered around the yard.<sup>73</sup> These cars are wooden platforms on wheels, atop of which is added wooden superstructure. The most complex and delicate of these is the Sirimanu car (*ratham*) itself. Its construction has been overseen for some two decades by a draughtsman employed in the municipal department of public works. Also put together in the yard are the Anjali Ratham and the White Elephant Ratham (see below). The fourth construction in the procession is not a vehicle but is put together in the Besta neighborhood as a giant umbrella carried by these freshwater fishermen (who now are tailors). The central pole of this construction is made from the stem of a banana tree. On the morning of the Sirimanu Jatra, when the Sirimanu Ratham, the Anjali Ratham, and the Blue Elephant Ratham are pulled to the Square Temple, the Besta bring their umbrella there as well.

The Sirimanu Ratham is roughly triangular in shape, with the front point of the triangle squared off, resting on two large solid wheels of wood painted in concentric circles of yellow, green, red. The Ratham is constructed as a small platform resting over the wheel axle. Apart from its platform, the Sirimanu Ratham consists of three major parts—the vertical *irusumānu* pole, *gilika* stabilizer, and Tree-Paiditalli. The *irusumānu* is inserted into the platform to hold Tree-Paiditalli. An intricate construction of interlocking planks and poles support—under, in front of, in back of—the small platform. The wheel axle is positioned about two-thirds of the distance from the front edge of the Ratham. The back one-third of the Ratham is heavier than the front two-thirds. The *irusumānu* is shaped from the second tamarind tree taken down during the Tevadam ritual, and is replaced every year.<sup>74</sup> This tree is cut off much shorter than Tree-Paiditalli (perhaps one-fifth of the length of the latter). The *irusumānu*, which must support Tree-Paiditalli, is also held in place by a complex web of heavy hempen ropes.

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<sup>72</sup> In 2002 her measured length was forty-four feet, with a circumference at her base of twenty-three inches.

<sup>73</sup> The carpenters are paid and fed by Bairagi Nayudu. He says that only his family has the secret of how to assemble the Sirimanu ratham.

<sup>74</sup> The term *irusumanu* means 'the vertical axle tree'. 'Verticle axle' may imply the opening of depth through revolution.

The *gilika*, stored in the shed from year to year, is fitted onto and over the rounded upper section of the *irusumānu*. The wooden *gilika* is made of four tiers held in place by two sides faced with decorative metal.<sup>75</sup> The first three tiers are flat planks whose narrowed rectangular ends are slotted into the sides of the *gilika*, while the top tier is shaped like a rectangular rolling pin with two round, long handles that fit through the *gilika* sides. The planks of the two lowest tiers each have a round hole through which the *gilika* is fitted onto the *irusumānu*. The third tier is solid. Tree-Paiditali will be positioned on the Ratham only right before the Sirimanu, outside the Square Temple. At that time a pin will be inserted through Tree-Paiditali, one third of the distance from her bulbous end and two-thirds of the distance from her top, into the fourth and top tier of the *gilika*, enabling the Tree to swivel up and down against the *gilika*; while together, *gilika* and Tree-Paiditali can rotate 360 degrees around the *irusumānu*.<sup>76</sup>

To the top of Tree-Paiditali will be slotted and fastened a crude seat consisting of three pieces: a back-rest; a simple seat; and a lower foot rest. In the Jatra, once Tree-Paiditali has lifted the Priest on high at about a forty-five degree angle, her rounded, bulbous bottom is tied to the back of the Ratham. A rope from her top end drops perpendicularly to the front of the Ratham and is tied there. All the *rathams* move in the Jatra by being pulled by devotees of the Goddess.

During the days before the Sirimanu, most of the work in the yard consists of preparing Tree-Paiditali's Ratham. However, the parts of the Anjali Ratham and the Blue Elephant must also be cleaned, renewed, and fitted together. The centre piece of the Anjali Ratham is again a small platform with extended arrangements of planks, resting on two large spoked wheels. The previous year's *irusumānu* is fitted into the small platform, and onto this column is fitted a framework of poles on which riders will sit. *Anjali* (a Sanskrit word) is a two-handed *mudra* with a convex space between the hands, opening, unfolding like a bud. Yet this *mudra* is also a closed offering, mysterious, virginal—the Goddess as she has been evolving, developing into presence, coming as shapeless mud from the depths, growing out of the nourishing earth as the powerful, luxuriant shape of a tree, penetrating the depths of the sky—much like the rice shoot, in its own way.

<sup>75</sup> The term *gilika* in Telugu may refer to the stem of a tree, a stalk, or anything hanging, a pulley wheel, a toy rattle, and so forth.

<sup>76</sup> In February in Vizianagaram the goddess Yelamma has a small Sirimanu Ratham whose shorter tree revolves through 360 degrees.



20. Sirimanu Model in Bairagi Nayudu's Courtyard (David Shulman).

Seated atop the Anjali Ratham, we were told, will be five men dressed in saris as auspicious married women (that is, as women who have borne children and whose husbands are living).<sup>77</sup> As the *mudra* intimates, just as seeds bud, so do women in having children. All five are from the Pativadu family, the family of Pativadu Appalanayudu, the minister who was with Paidimamba when her brother was killed at Bobilli in 1757, who was like a father to Ammavaru when she was a little girl, and whom Bairagi Nayudu claims as an ancestor.<sup>78</sup> The white elephant is an open wooden cart on two spoked-wheels, its sides and trunk covered with dark blue paper, its head draped with a pink cloth (as a royal elephant might look), with place for riders to stand under the cloth. The elephant is said to signify the royal presence of the Raja. Although there are biographical elements here in Paiditalli's coming fully into presence, there is no neat linear progression in her 'biography.' Her presence is always a complex braiding of dimensions and tenses in which one strand always weaves together with others, in different formations and intensities, a cosmos folded and enfolded over and again within itself.<sup>79</sup>

During these days before the Sirimanu Jatra, Bairagi Nayudu undergoes a change. Usually an affable man and generous host, he becomes more closed, withdrawing into himself, resting, meditating, sleeping, preparing himself for the moments on Tree-Paiditalli when he will have, as he puts it, 'a small unconscious', yet also 'an awakening of great clarity.'<sup>80</sup> Around the corner, Tree-Paiditalli herself continues to lie quietly at the side of the street with the occasional devotee making an offering of fruit, turmeric, and *kunkum*, worshipping her. She rests, of course, in her great singular length, and her length is no less her great depth, pointed to explore with intention and direction the reaches of her cosmos. We can say that her

<sup>77</sup> In the neighboring village of Pakki, where the Sirimanu festival takes place in January (as in many villages in the region), the five on the Anjali Ratham sit at the corners and in the middle, echoing the five directions.

<sup>78</sup> According to another version, in the past five auspicious women sat on the Anjali Ratham, and all of them were goddesses: Kota Śakti, Mutyalamma, Nukalamma, Yelamma, Durgamma. These were later replaced by men dressed as women.

<sup>79</sup> We were told that there also is a funereal aspect to the Anjali Ratham. The five auspicious women also recall the death of the king's sister, Paidimamba. A dead woman whose husband is still alive goes to Gauri Loka. The king's sister, who was not an auspicious woman, cannot go to Gauri Loka by herself, but she can be guided there by the five auspicious women, since she was reborn as Paiditalli, just as Sati, after throwing herself into her father's sacrificial fire, was reborn as Gauri/Parvati.

<sup>80</sup> Bairagi Nayudu says that on the Sirimanu he is not conscious (*nāku calanam unḍadu*) in the sense of not being interactive, not paying attention, not responding, having no awareness of self and other during this time.

maturation and intensification lie in this form. First an amorphous amalgam of earth and water—mud—when she first surfaced onto the shore, then a fertile catalyst for the *uru*, she is now shaping and honing herself to bring king to kingdom.

Some days later, on the Sunday eve<sup>81</sup> before the Sirimanu on the Tuesday, after a long day of laboring on the *rathams*, the swing (*uyyala/wiyyala*) is set up in front of the Square Temple, the work ending close to midnight. Swinging is a still-mysterious dynamic in temple-related activities in South India. Many large temples (and larger private homes) have permanent swing installations. Young women of puberty age swing (seeking husbands), young couples swing before their marriage (seeking fertility), deities who are processed outside of their temples sometimes swing (vibrating with energy and force) in their *rathams*, devotees swing on hooks inserted beneath their back muscles in devotion to their deities (notably, Murugan), and so on.<sup>82</sup> We heard no exegesis about swinging or what it does to swingers and others, apart from being told that in the case of deities this activity pleases them. Our sense is that swinging is indeed a dynamic, one related to interior movement and conditions of being, and perhaps to temporal movement (Chapter Two). However, the dynamic is not uni-directional. Sometimes the arcing, to and fro, seems to activate, focus, concentrate, and intensify interior dynamics. Yet sometimes this arcing, or just sitting on the swing, seems to activate dynamics that quiet, soothe, and perhaps reduce the intensity of interiority, as we shall see.

The swing will remain in place until Paiditalli, on the Tuesday two weeks after the Sirimanu, is ‘swung off’ to the Wilderness Temple until the following May. But on that Sunday evening before the Sirimanu, as the worship of Tree-Paiditalli begins in earnest around the corner from Bairagi Nayudu’s home, Paiditalli of the Square Temple will emerge, as will the pots that are Paiditalli, to sit on the swing together with Bairagi Nayudu and his younger son, Venkat. The seat of the swing is hung on chains attached to a metal crossbar supported by four angled, metal poles. All the metal parts are painted red. The seat itself, broad enough for a few people side by side, is painted yellow, with a large lotus in its middle.

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<sup>81</sup> In 2002 this Sunday is the eve of Vijayadasami. As noted, the Sirimanu takes its chronological lead from the celebration of Durga.

<sup>82</sup> In the village of Pakki, near Vizianagaram, the Swinging Away of the Goddess (*uyyala-kambālu*) has strong erotic components, as it does, apparently, for people who swing there. According to one informant in Pakki: ‘Everyone swings in the swing. They perch their asses in the swing and move a little [swing] and fuck off.’

