

ON THE WAY TO THE THOUSAND- PILLARED MANDAPAM



Fig.1 Strip mining.

Travelogue on the Monu- ments of an Agrarian Insurgency

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In May 2004, a center-left coalition, led by the Indian National Congress, came to power in India. The Congress is the storied party of Indian nationalism, the world's oldest political party. In the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, its unexpected victory over Chandrababu Naidu, ally of the Hindu right, flush with cash from Hyderabad's business process outsourcing (BPO) industries—the *Guardian's* George Monbiot called him the “West's favorite Indian”—owed significantly to brewing agrarian discontent, behind which lay a long-festering, decades-old Maoist armed insurgency. Recognizing this contribution behind its patently unearned success, the Congress government in Delhi magnanimously declared a ceasefire with the Maoists. On October 11, the upper echelons of the Maoist People's War Group (PWG) surfaced from their underground bivouacs, AK-47s slung over shoulders, in the Nallamalla forest area in Andhra Pradesh. Stashing their weapons, the leaders convened a mass rally in Hyderabad, the capital city, and 65,000 supporters attended the meeting. On the way, the Maoist leaders unveiled a “martyrs' memorial” in Guttikondabilam village in Guntur district. (Guttikondabilam is the venue of a historic secret meeting between Naxalite founder-member Charu Mazumdar and Andhra Pradesh Maoist leaders in 1969, a flashpoint of the Srikakulam peasant insurgency of the 1970s.)

Previous to this, the mainstream newspaper *Indian Express*, quite out of keeping with its pro-liberalization tilt, carried a sympathetic Sunday magazine article on the Maoists.¹ The article was accompanied by a picture of what it described as the memorial to “People's War martyrs” at Indravelli, the site of the police massacre and secret burial of some sixty Gond tribals who had assembled for a Maoist-organized meeting on April 20, 1981. The small, low-resolution image showed a square column on a pedestal, crowned by a pyramid-shaped capital. The structure, the article said, was inspired by the Monument to the People's Heroes (Renmin Yinxiong Jinian Bei) in Beijing's Tiananmen Square.



Fig.2 The memorial to PW martyrs at Indravelli. The original structure was inspired by Tiananmen Square.



Fig.3 Henry Flitcroft, Pantheon, Stourhead, 1753-4. The Hoare family, 1740s onward.



Fig.4 Bantry House, Cork, Ireland, 1765 onward.

My current research centers on the monuments of agrarian accumulation in the eighteenth century: the pleasure gardens, follies, and ha-has by which the Whig sensibility viewed the expansion of land under cultivation in Britain, America, and Bengal—the effect of Britain's “financial revolution”—through the devices of the aesthetic. Peering into the grainy image of the Indravelli monument, I was struck with an uncanny resemblance. The follies of Britain were “fakes” instantiating a political ideal; the rotundas, obelisks, Gothic temples of eighteenth-century English gardens were fragments of an exogenous, imagined, Virgilian culture, strewn around the landscape in order to ratify—to *institute* as the work of the imagination—a transformed political economy. Somewhat in the strain of French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux, I have called this kind of displaced memory—the recuperation of an archaic past that you *cannot have had experienced* as your own “history”—“ancestrality.”² The incongruous memory of Mao in the jungles of northern Andhra Pradesh, I thought, was perhaps a comparable kind of *asserted* ancestrality, something that could be useful to think through the critique of political economy that I was attempting to outline in my study of architecture. I decided to investigate.

¹ Rakesh Sinha, “The Thick Red Line,” *Indian Express*, Sunday magazine, August 29, 2004.

² See Arindam Dutta, “Ancestralities: Nature, Architecture and the Debt” (in progress); Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008).