Significantly, the swing as a vehicle resonates powerfully with the Sirimanu Ratham. The metal poles replaced wooden ones long ago, but two of these wooden poles are still fixed in place on either side of the seat each year. The poles were once part of Paiditalli's Sirimanu Ratham. Strung between these wooden poles along the metal crosspiece from which the seat is hung is a hempen rope that was once part of the rope used to pull Tree-Paiditalli's Ratham during the Sirimanu. The swing is another version of Tree-Paiditalli's vehicle.<sup>83</sup> So, too, in two weeks time the swing-ratham will swing Paiditalli off to the Wilderness Temple.

The seat is bathed, and a *yantra* design is drawn on the ground under it. Bairagi Nayudu consecrates the seat as he would an icon of the Goddess within the *garbha griha* or, for that matter, the *garbha griha* itself. He washes himself and the seat of the swing, offers it turmeric, *kunkum*, and *arati*, and re-enters the temple. The two clay pots of Pot-Paiditalli emerge, the first carried by Paidi Raju, the low-caste servant of the Goddess who went into the lake to await her coming and who carried her in the *jangidi* from there to the Square Temple. The clay pots are followed by Bairagi Nayudu, holding a small, golden mobile image, *utsava mūrti*, of Paiditalli, accompanied by Venkat. The *utsava mūrti* is placed on the lotus design, Bairagi Nayudu sitting to her right, Venkat to her left. Then Bairagi Nayudu sits on the lotus, holding Paiditalli, with Venkat next to him and a clay pot to either side of the pair. Together they swing gently, peacefully, for a time. The *utsava murti* returns inside the Temple, into the *garbha griha*. There the permanent image, the *mūla mūrti*, of Paiditalli is being washed, rubbed with turmeric, sandalwood, milk, and coconut milk. By 2 AM, she has been dried, dressed in a red sari, and draped with flowers, a silver lion to either side and her *utsava mūrti*, also in a red sari, in front of her. In the meantime everything else had been removed from the *garbha griha*, which was washed and cleaned.

The following evening, Monday, the Goddess pots will make a grand visit to the Kota Śakti, and on their return to the Caturugudi they will come together with the three-piece Paiditalli ~ Potu Raju, before the Sirimanu Jatra the following day, Tuesday. During the two weeks between swingings, all of the aspects and qualities of Paiditalli come together (and also fall apart or separate once more) in different combinations. The swing is a *modulator* of the interior intensities of the Goddess, helping to regulate, perhaps to focus the self-organization of her intentionality and

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<sup>83</sup> Later on, women praying for fertility will place new saris across the rope.



feeling. This is especially so in relation to the Goddess pots, even though ultimately the pots cannot be separated from other foci of her presence, Tree-Paiditalli, the three-piece Paiditalli ~ Potu Raju, and the temple *mūrtis*. This modulation becomes especially significant as cosmos begins to galvanize for the climactic harvesting of kingship after the triumphal re-growth of kingdom, thus overcoming the catastrophe of Bobbili. As we noted, swinging may augment, intensify, excite, yet no less relax, soothe, quiet. The capacity for excitation may be more self-evident (witness the qualities of the Sirimanu Ratham built into the swing), yet the potential for soothing is also there, if more implicitly. Swinging the Goddess is also a kind of putting her to bed, to rest, to sleep (*pavaḷimpu seva*).<sup>84</sup> We note that the swing is also thought of as a cradle. Years before, in a practice no longer done, Harijans (Dalits) covered the swing seat with the skins of goats and roosters they had sacrificed to the Goddess. The sacrifices were intended to satisfy the Goddess, and so to soothe and quiet her excitability and anger. Within her sacrifices, one may say, she could rest within her cradle, rest deep within herself.<sup>85</sup> The swing is erected and first used as her presence intensifies and excites, beginning with the Sunday. Yet when she finally swings away to the Vanamgudi, she is quiet, relaxed.

Beginning on that Sunday evening, Tree-Paiditalli awakens, her self-intensity growing. Her entire length, her body, is rubbed with turmeric; red rings of *kunkum* are traced in threes at different points around her circumference; and a lotus of *kunkum* is drawn near her *bulbous* base. Camphor lamps are placed along her entire length, the wicks lit. Devotees, mainly women, begin to come more frequently to her rounded base with offerings and flowers, while coconuts are broken there. During Monday, and especially Monday night, these activities quicken, as does the presence of Tree-Paiditalli.

Turned yellow with turmeric, red with vermilion (just as the inside of her Tamarind is yellowish and reddish), decorated and adorned, looked at from rounded bottom to tapering top as she lies in the street, Tree-Paiditalli in reverse provocatively begins to look something like a huge snake (*nāga*) with a thickened, blunt head. Remember that when grooves were smoothed into this head-like form (emphasizing where her roots had been) after she first came to lie in the street, these grooves were said

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<sup>84</sup> This is the term used in the Vanamgudi, when she rests, or goes elsewhere into herself, for half the year.

<sup>85</sup> Put otherwise, her cradle is already enveloped in wilderness, in the skins of the sacrifices.

to 'open her'. Now they resemble a mouth. These thoughts may seem far-fetched and without basis in local exegesis, yet perhaps they should not be dismissed out-of-hand. The nagas dwelling beneath the ground epitomize self-regeneration as they periodically shed their skins in revival.<sup>86</sup> Paiditalli joins earth (the mud of the lake) and the heavens (into which she thrusts during the Sirimanu itself). Just as she is said to be able to move in all directions on the Sirimanu Ratham, so her forming here enlivens the trajectory of earth and sky. Her forming is malleable: in one direction she opens to the nether world, in the other, into the heavens, joining both (or both emerging) through her being. She grows into the earth no less than she grows into the sky. Put this way, and despite her material appearance of utter lineality, her dynamics are closer to a recursive arcing, resonating with the relationships of waters and mountains—of depth in all directions—that we discussed in the first section. In other words, she is becoming the continuous self-enclosing cosmos that now includes the furrowed, sown human world within which king will be brought into kingship and kingdom.

During Monday the final work on the *rathams* is completed, and the intensification of Tree-Paiditalli through offering (and rooster sacrifice) continues. Bairagi Nayudu fasts from dawn on Monday until he descends from the Sirimanu at dusk on Tuesday. On Monday morning, Anand, the Raja-who-would-have-been, offers a new sari, *pasupu*, and *kunkum* to Paiditalli in the Square Temple. When we see him later that morning (in 2002) in his office in the Kota, he seems rejuvenated from his meeting with her. On Monday evening the mood becomes feverish; the tempo and fervor of offering and sacrifice increase greatly. Paiditalli is caressed over and over; she is enveloped in intense prayers as numerous coconuts are broken around her, and chicken heads are lopped, their blood smeared along her length.<sup>87</sup> Monday night is the time of the *Tolellu*, which translates literally as 'first furrow'. The term, 'first furrow', is highly suggestive, joining once more agriculture and sexual generation, though in the case of *Tolellu* these dynamics are oriented to the future.

*Tolellu* is the last major movement of the Goddess, that is, of Pot-Paiditalli to the Kota before the Sirimanu. The visit is described as inviting

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<sup>86</sup> The bards who will sing the story of *Adi Śakti* at the Round Mahal and who sometimes sing Paiditalli's praises at the *Swinging Away* say that she is connected to snakes. Keep in mind, too, that when the farmer refused to surrender the selected tamarind tree from his grove, his wife was threatened in a dream by a snake.

<sup>87</sup> In South India the coconut, with its shape, hair, and (dimpled) eyes is often likened to a human head, and its breaking to a substitute for human sacrifice.

Kanaka Durga to the Sirimanu, again intimating the close relationship between Durga and the Kota Sakti. Yet the visit is also the culmination of Pot-Paiditalli's contacts with the Kota Śakti. Indeed, it marks the presence at the Round Mahal of all of Paiditalli that has fully evolved thus far, distributed and refracted through the variety of pots that journey there the evening before she, Tree-Paiditalli, brings king to Kota.

On the Monday the pots are placed in the *garbha griha* of the Square Temple, next to the *mūla mūrti* and *utsava mūrti*. Outside, worshipers, especially women, throw packets of *pasupu* and *kunkum*, offerings to please the Goddess, at the façade of the Temple. After dark the pots, decorated with *kunkum* and garlanded are assembled inside the Temple. As Bairagi Nayudu walks through the Temple, parents gently place their infant children beneath his bare feet, so that he passes over them. This is thought beneficial for their good fortune. Somehow, with excellent coordination, he does step over them without stepping on them as he makes his way. The pots emerge from the temple and sit on the swing in various combinations. At around 11 PM they are put on the heads of carriers. Those pots with flat tops are covered with a plate of camphor with a lit wick. In all, ten pots (the two clay pots, the two five-metal pots, and the six brass pots) are taken in procession. All are carried by family right, the two clay pots by women. Saris are spread before the pot-carriers so that during the hundreds of meters to the Kota the Goddess will never touch the ground. The atmosphere is frenetic, bodies packed closely together around the pot-carriers. Every body, everybody, is participating in this sending forth of the goddess to her meeting with the protectress of palace kingship—by pressing together, surging forward, putting forth hands to hold the pots in place, to balance the pot-carriers, to touch the goddess-pots, by clutching at and supporting one another as an entirety, a massive presence.

The pots stop at particular private homes on their way to the Kota and then on their way back to the Square Temple. Thus they come to the homes of the descendants of two of the three ministers who ran the kingdom after the king was killed during the Bobilli war—one home is visited on the way to the Kota and the other on the way back. During the home visit on the way to the Kota, Bairagi Nayudu, dressed in white, garlanded, a silk scarf around his neck, receives the Maharaja's turban of white with a light blue border that he will wear during the Jatra.<sup>88</sup> He puts it on, leaves it in the home, and receives it again later on. The silk clothes he will wear

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<sup>88</sup> Until over twenty years ago the turban (*talapaga*) consisted of six yards of cotton material that only one man in Vizianagaram, a *Burrakatha* bard, knew how to tie. Since



21. Tolellu: Five-Metal Pot on its Way to the Fort (David Shulman).



22. Pots Moving to the Fort, Tolellu (David Shulman).

are stored, he says, in the Raja's palace.<sup>89</sup> Bairagi Nayudu knows full well that when riding Tree-Paiditalli he will be dressed as the Raja, adding that, 'The first time [his ancestor] Appala Nayudu was about to climb onto the Sirimanu, the Raja put those clothes on him'. He refers to the clothing as 'royal attire'.

The procession enters the Kota through its great gates that front on the thoroughfare along which Tree-Paiditalli will travel the following day. To the right of the entry port, high on the wall, is an arched niche. As the procession approaches, Bairagi Nayudu sees Kanaka Durga standing in the niche, protecting the walls of the palace, her presence unwavering. The procession of pots, augmented by hundreds of devotees and spectators, winds its way within to the Moti Mahal, the Round Mahal (now an educational institution for women) and stops before the entrance to the building which is shut, locked, dark. The area too is dark and compacted

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his death, the turban has been brought from Rajasthan, of a kind used in weddings, simply worn, like a cap.

<sup>89</sup> It is not clear whether he is referring to storage in the Kota complex or in one of Anand's homes or his office. Anand, in one of the very few acts that in practice connect him to the Sirimanu, said that he gives the clothes to Bairagi Nayudu on the Monday morning, when he goes to worship Paiditalli in the Square Temple.

with people. The mood is solemn, quiet, attentive for this climactic meeting of Paiditalli and Kota Śakti. Paiditalli is introduced by the bards who sing her epic of origin. Here she becomes the primordial śakti, *Adi Śakti*, who created the cosmos, attesting to her common origins with the Kota Śakti and Kanaka Durga.<sup>90</sup> But the bards also sing songs of sadness (*dolak*), lamentations of mourning, melancholic, full of distress, beauty, affection, dirges fore-grounding Paidimamba's death as the sister of the king.<sup>91</sup> There is here an implicit condensation of her cosmic biography that on the morrow, through the Sirimanu, will become her triumph. At the human center of this recitation is Bairagi Nayudu. He sits facing the Moti Mahal, enfolding his teenage son, Venkat, with both arms. If all goes well, the Kota Śakti manifests herself in close proximity to Paiditalli by entering within and filling Venkat with her presence. He bows his head, holding his face with one hand.<sup>92</sup> After this, the pots make their way back to the Square Temple. On the return journey the mood is more relaxed, the crowds looser, more dispersed.

The coming rites of Tolellu, the First Furrow, are the rapid coming to maturity of Tree-Paiditalli—the coming to the apex of her intentionality and awareness in the human portion of her cosmos. The rapidity of this dynamic shifts directly into the accelerated rhythm of her climactic

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<sup>90</sup> For another Andhra ritual context in which a local goddess is identified with *Adi Śakti*, see Chapter 3; Anand n.d.

<sup>91</sup> In 2003 there were heavy rains before and during Tolellu. On the night of Tolellu the pots were late in leaving for the Kota. The priests felt there was an obstacle of some sort. A priest from the Wilderness Temple (Bairagi Nayudu's son-in-law) was possessed by Paiditalli who told him she wanted to hear *Dolak* songs even before the procession began. But perhaps because of the rains, the bards did not come. At the Round Mahal the water was above peoples' ankles. The story of *Adi Śakti* was not sung; neither were songs of *Dolak*; and Venkat was not possessed by the Kota Śakti.

<sup>92</sup> The Kota Śakti enters Venkat (one can say that Venkat enters the cosmos of the Kota Śakti) because his father intended that Venkat succeed him as Paiditalli's priest and so, Venkat would ride the Sirimanu. Riding the Sirimanu, Bairagi Nayudu has kingship within him—he is Paidimamba's brother, the king. Next to the Moti Mahal, Bairagi Nayudu deposes the presence of kingship to Venkat, holding him in his arms, so that the Kota Śakti once more receives the presence of the king. However, Venkat did not succeed his father. In the past the decision on succession would have been made by the Raja. Now it was made by the Board of the Caturugudi, and the appointment went to the husband of Nayudu's eldest daughter, Nirmala. Her husband was a priest at the Vanamgudi, the Wilderness Temple. However Nirmala herself said that Ammavaru can never be taken out of her priest (by a bureaucratic decision) and that those who replaced Nayudu, including her husband, have become partially paralyzed in their limbs (which they try to conceal) because of their inability to handle the intimate presence of Ammavaru. So, Nayudu also has the Goddess within him on a permanent basis, and as such he has some presence in her depth as well as on her surface.

activity in the Sirimanu Jatra itself. The area in front of and around the Square Temple is very crowded, shoulder to shoulder, surging into dense movement, floundering on obstacles, waves breaking, and again into movement, the air heavy with wood smoke, incense, spice. Already there are long lines waiting to enter the Temple for *darshan* of the Goddess.<sup>93</sup> With the exception of the two clay pots that are put onto the swing, the pots are placed on a stepped *saduru*-platform (used as a *balla* or table, says Bairagi Nayudu) just across the street from the entrance to the Square Temple. The three-piece cut from the Sirimanu tree that we are calling Paiditalli ~ Potu Raju (with the interior fluidity of its coalescences as one and the other) makes its first public appearance. Bairagi Nayudu wraps the three pieces together in red cloth and places them in a basket together with five bamboo sticks, paddy, and basic peasant fare (an onion, *kūḍlu*) to feed Paiditalli~Potu Raju inside the basket. This is resonant with the re-birth and nurturance of Paiditalli emerging from Big Lake. What may be involved in Toellu is the birth and nurturance of the Potu Raju qualities of Paiditalli which emerge here for the first time in the Paiditalli ritual cycle. Nayudu then takes out the three-piece, removes the red cloth and wraps her~him in black cloth, and then in white cloth, placing her~him in the white cloth between the two five-metal pots (each of which is now topped by five lit wicks) on the *saduru*-platform.<sup>94</sup> Tree-Paiditalli has joined Pot-Paiditalli (who of course is also Mud-Paiditalli). Together the Paiditallis watch the performance of *Asarlu*. However here Potu Raju should be introduced a bit more thoroughly.

Potu Raju (Buffalo King) is the generic younger brother of the Goddess in South India. Where the Goddess is present, his presence is ubiquitous. He is often a small slab of rock stuck in the ground or an equivalent wooden post, stake, or spike. Often he stands as such outside and opposite a goddess shrine. He is considered the guardian and protector of the Goddess. Yet consider his name in relation to Mahisasura, the great Buffalo Demon killed by Kanaka Durga at the end of Navaratri, and Durga receiving buffalo sacrifices during Navaratri.

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<sup>93</sup> For the first time in this cycle entry to the temple is by payment. There are two lines, an express line (costing more) and a regular one.

<sup>94</sup> The color red, we were told, is that of life, of intense feeling (*raudram*). That of black is death, sadness, sorrow, mourning, and fierceness. White is the quality of purity (*svaccamayinadi*). Here again are condensed the histories of the princess, Paidimamba and her brother the king—their life (red), his death, her mourning, and her death (black), her return as the virgin goddess who yet contains her (now) younger, less senior brother (white).

Bairagi Nayudu identifies the middle piece with the crude visage as Paiditalli, saying it is carved in her shape, and the two side pieces as Potu Raju, her guardian. Identity is crucial here to our argument, or, more ambiguously, the infra-lapping of identity. When we asked a devotee of Paiditalli, one who participates in many of her rituals inside the Cadurugudi, about the identity of the three-piece, he responded immediately, unthinkingly, that the three are Potu Raju. Then he denied this and insisted they were Ammavaru in different forms. An interesting parallel comes from southern Andhra, courtesy of our friend, Joyce Flueckiger (personal communication July 2010), who has done intensive fieldwork on the goddess Gangamma in Tirupati. A central figure of wood in her Jatra is one that Handelman (Chapter Three) identified as Gangamma. Years later, one of Joyce's main informants (himself a Gangamma ritualist) who earlier had said that this figure was Gangamma now said that this was Potu Raju. The next day in Gangamma's shrine, looking at this figure, this man said, 'He's *śaktiswarupani*.' In other words, he is, is part of, the Ammavaru who is called *śaktiswarupani*, the creatrix in her 'base' (*mūlam*) or elementary form.

Ethnographically, these ambiguities are quite on the mark in Paiditalli's cosmos. The three slivers are cut from the top of the Sirimanu tree who is Paiditalli. The three pieces come out of Paiditalli.<sup>95</sup> Potu Raju comes out of Paiditalli. In a sense she creates, gives birth to, her younger brother, just as everything emerges from her in her cosmos. She and he share elemental qualities of being, even as she may transform him from Buffalo Demon (her great enemy) into Buffalo King (her guardian). The Paiditalli~Potu Raju relationship is deep, and depth in this cosmos is a fluid intensity. Therefore, male and female move through one another, *inhabit* one another, are never completely separated from one another. Paiditalli~Potu Raju are one and are two. They are fluid coalescences within Paiditalli, into one vector, into another. Potu Raju appears in this way just prior to and during the Sirimanu because of his powerful resonance with the king, the older brother of Paidimamba who became Paiditalli with her own (now) younger brother, Potu Raju. In both instances the bond between sister and brother is profound and intertwined with death and resurrection. And all four of them ride the Sirimanu as kingship is harvested and brought to the center of kingdom.

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<sup>95</sup> We know from the work of Madeleine Biardeau (2004) on Potu Raju in South India that his wooden post or stake is almost always cut from the *Śami*, a form of pea tree. Yet in Vizianagaram, the Potu Raju of Tolellu and the Sirimanu is always cut from the Sirimanu tree, from Paiditalli. Nonetheless, in South India the *Śami* tree is considered female.