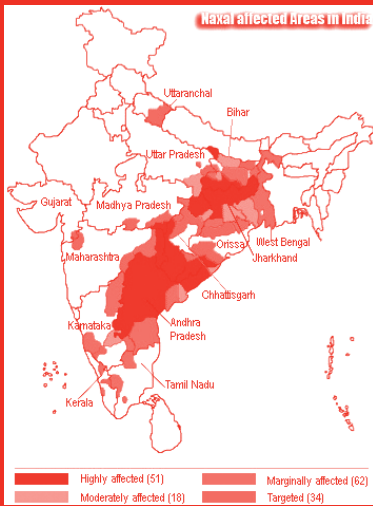


Fig.5 Map of Naxalite affected areas in India, produced by Citigroup, January 2007.

How big is the Maoist insurgency in India? What you see here is a map produced by a Citigroup report from January 2007, laying out the various indicators that potential investors in the Indian economy should watch for. The Maoist insurgency is listed as one of the four key challenges that the continued growth of the Indian economy could be threatened by. In Citigroup’s imagination, the Maoist insurgency has

succeeded in establishing rule over a large geographical stretch known as the “red corridor,” across central India from Nepal in the north to Karnataka in the south, and including Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, W Bengal, and parts of Orissa. The Naxalites are most well-entrenched in the Dandakaranya region in the state of Chattishgarh, where they have established a government of their own—the *Janatana Sarkar*...[Their influence] extends to 165 districts in 14 states covering close to 40% of the country’s geographical area and affecting 35% of the population.³

For potential investors in the Indian market, the next observation is crucial: “Given that the Naxalite movement has spread to the mineral-rich states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and slowly even around the districts in Bangalore, its economic impact could be far reaching.” The Citigroup report was written at a time of global price highs in the commodity markets. Much of the deficits accruing from the Indian “economic miracle” and the burgeoning national market for international products has been paid for not by its export of either high-value manufactured goods or even the

much-touted BPO services—the cynosure of the international media and of the dominant coterie of “cultural studies” in academia—but in fact through intensified extraction and export of ore, minerals, and petroleum products. This is markedly “old economy” stuff, a return to India’s colonial structure, where the BPO industries more or less serve as globalizing gloss, with the caveat, *mutatis mutandis*, that Indian firms were now selling the raw material to Chinese firms who were selling manufactured goods to Western consumers, while carrying American debt to hold up the price of the dollar, and so on. Given this chain, it is plausible that the Citigroup report exaggerated the actual danger from the Maoist insurgency to startle stock-market investors, a constituency to which both the neoliberal Congress and its antecedent governments were in consummate thrall. Nonetheless, it was clear that both the Maoist militants and India’s substantial tribal population—politically ignored and brutally exploited—ensconced in the forests and ravines that also hold the bulk of India’s mineral reserves, were now directly in the path of this chain of extraction.



Fig.6 Construction on a BPO Incubator, Hyderabad Cybercity, January 2007.

Preliminary enquiries on my part revealed that the Guttikondabilam and Indravelli memorials were not the only Maoist memorials in Andhra Pradesh; hammer-and-sickle topped obelisks dot the forests and countryside of the insurgent landscape by the hundreds. Each commemorates a slain cadre, executed by the police in extra-judicial “encounters”: pick the suspect up when he comes into market to pick up provisions, torture him for information, shoot him at point-blank range, let his body decompose to send a message to his family and village, drop off his body in the fields, and claim that the suspect was shot when he opened fire as the police were about to apprehend him. This, and the 180,000 farmer suicides since 1997 exemplify the pervasive agrarian dissent and distress that occupy the other side of the coin of India’s “liberalization.”

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Rohini Malkani and Anushka Shah, *India in 2007: Managing the New Growth Paradigm* (Economic and Market Analysis: India) Citigroup Global Markets, 2007), 38-39.