Facing the Goddess pots, Bairagi Nayudu, Venkat, Paidi Raju, and two others do *Asarlu*. Each of the five takes up a bamboo stick from the basket. Each stick has a cotton bud at its tip. The five light the buds and, moving together as a line, walk toward the pots and Paiditalli~Potu Raju and back three times, holding the sticks and clapping their hands. Then they dash the sticks to the ground, extinguishing their flaming buds. *Asarlu* is a standard segment in other *Tolellu* rites held elsewhere, especially in villages during January—February. During *Asarlu* in these settings, the story of Śiva killing his demonic son Andhaka is told or referred to, the demonic drops of blood (perhaps here the flames?) spilling on to the earth, giving birth to other demons, until the blood is caught in a vessel by the goddess Camunda or by Śiva himself (see Handelman and Shulman 1997). *Asarlu* appears as an anti-demonic rite, cleansing the earth of demonic fertility at the place where big Tree-Paiditalli will mount her Ratham in some hours' time.<sup>96</sup> No less, here *Asarlu* appears to protect Potu Raju, newly emerged from Paiditalli.

In this space there immediately follows *Sirilu*, the First Furrow itself, whose name connotes abundance, wealth. A new, white, cotton sari is placed on a wooden platform, opened, a basket filled with rice seed (*dhanyam*) placed within, the cloth then curved, furred over itself, folded. Two men dressed in saris (in other words, dressed as women) kneel on the platform, one at the head of the sari, the other at its foot.<sup>97</sup> In the lap of one is the three-piece, still covered in white cloth.<sup>98</sup> A large white cloth covers the men and the sari so that their movements are partially cloaked. With great speed the platform is lifted at outstretched arm's length high in the air and whirled clockwise quickly three times. Beneath the covering cloth the two men-women rapidly twist, turn, and churn the ends of the furred sari with its basket of paddy back and forth, over and again. First Furrow—this twisting and churning of the folded sari within the twisting and turning of the cloth-concealed platform—takes no longer than a couple of minutes. Bairagi Nayudu clambers up onto the *saduru*-platform, briefly tells the story of Paiditalli, focusing on her desire that these rice seeds be distributed to the agriculturalists, and then distributes the seeds

<sup>96</sup> Here Śiva's killing of Andhaka resonates with Durga's killing of Mahishasura, to which the Sirimanu Jatra is calibrated.

<sup>97</sup> The two men wear a type of sari called *veyyigalla cheera* (a thousand squares or a thousand eyes) or *banala cheera* (a sari of arrows). Both are of inexpensive cotton and dear to Ammavaru. One of the men is usually Bairagi Nayudu, but he was ill and deputed Venkat to take his place. The other was the priest in charge of *Tolellu*.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Bairagi Nayudu in his home, 29 May 2009, 10 AM.

to farmers (*raitulaki*). The farmers will mix these seeds with those in their storage spaces so that the former, energized, fertilized, will do the same to the stored seeds.

The three-piece, Paiditalli~Potu Raju, is treated by Bairagi Nayudu as an infant, gently put into a basket—into womb-like space—together with nourishment (as was little Mud-Paiditalli) but now also with weapons, the *bamboo* sticks that will be used to rid this space of demonic presence. Little Mud-Paiditalli, the very beginning of the entire Goddess dynamic, was entirely a female infant, while the three-piece is in a sense the dynamic of Paiditalli giving birth to her younger brother. The sticks protect but likely are also empowered even by this infant. Similarly, the aspects of Paiditalli unite at *Asarlu*—and while certain of the aspects (the five-metal pots) will return with her to Vanamgudi and others (most of the other pots) will enter the quietude of storage, the presence of the three-piece will endure in the tiny shrine nestled against the three-species tree.

The First Furrow, this hidden, secretive churning of the paddy-filled basket-womb in the white sari, suggests generative force, sexual in its intimations. Producing seed by churning is called *manthana* in Sanskrit and Telugu—the vigorous back-and-forth movement, *pravritti* and *nivritti*, as is the case with butter churning, with the churning of the mythic Ocean of Milk, and with sexual churning; also with the generation of fire by rubbing together wooden fire-sticks in a rotating, contrary manner, the ‘male’ stick inserted vertically into a hole in the horizontal ‘female’ stick and rotated rhythmically back and forth by means of a rope, generating smoke and fire. Fire is thought to be a potentiality of the wood, latent in the wood all along. The logic of churning seems close to that of the churning of paddy in the Toellu sari—the sari that can only be the goddess herself, virginal and bursting with potency barely contained. First Furrow brings the Goddess to puberty, reaching maturity, awakening her *sakti* into its highest intensity. This is how she will appear on the morrow—as a virgin Goddess endowed with the creative energy and fertility of *śakti*, in a sense generating kingship in a virgin birth.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> On the *Sirilu* platform are two female-males (the priests), one shifting female-male, and the virgin Goddess. The rite is female and female-centered, yet with a male presence. One hint of what may be occurring there evokes another variety of sexual potency and fertility, which is that of drawing this force out of the female. This hint comes from a secret rite in the Jagannatha temple in the former little kingdom of Puri in Northern Kalinga. This undoubtedly tantric rite is discussed by Apffel-Marglin and Hudson (2008: 79–84) and we will not enter into it here. Yet, significant for our thinking is that the purpose of the Puri rite is to draw sexual fluid from the devadasi (one of a number of temple courtesans

Paddy is a potentiality of the Goddess in her cosmos; she activates this seed with a view to the future, to her next coming to the kingdom. Just as she has self-generated herself and sown the space of the city, so she sows time, future time, when she will return to harvest both kingship and the prime crop upon which the kingdom most depends. The First Furrow, then, extends or projects the current cycle before it culminates and closes into the onset of the next. More accurately, First Furrow is an extension of futurity, creating depth, opening space/time. The rite shows depth in its very making—the height of the platform, the textured folding of the sari, the layered covering of sari and women-men, the whirling of the platform as the sari is folded and twisted and turned. The very name of this rite accentuates the potential for growth latent in the opening of depth by sowing. First Furrow is perhaps an originary cut, a primordial opening that enables human being to reach towards the interiority of the goddess. Perhaps we can say that with First Furrow the coming yearly cycle is already a curled foetus folded into Paiditalli's cosmos.

During the activities of the Toellu evening and night, there is a tremendous arousal and intensification of the energy of Śakti, first through the meeting of Pot-Paiditalli and Kota Śakti and then through the emergence of Potu Raju from his older sister, Paiditalli. First Furrow is a sort of assurance on the part of the Goddess that she will return during next year's month of Vaisakha. Harvesting (the Sirimanu morrow) and awakening and sowing (the First Furrow of today) are not separated lineally, in neat chronological sequence. Next year's sowing of the kingdom by the fully evolved and wholly present Goddess precedes her harvest of this year. We underscore once more that the temporality of this dynamic is fractal—next year and this year emerging from within one another, Moebius-like, next year and this year slipping, gliding through one another, fructifying one another. These too are the interior dynamics of the goddess: she and

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married to the deity, Jagannatha, and therefore forever virgins regardless of the sexual services required of them in the temple). The sexual fluid (*rajas*) is essentially the śakti of the female and of course the goddess; and this sexual fluid can release *tejas*, the brilliant conquering power of the goddess which protects the king, the further purpose of the rite. Now, we are not saying that the Vizianagaram *Sirilu* is comparable to this Orissan Puri rite. Yet there are dynamics in the two rites that resonate. The purpose of the *Sirilu* is that Paiditalli fertilize the rice seeds in her 'womb', and she must do this as the virgin goddess. This may well involve bringing forth, or in this case deeply involuting the sexual fluid that is her śakti. Turning, twisting, and churning her may indeed be involved in this, her śakti/sexual fluid activated, entering the rice seeds. Perhaps she does for the rice what she does for Potu Raju, interiorizing the former, exteriorizing the latter.

the kingdom are inseparable, moving and moved by one another, resonating powerfully together.

The activities of Monday night compact the biography and dynamics of Paiditalli. The epic of *Adi Śakti* tells of the creation of the Goddess and her creation of cosmos. The songs of *Dolak*, their sadness and mourning, imply her death—the death of Paidimamba, the king's sister. *Asarlu* cleanses the grounds on which the regenerative power of the Goddess will shortly begin to operate and from which her harvesting of kingship will depart. *Tolellu* is the maturation, intensification, and activation of this generative power toward its own future. Then, on the morrow, the *Sirimanu* marks the harvesting of this year.

Schematically, these movements may appear flat and linear, but they are not so in a cosmos that curls within itself, folding and unfolding. Consider that 'pregnancy' both of rice and woman is a folding into itself, or an unfolding from within itself, and that rice is self-pollinating and the goddess, self-generating. Thus Paiditalli folds into herself as she journeys back to the Wilderness Temple after the *Sirimanu*. The following *Vaisakha* she unfolds into the human world as mud that in itself is folded into itself within water, sticking to itself. Mud then unfolds into the clay *ghatalu*, as the *ghatalu* unfold into the city, even as Paiditalli folds into herself as the Tamarind tree, later to unfold into the space/time of kingship in the *Sirimanu* as her priest folds into kingship that unfolds into its kingdom. Interior is turning into exterior that is turning into interior . . . Throughout these dynamics, the human world is within Paiditalli, even as she appears within this world.

#### 10. *The Sirimanu Jatra*

This Monday evening is the full moon night of the Telugu month of *Asviyuja*. Tuesday daybreak in 2002 is cloudy, with the possibility of rain. By early morning there are already three long lines of thousands of people waiting for *darshan* of the goddess in the Square Temple. The line stretches around the block, hundreds of yards down the thoroughfare the *Sirimanu* will travel, almost to the Kota. The city is full, bursting with visitors and vigor. Rough estimates in 2002 and 2003 were that some 300,000 to 400,000 persons came to see the *Sirimanu Jatra*. In the *Besta* neighborhood final touches are put on their giant umbrella made of fish netting stretched over a frame with cut-outs of fishes attached to the net, topped with a large gold and silver-covered cardboard fish. *Besta* say that the umbrella

has a thousand eyes, a reference to village disease-bearing goddesses who are said to have a thousand 'eyes', that is, the pox sores on the bodies of their victims. In Besta eyes, Paiditalli is a disease-bearing and disease-healing goddess. The young men who will carry the umbrella have yellow conical hats tied under their chins; they look like they are carrying halved bananas on their heads.

Tree-Paiditalli's length is again rubbed with *pasupu* and balanced length-wise on an ox-cart; the oxen have painted horns, garlands around their necks. People hug her, throw water on her, break coconuts. From Bairagi Nayudu's home the bullocks pull her to Four Lantern Street in front of the Square Temple. Behind her is pulled the Sirimanu Ratham. Bairagi Nayudu, composed, reserved, but shouting orders like a Raja, stands on the Sirimanu Ratham, with young men hanging from it in all directions. Behind the Sirimanu Ratham is pulled the Anjali Ratham with some twenty-five men on it, roaring obscenities at those watching from the sides. Behind the Anjali Ratham comes the white elephant (colored purple), also packed with men. All move slowly through the crowded streets. Opposite the Square Temple, Tree-Paiditalli is shifted with care to the Sirimanu Ratham, pinned to the *gilika*, tied in place, the seat fastened to her upper end, a bunch of bananas tied around her just below the seat.<sup>100</sup>

The balconies, rooftops, and windows along the route fill with people; the streets are dense with movement. The Besta arrive with their multi-colored, beribboned, fish-decorated umbrella on its banana tree stem; so too does the 'flow of milk' (*pāladāra*), the 'army' of Paiditalli organized by Bairagi Nayudu—young men who have taken a vow to serve her and who in this regard are observing a forty-one day vow of abstinence. The 'soldiers' wear red bandanas around their necks or foreheads and carry staves that they crack against one another's. The police armed with long bamboo lathis are evident in force, led by their (female) district superintendent (who has a Ph.D in Sociology). The police begin stringing rope along both sides of the route. Later they will work at keeping spectators behind these barriers, liberally threatening blows with their batons to do so. They will also surround Bairagi Nayudu when he sits in the wooden seat attached to Paiditalli and is lifted high in the air; similarly, when he dismounts.

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<sup>100</sup> In 2002 the beginning of the Sirimanu was delayed by some forty minutes until the police were satisfied that the pinning of Tree-Paiditalli to the Gilika was carefully accomplished, to ensure safety during the Jatra.



23. Transporting Tree Paiditalli to Square Temple (David Shulman).

Slowly, amidst jostling, calls, cries, shouts, the groups and *rathams* assemble at the head of the Sirimanu route. The Bestas are fighting amongst themselves, pushing, shoving, some punching until the police pull them apart. The long line of worshipers waiting to enter the Square Temple for *darshan* of the Goddess continues to move steadily, step by step. The Raja-who-would-have-been or his brother are expected to take a pull or two of the Sirimanu Ratham rope, then to sit further down the route on the wall of the Kota, opposite the tomb of the Muslim pir.<sup>101</sup> Neither are to be seen at the head of the route, though Anand told us the previous morning that he would be present. Perhaps he sits on the Kota wall.

Bairagi Nayudu appears from within the Square Temple and sits next to Tree-Paiditalli. He is barefoot and is without his customary eye-glasses. He wears the white silken finery of a raja, with the raja's high, conical, Rajasthani turban on his head. He is garlanded like a groom and receives *pasupu* and *kunkum*. He levers himself into the wooden seat and is tied in

<sup>101</sup> They are expected to sit next to a sign of royalty, a flag that flies on the wall of the Kota. It is said that the flag was given to a Vizianagaram king by a Muslim Maharaja of Hyderabad as a sign of gratitude after the former saved the abducted son of the latter. The design of the flag is that of two swords with curved blades angled towards each other, their tips meeting.



24. Bairagi Nayudu before Mounting the Sirimanu (Boaz Amichay).

place with new saris, his feet resting on the low wooden footrest (Later, as he enters the goddess, his feet will dangle in the air). In one fist he holds tightly to a stick to which is attached a small, squarish mat of rattan. The stick is the fourth sliver cut from the Sirimanu, Ammavaru Paiditalli, and the rattan is the square mat on which the Goddess used to sit under the three-species tree, her ordinary shrine after her primordial emergence as Paiditalli from Big Lake. Bairagi Nayudu holds tightly to Paiditalli throughout his ride, even as she carries him. In his lap, wrapped in a silk cloth, is the three-piece, Paiditalli~Potu Raju, the other three pieces cut from the Sirimanu tree.<sup>102</sup> Water is thrown liberally over the *bulbous* root end of Tree-Paiditalli and onto the Besta umbrella covered with fish-nets and fish designs.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps the most chaotic, emotional, yet apprehensive moment in the entire Sirimanu is when Bairagi Nayudu is tied into the seat with new saris. We return to this below.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Bairagi Nayudu in his home, Friday, 29 May 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Again, the Besta umbrella resonates with a mountain within the sea (of fishes and fish-nets), a mountain of holes filling within with water, a mountain turning into a wave.

With a great cry that sounds like a wave-like sigh, Tree-Paiditalli lifts her priest high in the air at about a 45 degree angle and (in the relatively open street space close to the Square Temple) swings him in an arc of some 180 degrees, showing that she moves in all directions. Her *bottom* with its rounded *tumbu* is then tied in place on the Sirimanu Ratham, and she does not move again sideways. In our understanding this great raising and heightening of space is the opening of the *depth* of the kingdom by Tree-Paiditalli, harvesting its capacity for creativity and growth as rejuvenated by the goddess. Depth, we argued, is watery space in which heights fill within with water and fit into or submerge within watery depths. Watery space in this cosmos is crucial to growth; and the task of the Goddess is to turn the dry, dusty, flatland of civilization into the depths of watery space. Paiditalli emerges annually from the deep fluidity that is her existence, as does a rejuvenated kingship, synchronized with the growing of rice, that will be brought to its rightful location, the palace-fort, on the head of the goddess. As she moves through Vizianagaram she distributes blessings to everyone.<sup>104</sup> Put more forcefully, king and kingship *sprout* from within Paiditalli into her priest, the receptacle formed to receive them within the human world within her cosmos.

In 2002 and 2003, at the very forefront of the Jatra is a Fisherman who begins its movement. He appears in trance, supported on both sides, leaning backwards and sideways as if he had limited control over himself, and holding two small clay *ghatalu* in his hands. Behind him comes the Elephant Ratham filled with men who distribute new saris along the way, until the supply runs out. Then the Anjali Ratham, but with seven men dressed in saris (not five, as we had been told) sitting atop the vehicle with many others in daily garb hanging from the sides. Then the crowd of Besta men, their fish-net umbrella with its fish decorations held high in their midst. Then the Flow of Milk followed by the Sirimanu Ratham itself.

As soon as the Sirimanu comes into view, a rain of bananas begins, tossed with accuracy and abandon especially at the Sirimanu but also at everyone else in the procession. Thousands of bananas are hurled, from balconies, rooftops, pavement. Good fortune is thought to accrue especially by hitting Bairagi Nayudu.<sup>105</sup> Why bananas, into this watery space,

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<sup>104</sup> Bairagi Nayudu feels the Goddess distributing blessings through him as he is carried by her in the Sirimanu.

<sup>105</sup> The news of this hurling of bananas at a goddess tree was what first enticed us to see Paiditalli in Vizianagaram.





25. Bairagi Nayudu Aloft (Boaz Amichay).



26. Bairagi Nayudu Aloft (David Shulman).



27. Sirimanu Underway: Bairagi Nayudu Above it All (David Shulman).

this fluid depth? The simplest exegesis is that the banana is a usual ritual offering, one associated with fertility; thus these bananas hurled with gusto are offerings to the Goddess, just as packets of *pasupu* are thrown at the façade of the Square Temple on the night of Toellu, and just as a banana bunch is tied to Tree-Paiditalli just below the seat. This is Bai-ragi Nayudu's explanation. Yet banana reproduction shares an important characteristic with rice—the banana also reproduces through parthenogenesis or, more accurately, through parthenocarpy, the development of the ovary of a flower into a fruit without fertilization. The banana, like rice, is self-reproducing, pollinated by its male flowers. We have seen that the developmental cycle of Paiditalli is one of self-reproduction through phases of maturation. Paiditalli's maturation and harvesting of kingship resonate powerfully with the harvesting of both rice and banana, and indeed with her self-reproducing cosmos.<sup>106</sup>

There is another potential wrinkle here. When she saw a video of the rain of bananas hurled in huge numbers at the Sirimanu, our colleague, the late Galina Lindquist of Stockholm University, exclaimed, 'They're fish!' The watery depths of Paiditalli's cosmos fill with mature fruits that model the maturation of Goddess and kingship, fruits that appear as inhabitants of these depths and that are integrally related to the fishermen who play such a significant role in the biography of Paiditalli—who, like fish, are denizens of the depths of wilderness.<sup>107</sup> Along the route from the Square Temple, the palace of Paiditalli, to the royal Kota, space is, in a sense, flooded by a great wave. This flooding wave, cresting before the royal palace, is also the dynamic of the spectators and worshipers as they watch and hurl bananas.

Paiditalli and her entourage make three journeys from the Square Temple to the Kota-palace and back; but the first is the climactic one, carried high on the surging waves of the crowd's emotion. The Sirimanu passes the tomb of the Sufi Pir situated in the middle of the street and the Raja's flag on the wall opposite, where the royal family should be seated, reaching the main gates of the Kota-palace. In the past, Paiditalli is said to have dipped three times at this spot, lowering the priest towards the entrance of the Kota. Here the procession turns, going back to its starting point, then repeating this route twice more. During each successive

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<sup>106</sup> Perhaps it is worth noting that the pod of the Tamarind tree resembles the banana in shape.