Seeking to document these memorials, I established contact, through intermediaries, with civil society groups affiliated with the Maoist insurgency who could direct me to these locations. I eventually hoped to make it to Indravelli, on the state border two hundred miles north of Hyderabad, nestled deep in the ravines of the Central Indian plateau. January 14, 2005, three months after the *Express* publication, seven months after the ceasefire announcement, and the day before I was to leave Calcutta for Hyderabad, television news channels carried reports of six Maoists killed in Karimnagar district, one of the areas in my planned itinerary. The Naxalites retaliated, dragging a Congress Party *sarpanch* to one of these martyr's monuments, and then killing him. By the time I arrived in Hyderabad the next day, police had started full-fledged combing operations. The ceasefire was over. Maoist cadres that had surfaced in the past few months slipped back into their forest bivouacs. My prospective guide went underground; the tentatively quiescent landscape I had hoped to reconnoiter erupted overnight into a terrain of counter-insurgency.

My research objective had abruptly become rather uncomfortable: a person bumbling about, asking for the whereabouts of Maoist structures was sure to invite suspicion from counter-insurgency forces. Stuck in a hotel room, I was able to visit two of the monuments in two working-class suburbs of the city itself: the Maoist movement reaches thus far into the maw of its urban antagonists. But otherwise I was left with nothing to do. One of my contacts suggested a different strategy. In Warangal city, some ninety miles to the northeast of Hyderabad, the police have built a memorial to *their* slain cadres who had succumbed to Maoist action. The memorial is pyramidal in shape, a concrete structure of four boomerang-shaped planes supporting each other at their edges, plastered in white. The structure sits on the lawn of the police headquarters on one of the main crossroads of Warangal town, clearly visible from the outside but walled off by a concrete-and-barbed-wire perimeter. We determined that I should go visit this structure instead. Without a press card, however, we were hard put to come up with an alibi that would allow me to photograph this bastioned memorial at the heart of an ongoing insurgency.⁴

Two miles down the Warangal road from the police compound are the ruins of a temple called the Hanumakonda complex, built around the year 1163 by the Kakatiya

empire, a Telugu-speaking dynasty that reigned between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries with its capital in Warangal. Scores of magnificently carved thick stone columns hold up short-span beams that form two separate structures: one a star-shaped structure with a cella and a portico, the second a densely populated hypostyle structure, symmetrical and square in plan with a central courtyard at the crux of two crisscrossing aisles. The spatial effect is of a delicately proportioned and sculpturally elaborate composition; at the same time, unevenness of construction, geometrical inconsistencies, and asymmetries between corresponding elements also convey the sense of a crude structure, where time has left no two vertical elements in alignment or, for that matter, in plumb. The large number of columns gives the temple its apocryphal name: the Thousand-Pillared Mandapam (canopy).

This ancient monument would be my alibi. My rented car would drive—so the plan went—*past* the police memorial that was my objective, to visit the Hanumakonda temple, making sure to take pictures (should the police investigate) of this tourist-appropriate destination. Then, arriving back at the gates of the police station, I would claim to have chanced on the remarkable “beauty” of the police memorial while traveling to the “famous” temple of which I had heard so much, and beg to photograph it. Accordingly, upon my arrival, a phone call from pillion box to the superintendent was made, the words “tourist,” “America,” “architect,” “architecture,” were thrown into the mix, and the requisite permission was obtained. It was critical that at no point would I betray having even a remote clue of either local conditions or of the insurgency. A paradox that I had been mulling over for the last few days came sharply into focus as I was crossing the gates of the police compound. My display of innocuousness in order to attain my object rested, in a manner of speaking, on my *playing myself*, which is to say the architectural historian and aesthete-tourist retracing the map of a state-sanctioned heritage, which architectural historiography has an institutionally privileged role in creating. The power of this alibi rested paradoxically on a kind of scholastic pretension on my part, assumedly inherent in which was a kind of studied disinterest in present-day affairs. My professional status had itself become an alibi for research: the path to enlightenment lay in adopting an air of realpolitik ignorance.