<sup>107</sup> According to Alexander von Rospatt, in Newar rituals of aging in the Kathmandu Valley the shape of the banana is made to represent a fish.

round there is less overt excitement, the high waves of emotion subsidizing into a plenitude, its flow becoming gentler and gentler. Yet there is no lessening of enthusiasm; rather, one senses an increasing fullness and the quietude this brings, a feeling of satiation as a difficult, lengthy journey nears its completion. At the end of the third return, Tree-Paiditalli dips, lowering Bairagi Nayudu to the ground.<sup>108</sup> This once more is a moment of excitement, the return of the priest from the depths of possession by the goddess to her temple. As he alights from the seat, everyone wants to touch him, seeing him as the Goddess, seeking his blessing.<sup>109</sup>

As he is carried aloft, wearing the raiment of a raja, respectfully bare-foot in the presence of the goddess, Bairagi Nayudu is fully himself, the priest of Paiditalli, yet formed to receive kingship. We can say that as he is carried, the goddess enters him, possesses him. Yet this is a particularly human perspective.<sup>110</sup> From Paiditalli's perspective—if we may be allowed the hubris of extrapolating her perspective—she absorbs him fully into her interiority, into her cosmos, so that he becomes part of her, part of the wilderness that extends itself through dynamics of similarity becoming difference. This is the significance of the new saris that tie him into his seat. As he is tied, he is held by her, within her. The saris are her, not him. In a way, the saris dress him, so that he is enclosed by her, held next to her, as a mother would carry an infant in front of her. Tied closely to her by the saris, he is, as it were, beginning to be tied into her, absorbed into her, becoming part of her, becoming part of the entirety of her cosmos. The 'small unconscious' he feels (as he once put it to us in English) is just this—internalized by her, he becomes a small part of her entirety, of the perception of a wholeness of cosmos and of himself as perceived from within it.

From this perspective, the world of Vizianagaram is an exteriorization from within the cosmos during this period when Paiditalli comes closest to exteriorizing herself in this way. And it is within herself that the king sprouts into the priest becoming the raja, the priest who *is* the raja, just as the raja is no less the brother of Paidimamba, the younger sister who became a goddess. The priest-turned-king sprouts from within the interior

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<sup>108</sup> In 2002, as Bairagi Nayudu was lowered, the rope fastening the high end of Paiditalli to the Ratham slipped, the bottom suddenly rising, and he plummeted half the distance to the ground. Unfazed, he was raised again and lowered once more, slowly.

<sup>109</sup> In 2002 this included the policemen on the spot whom the police superintendent beat off with her lathi.

<sup>110</sup> He says that both Paiditalli and Kanaka Durga are within him as he is carried by Tree-Paiditalli.

of the goddess as he is brought to his palace-fort, where he comes under the protection of the palace Śakti. In this sense, the self-creating Goddess brings the king out of herself *into her own exterior*, into *an extension of herself* that is still herself and, within this, into the kingdom of Vizianagaram that she has sown and grown with her blessings. In a profound sense, within herself she gives birth to the king, her brother—or to her brother, the king. Put otherwise, the king slips out from the Goddess just as Potu Raju emerges from his sister. Older sisters both, younger brothers both. The homologies between sister and brother resonate throughout this cosmos, crucial to kinship, crucial to kingship. The Sirimanu is the apex of a renewed involution of creative wilderness powers within the hardened self-protectiveness of civilization; and of the renewed intimacy between sister and brother that lies at the heart of Vizianagaram kingship, and that likely has broad cultural cachet in Andhra Pradesh.

With each round of Tree-Paiditalli's journey to the Kota, the waves of excitement subside without flattening; rather, as noted, there is the feeling of fullness in the world, of its momentary repletion, of the gentle lapping of waves of deep, imploded feeling. As the sun sets with the third return of Tree-Paiditalli to the Temple, the Sirimanu ends. The pavement of her route has turned slippery and yellowish with the mashed remains of thousands of bananas.<sup>111</sup>

The Sirimanu Ratham stands outside the Square Temple for a week and then is dismantled and stored. Tree-Paiditalli is taken to the Goddess Place close to Bairagi Nayudu's home. Later the tree will be cut into small pieces by Balaji & Co., a firm of tanners that has the right to sell these sections, disseminating her surface traces into a multitude of homes. The *irisimanu* pole becomes Balaji property, and as noted will become the central support of next year's Anjali Ratham. After Paiditalli leaves the tamarind, its wood is thought of more as a husk, a hard cover, a discarded skin, mainly surface with little depth.

Late Tuesday evening after the Jatra, the brahmin priests of the Square Temple and the pot carriers gather at the *saduru*-platform across the street from the temple. Bairagi Nayudu is not among them. Without the rituals of the previous night's Toellu procession, but accompanied by drummers, they carry the three-piece, Paiditalli~Potu Raju, and eight

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<sup>111</sup> In earlier times the Sirimanu began later and journeyed into the night. Police concern for power lines and the possibility of accident during the darkness moved back the starting time.

pots inside the main gates of the Kota. Wrapped in white cloth, little Paiditalli~Potu Raju leads the procession. They go no farther than the main gates, one of the participants says, because this is where Bairagi Nayudu saw Kanaka Durga on the night of Tolellu. Kingship and kingdom are now under the protection of the resident goddess, the Kota Śakti with her affinities to Kanaka Durga. Just inside the entrance is a temporary altar on which the two clay pots of Pot/Mud-Paiditalli already await Paiditalli~Potu Raju. The cloth removed, Paiditalli~Potu Raju is placed between the clay pots and red and black bangles are slipped onto the two side pieces, though not together on the same side piece. Paiditalli is slipping toward childhood and toward the non-differentiation of the fluid deep within herself. This is Paiditalli~Potu Raju's first meeting with the clay pots, the transitional form, Pot-Paiditalli, between Mud-Paiditalli (whose form has dissolved) and Tree-Paiditalli. During Tolellu the two clay pots sat on the swing. Now, in the Kota, Paiditalli~Potu Raju is bangled, red and black, as are infants to protect them against the evil eye and other deleterious forces.

After a lengthy *puja* conducted by the brahmin temple priests, they and the pot-carriers depart with all ten pots and Paiditalli~Potu Raju again wrapped in white cloth. Still at the Kota, Paiditalli offers a meal to Kanaka Durga which no one should observe, during which Paiditalli asks Kanaka Durga to protect the city until she returns. Paiditalli~Potu Raju is placed in the small shrine of Paiditalli, shaded by the three-species tree in the back of the Square Temple. There she joins the many others cut from previous Tree-Paiditallis, a kaleidoscopic enduring return and rejoining of Paiditalli to her presence in her originary shrine, the three-species tree, and of her first differentiation in the human part of her cosmos, between herself and her younger brother, Potu Raju. Six of the pots re-enter the temple; the two clay pots and the two five-metal pots are put on the *saduru*-platform. Later that night the two five-metal pots accompanied by two drummers are carried with soft drumming but without fanfare to the Wilderness Temple. Paiditalli's re-submergence into her own depths continues, culminating two weeks later, when the two clay pots of Mud-Paiditalli are swung away and return to Big Lake.

While the brahmin temple priests are in the Kota performing their *puja*, Bairagi Nayudu leads a young male buffalo into the empty Square Temple and within the *garbha grha*, before Paiditalli. The buffalo had been bought a year before and raised as an offering for this moment. Nayudu releases the rope around the buffalo's neck and this is seized by Scheduled Caste (Dalit) men who have been waiting. They exchange the buffalo for a male

sheep which they sacrifice to Paiditalli and eat. A few decades earlier, the buffalo would have been sacrificed to Paiditalli by her priest.<sup>112</sup> Now, without doubt, the intent is present.

#### 11. Uyyala Kambālu—*Swinging Away to the Wilderness*

These two weeks are felt to be a spooky period in Vizianagaram, an uncertain period of betwixt and between, a post-harvest lull, perhaps a time of partial cosmic dissipation. Paiditalli's presence is stretched between the Square Temple and the Wilderness Temple, with direction and momentum shifting towards the latter. Qualities or parts of her have left, others are present. Parts of her are again deep within herself, perhaps resting in the Wilderness Temple, though the goddesses are around, in the city—Kota Śakti in the Palace-Fort; Paiditalli in her Square Temple shrines; Kanaka Durga perhaps diffusely present—but their dynamics generally are shifting toward less activity and hardly any overt interactivity amongst them. Once Paiditalli is swung away to the wilderness, she does not leave the Square Temple from mid-October to mid-May, though every Tuesday she is processed around the temple precincts (in other words, around her cosmos).

All post-Sirimanu rituals are intended to quiet Paiditalli, to soothe her, to please her, to make her softly sleepy in her now more matronly presence. The rite of *Uyyala Kambālu*, of Swinging Away, is especially prominent for the low castes (in particular their womenfolk) who were responsible, mythically, for bringing Paidimamba into the world as the Goddess and who are her practical servants in numerous matters of ritual. The atmosphere within the Square Temple and around the swing is very relaxed. Many more persons are going to visit Paiditalli inside the temple than are gathering around the swing. Among those close to the swing are a group of women of the Bhogumvallu caste who in the past would have been devadasi temple courtesans. Today they are prostitutes.<sup>113</sup> The police presence is minimal (four senior policemen sitting in front of a shop to the side of the swing, and one policewoman).

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<sup>112</sup> Further south, in the region of Rajamundry, such a form of sacrifice to Paiditalli would have been a form of divination, the blood in a plate placed before Paiditalli, the temple gates locked, and on the morrow the patterns of coagulated blood read as portents. The sacrifice was that of Mahisasura, and marked the end of the period of the presence of the Goddess in the community.

<sup>113</sup> These women are always auspicious because they never marry and so are never widowed.

We noted that in the Swinging Away the swing itself is thought of as a cradle, the Goddess on the swing cradled within the sacrifice, that is, in the sacrificial skins in which the Goddess was cradled in the past. Indeed, in the past the Swinging Away was even more a rite for untouchables—of Malas (skinners, tanners) and Madigas (agricultural laborers) both of whom performed the blood sacrifices—and of women who had reached puberty. The Malas and Madigas made the swing and swung the seated goddess. According to one informant, in the past the Swinging Away was more explicitly a *pavalimpu seva* ritual, that is, one of putting the goddess to bed as is done every evening in her temples. Then a little bed together with the clay pots would be placed on the seat, atop the sacrificial skins. These untouchable castes, like the fishers, belong to wilderness, as do their blood sacrifices and the skins that covered the goddess seat of the swing. The goddess at rest is involuting, contracting, condensing; the more explicit *pavalimpu seva* of the past showed that in her resting she became absent from the human world. The swing, then, though it stands adjacent to the Square Temple, is already in wilderness. The likelihood is that Paiditalli is swung away through her two clay pots because they (unlike the metal pots) are transient and soon will dissipate within the fluidity of Big Lake, just as Ammavaru is self-submerging into her own fluid depths.