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Indian authorities in general adopt a stance of extreme suspicion of the image: photography of public buildings and installations has been long banned, with the usual rationale about terrorists and foreign powers. Google Earth's introduction therefore drew considerable huffing and puffing from Indian, as well as South Korean and Russian, authorities.



Fig.7 Thousand Pillar Temple, Kakatiya Empire, Hanumakonda, district Warangal, twelfth century.

At its best, the discipline of historiography is conscious of itself as a distancing one: of creating a speculative, categorical frame of reference through which nuggets of empirical or episodic meaning enter into a discursive, authoritative register. The historian's role is inevitably a cauterizing one, as French scholar Michel de Certeau terms it, "a partitive usage." The past is made accessible only after its definite "death," so to speak, is produced, rendering it as other. If the historian's production of knowledge has a certain place in power, it is a contra-purposive one, of imparting lessons about power while appearing to be cast out of power. "[Historiography's] discourse will be magisterial without being that of the master, in the same way that historians will be teaching lessons of government without knowing either its responsibilities or its risks. They reflect on the power that they lack." The turn to method, in this sense, is inevitably a self-abnegating one: "to the very degree that this discourse is rigorous, it will be destined for futility."⁵ Only in this functional futility does historiography find its place of preeminence and sit next to the prince—a parasitical prominence, as it were—as narrative-producing handmaiden of the state.

For the historian, monuments are thus neither the pure figuration of aesthetic practice—as Adolf Loos propounded in "Architecture"⁶—nor are they the fraught material vestiges through which a "public" constitutes

itself as such, by concocting a past, as Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire* sought to document. At sites like Hanumakonda, rather, what the architectural historian confronts is the vast, infrastructural, disseminated spoor of a canonism for which he is disciplinarily responsible, but whose constitution of a "public" is palpably compromised. James Fergusson, the colonial historian of Indian architecture and author of the first "global" history of architecture, devoted an entire, albeit short, section of his magisterial *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* to "Hanamkonda."⁷ The structure is depicted as one of the few well-preserved examples of the late Chalukya period, shoehorned into Fergusson's trademark tripartite schema of beginning, apogee, and decline that characterized "Hindu" architecture itself the middle element of a further, supervening tripartite progression from "Buddhist" to "Muslim." The decolonized nation absorbs this historiography—with its traditions of establishing historical "context," aesthetic "judgment," and the celebration of great civilizations in antiquity—as its heritage, *re-presenting* it to its citizens as an object of veneration and an ancestral bequest to the nation, with the requisite secularization—its "partitive" reproduction—via the notice posted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in front of the temple.

Fergusson describes the Hanumakonda site as a material assembly of ruins, not the active place of worship that it was in his time and is today. The ongoing religious use of the temple and the everyday rituals performed by the faithful operate in a different temporality, at a different tempo, than the archaeological classification of the temple as "ruin." The former marks the same stones with turmeric and vermilion, offers flowers and prayers to them in a different modus of veneration. The latter territoriality inscribes numbers on each column of the edifice, recuperating each component stone of the structure for the desacralized halo of science. Each stone is turned into an isolated minim for a disenchanting, distributional form of categorization, sequestered for the purpose of a perdurable, defensible conception of national and global "heritage."

For the few local tourists who come picnicking to the Hanumakonda temple on weekends from nearby villages and towns, pulled by the threads of popular memory, the ASI notices confer on this act of re-memory the frame of an ecumenical, national sanction. On the other hand, far from the "global"

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Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 8.

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Adolf Loos, "Architecture," (1910) in *Adolf Loos: Architecture 1903-1932*, ed. Roberto Schezen (New York: Monacelli, 1996), 15.