Thus the swing is yet another *ratham*, a *fluid, modulating version* of the Sirimanu Ratham—as noted, its old wooden posts are made from a Sirimanu ratham after it had completed the Sirimanu; the rope swung between them is taken from the rope used to pull a Sirimanu Ratham. It is thus a kind of *ratham* that, instead of opening depth, encloses and cradles space, or smoothes it, persuading the goddess to leave the space she has opened and encouraging her to involute. Cradled, she returns to her youth, perhaps to her infancy, for there she is sheer potentiality. The goddess is cradled and swung in order to be soothed, relaxed, and sent away to the Wilderness Temple where she can rest, say Bairagi Nayudu and others. He speaks of Paiditalli now as a young girl, and of the swinging as a lullaby.<sup>114</sup> As she re-enters herself, she leaves the traces of her maturation and harvesting on the various surfaces of the kingdom, returning to

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<sup>114</sup> Gell (1980: 221) argues that, 'In all swinging there is an element of self-surrender to a loss of individual equilibrium . . . The swing is an artefact whose use is the modification of mental states.' Swinging (being on the swing) loosens Paiditalli from within, towards childhood, perhaps infancy, as the Sirimanu ratam, from moving forward, curls, coils, into itself, as does Paiditalli within the pots on the swing.





28. Departing Pots on the Swing (Boaz Amichay).

the fruitful depths that human beings will try to activate again in another six months.

Paiditalli's externalization of herself is wholly from within herself, emerging phase by phase, always herself yet different; just as her internalization of herself is wholly into herself. Externalization is maturation, active engagement with and on behalf of the human world within her; internalization is the return to her own primordial being. Her dynamics are those of her cosmos with which we began this discussion—her cosmos opening into itself and closing within itself, its waters flowing from the high depths and the low depths, its mountains fitting into the lakes, its rivers filling the mountains, all of these flowing through and revolving within one another. All of this transpires within, and is externalized within, golden Paiditalli, a watery goddess whose goldenness is fluidity.

Also on the swing is the old tribal, sacrificial axe that was used to make the first gentle cuts in Tree-Paiditalli during the Tevadam rite. Present on the swing are qualities of the phases of Paiditalli's maturation on the human surface of her cosmos: The clay pots absorbed her presence from the mud of Big Lake; the axe helped to bring her as the tree to the city; and the Sirimanu helped bring the king to his kingdom. Qualities that participated in her development now take part in her departure and

involution. The first parts or qualities of Paiditalli to be swung away are those of Pot/Mud-Paiditalli, the Goddess born again from the lake. The two clay pots are placed on the swing together with offerings. The pots sit there for some time as the presence of the women becomes more frenzied, with possession by the goddess here and there. The pots and axe are then removed. The swing is cleaned and prepared with fresh offerings for Paiditalli of the Square Temple.

Bairagi Nayudu emerges from the temple holding the small golden *utsava mūrti* of Paiditalli that usually stands in the *garbha griha* in front of her permanent *mūrti*. Also emerging are the axe and the wicker basket containing *pasupu* and *kunkum*. All are placed on the swing. Paiditalli is dressed in a tiny red sari, garlanded, seated on a new women's sari. When Bairagi Nayudu sits on the swing, he holds Paiditalli on his lap. This moment is the final Swinging Away to the wilderness. The *utsava mūrti* is Paiditalli of the Square Temple. Some of her basic qualities are thus now joined to those of the five-metal pots, of Tree-Paiditalli and Pot/Mud-Paiditalli, returning together to the wilderness, to the space of self distant from human being; distant, too, from the depths the goddess has opened, sowed, and reaped, these depths that are kingdom and kingship rejuvenated.

## 12. Concluding Thoughts

Vizianagaram developed as a little kingdom as part of a broad spectrum of a distinctive political culture with particular state-formation, stretching south from the coast of Orissa, including the kingdom of Puri (North Kalinga), through the hill country on the Orissa—Madhya Pradesh—Andhra Pradesh border (taking in the little kingdoms and jungle kingdoms of Jeypore, Bastar, Madugula, Bobbili, and others), to the Godavari River (South Kalinga). In terms of three kingdoms in this spectrum for which we have some information on the annual rituals of the renewal of kingship (Puri, Jeypore, Bastar), we are able to say something further about the relationship of the Sirimanu Jatra to Vizianagaram kingship. This has more to do with what the Sirimanu Jatra is *not*, than with what it *is*. Moreover, we can only learn about this from kingship ritual in these other kingdoms. There we discuss very briefly materials from Puri and Bastar, with a citation of Jeypore.

Immediately evident is that rites of kingship in India generally acted directly on the body and being of the king. If there was a substitute for

the king, then the former had to be prepared properly within the palace precincts. When a new king was installed, the tutelary deity of the royal family was called upon to bless the installation (Mayer 1991: 770). The new ruler ascended to the throne, the seat (*gaddi*). At the outset the *gaddi* had been filled with deity through 'a rite similar to that by which a material object is turned into an image [murti]' (Mayer 1985: 208). In northern Indian kingdoms the *gaddi* sometimes was described as *the State* (Mayer 1985: 217), for within the *gaddi* (or within its cushion, which supported the king) were the goddess or goddesses who protected the State with their *sakti* (Mayer 1991: 774) and who were considered vital to the viability of the king's reign. Mayer (1985: 217) writes that, 'At his installation, then, the ruler . . . was then joined to it [the *gaddi*]—some said as a son to a mother (sitting in the mother's lap was the picture given), others as husband to wife.' Galey (1989: 175), writing of the Himalayan former kingdom of Tehri-Garhwal, says that the king 'is actually married to his kingdom and made protector of the earth.' In some kingdoms the king himself worshiped the throne on Navaratri/Dasara, the great time of Durga or her homologues.

As we commented, in Indian rituals of the renewal of kingship the focus is the body and person of the king. In the Kalinga region, where there is evidence of annual rejuvenation of kingship, the king either takes an active role or is the recipient of vectors of energy directed at him. In the former kingdom of Puri in North Kalinga, the tutelary deities of kingship—Jagannatha (a form of Visnu), his brother and sister—annually fall ill during the hot, dry season when diseases in the past were rampant. Every twelfth year the deities die and are reborn. Implicitly, they are made ill by smallpox brought by the pox goddess, Sitala (Apffel-Marglin 2008: 142–143). The king, the living incarnation of Jagannatha, has a major role in the annual healing and rejuvenating of the deities. In doing so he becomes an untouchable sweeper (through sweeping and cleansing the chariots of the deities) (Apffel-Marglin 2008: 41, 143). One can say that *as* the king heals the deities he no less actively participates in his own rejuvenation (since he is the reincarnation of Visnu, of Jagannatha).

In the former kingdom of Bastar, for the duration of Navaratri/Dasara the king abdicated his secular power to his prime minister and became an ascetic renouncer, a non-person who performed austerities, who could not be greeted, who slept on the floor, who did not wear shoes nor eat meat. He was substituted for by a stand-in who performed austerities for him. The stand-in sat on a heap of ashes in a pit dug in the durbar hall. At the other end of the pit were a pot of water, a heap of grain, and a sword. The stand-in Raja fasted for the duration of Navaratri, and was not permitted

to move his body (Gell 1997: 438). Gell (1997: 440) writes that the stand-in Raja is dead, seated in a grave together with the means of renewal and agriculture: the sword, a ploughshare and sickle; the seed, seed; the water, rain; and the ashes, fertilizer. With the close of Navaratri, the king returns, alive, rejuvenated, and the sacrificed stand-in departs quickly without the two laying eyes on one another. The intimations of the ritual death and rebirth of the king and kingship are clear, while the king is identified with the regeneration of the agricultural year (Gell 1997: 440–441). A quite similar forming of the death and rebirth of king and kingship was reported for the neighboring kingdom of Jeypore (Crooke 1915: 33–34).

In all of these rejuvenations of kingship during Navaratri, the king was either an active participant or was acted upon vigorously and formatively. None of this is so in the Sirimanu complex. The king and then the would-have-been king were expected to touch this ritual cycle at certain points—a few gentle cuts with the sacrificial axe to Tree Paiditalli, giving silk garments to the priest to wear on the Sirimanu, taking a few pulls at the Sirimanu Ratham—yet apparently little more than this. Given that Vizianagaram kingship likely shared qualities of transformative renewal with these other little and jungle kingdoms, where was this most likely to have taken place in Vizianagaram? Most probably inside the Kota, inside the palace quarters, inside the Round Mahal with its Durbar Hall and throne, in the presence of the immoveable Kota Sakti, the energizer and protectress of kingship within itself. In there, it was likely that the king annually went through some form of death and rebirth, perhaps during Navaratri. Unfortunately the Royal archives of Vizianagaram are either destroyed or lost, so our supposition cannot be confirmed. Nonetheless, continuing with our inference puts Paiditalli into a different focus.

What is the significance of the presence of the Sirimanu in Vizianagaram? The immediate response is historical. Vizianagaram's military power finally was decimated at the end of the eighteenth century by its erstwhile ally and partial controller, Britain, at the battle of Padmanabha. After this the kingdom entirely abandoned military ventures and concentrated on political intrigues in Madras and on its own developing, vibrant cultural life which reached its apex in the second half of the nineteenth century. Vizianagaram kingship was a major force in this inward turning and in encouraging this South Indian cultural renaissance. Though we are unsure of the exact dates of its initial practice, the Sirimanu may well be part of this creative cultural movement or received impetus from this in the nineteenth century.

We could rephrase the above in the following way. The Sirimanu complex is the people's rites of kingdom and kingship and their rejuvenation. They were the people's creative response to the crisis of kingship in Vizianagaram. This response entailed the cosmic perceptions of a goddess whose presence was prevalent in rural areas of the region and who was re-originated precisely as the people's protectress of Vizianagaram kingdom and kingship in the face of the crisis of Bobilli. Note that at no point do the Paiditalli rites penetrate the palace interiors of the Kota where the Kota Sakti reigns and where the king's rites of kingship likely were done. Neither do the Paiditalli rites clash at any point with where kingship rites were prominent nor do the Goddess rites belong to a particular sector of the kingdom (as could be said for Bastar, where in the last phase of the Dasara rites of the death and rebirth of the king, he is 'kidnapped' by 'tribal' peoples and re-formed as Dantesvari, the goddess of land and people, as whom he is returned to his palace [Gell 1997: 439, 442]).

In the people's rites of Paiditalli it is the self-sacrifice of the Goddess for the sake of kingdom and kingship that always is at the forefront; and this is tied directly to the historical event of her brother's, Raja Rama Raju's, death at Bobilli, and not to the death and re-birth of king and kingship as such (as was the case in Bastar, and perhaps in Jeypore and Puri as well). The Sirimanu unusually and ironically *celebrates* the tragic death of the king, and the focus in the Sirimanu complex is on the king's sister and her deep tie to her brother. All of this feels like rites of the people in a cosmos with which, in terms of cultural common sense and its truths, they are intimate. In a *vital* sense, the rites of Paiditalli entail and practice her existential and phenomenal existence and not those of kingship and king, though in her cosmos she indeed takes responsibility for them. It is worth emphasizing again that Paiditalli throughout is a relatively pacific goddess devoted to self-sacrifice for the sake of the growth of kingdom and kingship, and this in a previously self-perceived warrior kingdom.

By calling the Sirimanu complex the people's rites of kingdom and kingship we are suggesting that the likely impetus for these were neither directly in royalty nor in the usual state priesthood of brahmins (who were not significant in Vizianagaram kingship outside of the palace). Perhaps the impetus (if not the initiative) came from goddess priests within the atmosphere of a kingdom turning inward and perhaps searching inward and discovering forms of shaping the world other than those of war, culminating in the cultural effervescence of the nineteenth century.

Our argument has implications for just how the Sirimanu rejuvenates kingship. Kingship—perhaps we should say, maleness—enters the

Sirimanu through the appearance of the three-piece, the creation and joining of Paiditalli~Potu Raju, at Tolellu, the apex of the heightening and activation of the Goddess' fertility. The three-piece is cut from, born from, Tree-Paiditalli in her cosmos. Potu Raju in this assemblage emerges from his older sister. Maleness emerges from femaleness. It is here that Paiditalli creates gender. But in this regard the identities of Paiditalli and Potu Raju are not (quite) distinct. In the three-piece, sometimes femaleness is predominant, sometimes maleness, but both the Goddess and her younger brother share these qualities, and maleness remains integral to femaleness. Their beings in this cosmos are permeable, their qualities fluid and flowing into one another, to borrow loosely from the thinking of McKim Marriott (1989, see also Busby 1997, Daniels 1984).

With Potu Raju, the Buffalo King, kingship is born within Paiditalli's cosmos, with herself as its protectress, the guardian of her younger brother, the king. King Rama Raju was the older brother of Paidimamba, the ancestress of Paiditalli, and lost his life at Bobilli because he wouldn't hearken to his sister's advice. Now kingship depends on the power, yet no less on the wisdom, of Paiditalli. Her wisdom may be why Paiditalli *insists* on appearing as the Sirimanu tree, re-creating, giving birth to, her now younger brother, the Buffalo king. The identity between Potu Raju and the kingship of Vizianagaram (including its incumbent) is precisely here—Potu Raju and the king are one. Royalty in the Sirimanu is a family composed of sisters and brothers who together fully regenerate the kingdom as Tree-Paiditalli deposits the king (perhaps an infant?) at the doorstep of his palace-fort, the domain of Kota Śakti.<sup>115</sup> It is the people's rites of kingship in Vizianagaram that catch the significance of the sister-brother tie in Andhra Pradesh more generally and make this a fulcrum for the regeneration of kingdom and kingship. At the top of Tree-Paiditalli in the Sirimanu, in the figure of her priest, Bairagi Nayudu, there is the extreme condensation of Paiditalli's biography. The originary Paiditalli appears as a stick held onto by Bairagi Nayudu (for dear life, as he once told us). Attached to this stick is the mat on which Paiditalli sat beneath the three-species tree (which may well be her as well), her originary

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<sup>115</sup> Oral traditions in India do not obviate conundra of incestuous unions, which may be cleaned up in more canonic or priestly versions. For example, Galey (1989: 175), writing on the Himalayan former kingdom of Terhi-Garhwal, states that, '... much is still unexplained in the incestuous form of union developed by the oral tradition where the king marries the earth which is also his sister, his mother, and his daughter.'

shrine in Vizianagaram after she first emerged from Big Lake. Wrapped in silk cloth is the three-piece, Paiditalli~Potu Raju/incumbent king, all three pieces cut from Tree-Paiditalli and resting on Bairagi Nayudu's lap, just as his ancestor the chief-minister held Paidimamba on his lap prior to her brother's death.<sup>116</sup> And perched on the Sirimanu is Kanaka Durga, the protectress of Paidimamba, who enabled the latter's transformation into Paiditalli.

The sequence of forms Paiditalli takes during her ritual period in Vizianagaram tells us more of the energies of regeneration activated here. Paiditalli emerges from Big Lake as formless, almost amorphous ooze. Mud-Paiditalli then enters the two clay pots specially made for her. Paiditalli acquires firm shape. The interior of Pot-Paiditalli is circular, perhaps spiral, her trajectories of energy going round and round, coiling within and through themselves through interior dynamics, intensifying more and more. The pot is homologous with the womb, and within herself Pot-Paiditalli is developing the differentiation of her cosmos, which will appear at Tolellu as gender distinction. With the appearance of Tree-Paiditalli, she becomes straighter, her trajectory potentially more linear, one end pointing downward into the earth, the other, potentially upward, forward, into the heavens. With the appearance of the three-piece, Paiditalli~Potu Raju, during Tolellu, gender comes into existence, though female and male qualities are blurred fluidly into one another (just as in Mud-Paiditalli her different qualities were quite blurred and fluid amongst themselves). With the appearance of the infant-like three-piece of Paiditalli~Potu Raju and the doing of *Sirilu* (the First Furrow of generating fertility), Tree-Paiditalli should be understood as having both female and male qualities.

The following morning, Tree-Paiditalli on the Sirimanu Ratham, elevated to a 45 degree angle, looks more male-like, perhaps a female-male, thrusting forward, opening space, the throngs of onlookers sighing and moaning her ejaculation, tailing off (especially at the close of first arrival at the Kota entrance) as she lowers herself to permit the king to dismount. On the Sirimanu Ratham all forms are linear—the rectangular mat, the stick, the three-piece. All pots, all dynamics of coiling and intensifying,

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<sup>116</sup> The three-piece may resonate with the three-species tree. Here we will not enter into the possible significance of threes or triads in the entire Paiditalli complex, though without doubt this is important—the three goddesses (Paiditalli, Kota Sakti, Kanaka Durga), the three-species tree, the three-piece, the three rounds of the Sirimanu between temple and fort-palace, and likely more.

have disappeared. But on the evening after the Sirimanu, pots reappear as the two clay pots meet the three-piece on a temporary altar inside the main entrance to the Kota. After this it is linearity that disappears as the three-piece enters the small shrine adjacent to the three-species tree and the pots that return, as Paiditalli begins to intensify her involution, returning deeper within herself, in a sense deeper within her own womb, until the swinging away of the two clay pots on the swing that is thought of as a cradle.

A Tantric reading of Paiditalli's rhythms might see a progression from femaleness to maleness to the uncoiling of energy. The pot is not only a womb; it also resembles the cakra centers of subtle energy in Tantric Yogic physiology. The female energy of the Goddess coiling and intensifying in the pot is not dissimilar to that which occurs through meditation and ritual in the Yogic cakras, especially that at the base of the spine, as the sleeping Kundalini is shaken awake. In Tree-Paiditalli this coiling uncoils and straightens. In Tree-Paiditalli on the Sirimanu Ratham traveling to the Kota, especially in the first journey, uncoiling energy, unleashed, rises as would the Kundalini to the top of the skull, to the top of the Tree and beyond, thrusting forward with male energy. Tree-Paiditalli on her Ratham is the synergistic blending of female and male energies of the Goddess and Potu Raju that together re-energize, give birth to, the infant king deposited at the entrance to his palace-fort. And what then of the banana, hurled by the thousands at the Sirimanu Ratham—the simple banana that first brought us to the Sirimanu Jatra and set us on our journey of exploration into a people's rites of rejuvenating kingdom and kingship? Of course one could always say, trivially, that the banana has a phallic shape. More important in our eyes is the self-pollinating and self-generating nature of the banana plant; and we would want to add that the Sirimanu Tree, blending in its intensities both female and male energies, may well be described as such a self-generating phallus emerging from the female pot-wombs of Paiditalli. Perhaps there is, indeed, an implicit Tantric logic in Vizianagaram—for what is Tantra if not the formalization of just such local conceptual logics as we find in the Paiditalli rituals? We know that Tantric Yogis had a major role in the life of the Vizianagaram court alongside the wrestlers and tiger dancers and poets. At the least we can say that showering the Sirimanu Ratham with bananas is a tremendous intensification of the dynamics that have gone into this people's shaping, that is, rejuvenating, their kingdom and their king.



We would like to stress again, in conclusion, the perhaps unexpected notion that goddesses, like other nourishing and living beings, themselves need to be grown, nurtured, fermented, and matured, and that it is the work of human beings to see them through these processes year after year. Paiditalli is a living goddess, hence never a given, a datum, a “fact.” Like all other living beings, she exists in varying intensities and uneven textures; it would be ludicrous to claim that she is always a single set of attributes or features, or that her self-awareness is steady or fixed, or even that she is uniquely female—when, as we have seen repeatedly, the very division of femaleness and maleness is a categorical feature of the surface. On another level, as a goddess endowed with depth, indeed defined by her depth, Paiditalli is capable of generating maleness in the form of her intimate male self, her brother and, at the next remove, a king. We have attempted to see, with her devotees, into the deeper innerness of this goddess and to watch her emerge from it, or through it, in order to draw close to her people, only to depart with their help back into that deep interior when this year’s task is done.

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