7

James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, rev. ed. with additions by James Burgess and R. Phene Spiers (1910; New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1998), 420, 434.

pathways of tourism and business that pass through Hyderabad or Agra, or for that matter the temples of Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Mahabalipuram, Madurai, the rare foreign visitor to this provincial edifice appears markedly out of place, thus even more identified with the appearance of a disinterested scholasticism. The “distancing move” of the historian operates even more strongly at this fringe, providing the occasional “global visitor” with the alibi of the specialist’s somewhat nugatory pursuits. The vulgar absorption of a methodological scruple has here acquired a depoliticized license; the (architectural) tourist automatically carries about a distracted air of innocence about the killing fields of rural India. Two kinds of commemorative landscapes, two archaeologies of the state thus confront each other on the main road at Warangal, and to address one the architectural historian needs the alibi of its sanctioned other.



Fig.8 Police memorial to cadre killed by Maoists, Warangal city, Andhra Pradesh.

In January 2007, two years later, I returned to Hyderabad. By this time the renewed force of counter-insurgency that I had encountered on my previous visit had subsided into a normative terrain. The debate in the media over the raft of issues that the Maoists had brought to the table had subsided to a singular, archaic, rather dissimulatory focus: the state’s right to monopoly over violence. At the time of the armistice, the Maoist’s principal demand to the Congress was that it stick to its pro-poor electoral promises of land distribution. As Sumanta Banerjee has pointed out, “the

Maoists did not take the maximalist position of demanding recognition of their authority over the pockets that they controlled in Nizamabad, Warangal, and Karimnagar.”⁸ If in the immediate aftermath of the election Congress’s *noblesse oblige* was a de facto recognition of this extant authority, long-term territorial concession to the insurgency would leave it at the political mercy of the Maoists. In any case, the mining interests behind Congress—connected to the Chief Minister’s family⁹—were least likely to let matters stand, given that the Maoist bastion straddled territories that were richest in ore. As the ceasefire went underway, Maoist cadres went about forcibly redistributing land. Unable to counteract these actions given their own grandiose (and desperate) campaign promises, the state rather began to insist that the Maoists first disarm themselves: a patently pharisaical move in a context where weapons are actively used by a host of non-state actors, from landlord militias to party hoodlums and to labor mafias.

In the two years since 2005, the frontlines of the insurgency had receded again deep into the forests. The well-known Maoist poet Varavara Rao put me in touch with a civil society support group for the families of slain insurgents. The group is also responsible for the upkeep of the Maoist monuments. Three people were to accompany me in my reconnoitering: “Kaveri,”¹⁰ a former People’s War Group guerilla and widow of a slain cadre, who had been imprisoned and tortured for five years by police on charges of being an “explosives expert.” (This kind of charge has been described by lawyer-activist K. Balagopal as particularly advantageous for the extra-judicial tenor of counter-insurgency operations “because it is a crime without victim, for it is a crime of intent and not execution. All the police have to say was that a bag of explosives were found on the person.”¹¹) My second companion, “Krishnamma,” is a mother of two whose husband was killed on May 4, 2004, a few days before the ceasefire, in another “encounter,” his body dumped in a field in Guntur district. While never having been a cadre herself, she now works as a treasurer in a group politically affiliated with the underground militancy. The last, the elderly “Vamanna,” was my guide who had gone absconding two years ago. A carpenter by profession, he is the architect of the smaller of the two monuments on the Hyderabad outskirts that I had visited two years previously, built in memory of his son Venu,¹² killed on January 23, 2002.

⁸ Sumanta Banerjee, “All Quiet on the Maoist Front?” *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 5, 2005. Also see “Naxalites Give New Dimension to Land Issue,” *Hindu*, October 18, 2004; “Land for Poor: Naxals Urge Govt. to Constitute Panel,” *Newindpress.com*, October 18, 2004; “Naxalites Target Forest Land,” *Hindu*, October 22, 2004; “YSR Raises Serious Objection to Naxals Occupying Private and Forest Lands,” *New Indian Express*, October 27, 2004; “IG [Inspector General of Police] Warns Against Usurping of Lands,” *Hindu*, October 27, 2004; “Naxal Problem: Government Plans to Buy Land,” *Hindu*, October 29, 2004; “Maoist Occupation of Lands Might Derail Talks,” *New Indian Express*, October 30, 2004; “CPI(M) Backs Maoists on Land Issue,” *Hindu*, October 31, 2004; “Maoists Help Dalits [lower castes] Occupy Lands,” *Hindu*, November 1, 2004. The government went through some motions of listening to Naxalite demands on land redistribution, see “Andhra Panel to Take Up Naxalites’ Land Demand,” *Indian Express*, October 20, 2004.

⁹ Sugata Srinivasaraju, “‘Bellary is Mine,’ Mining: The Reddy Brothers,” and “The Castle, The Moving Forest,” *Outlook*, August 10, 2009. <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?261044> (accessed August 10, 2009).

¹⁰ Kaveri, Krishnamma, and Vamanna are not their real names.

¹¹ K. Balagopal, *Problems in the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts*, reprinted from *Economic and Political Weekly* (Hyderabad: Perspectives, 1988).

¹² Also a pseudonym; armed Maoist insurgents operate only under aliases.

Our route would take us through the districts most under Maoist influence: Warangal, Karimnagar, Adilabad. In 2002, Warangal and Karimnagar were two of the three districts in which as many as 2,580 deeply indebted farmers had killed themselves by ingesting pesticides.¹³ Our final destination would be Indravelli, site of the 1981 massacre and the Tiananmen-inspired monument, a one-street market town deep in the forested tribal area of Adilabad district, bordering on the neighboring state of Maharashtra.



Fig.9 Qila Warangal, Kakatiya Palace Complex, thirteenth century.

The intuition that I had had while crossing the police gate in Warangal would acquire more weight in the ensuing days. A mile and a quarter from Warangal railway station and seven and a half miles from the Hanumakonda temple is Qila Warangal, the thirteenth-century fort of the Kakatiyas. The remaining ruins of the fort comprise delicately carved fragments of the central palace and temple complex, in addition to the remaining shards of the three layers of defensive walls. These remnants are under the protection of the ASI. The *kirti toranas* or triumphal gates of the palace complex serve as the official icon for Andhra Pradesh's state tourism agency. In addition, the fort is home to a small town: tightly packed single-storied houses with one or a few rooms each that make up a population of a few hundred.

Guthikandula Raju, alias Raju, was born inside this fort; as a youth, he joined the Maoist movement and was killed by police on October 1, 1995. When his mother, Guthikandula Pushpa, expressed her desire to build a martyr's memorial near his home, the Archaeological Survey objected, saying that the memorial would deface the historical

caritra of the fort. The word *caritra*, cognate of the English "character," has been described by Velcheru Narayana Rao et al. as a new genre of bardic storytelling about historical events that emerged in this region in the middle of the eighteenth century, closer to the French sense of *histoire* or the Italian *storia* rather than the English *history*.¹⁴ This new use marked a transition from an older use of the word, as in Banabhatta's *Harshacharita* (ca. seventh century) or Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* (ca. 1574–1612), a hagiography genre comparable with the Christian "Lives of the Saints," tales of religious virtue translated as ethics, as regulative narratives for a moral *saeculum*.¹⁵

To the Archaeological Survey's appropriation of the term *caritra*, Pushpa had three kinds of retort: a) When you allow Coca-Cola signs and tea- and snack-shops to entertain visitors to the fort, does this not destroy the *charitra* of the place? When you grew a garden to isolate these ruined fragments in a recreational park, was this historically authentic? b) When the government put up statues of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi in my village, these people were nothing to me, they were not from my family, and yet did I not tolerate this imposition?¹⁶ c) If the Kakatiya kings were powerful, it was not because they themselves were brave. It was their poor peasant soldiers who fought, and yet you celebrate the bravery of the Kakatiya kings. If my son took to arms to fight for the people himself, why can't I build a monument to his bravery, to the struggle of the people?

Things are being turned upside down here. Professional archaeologists may not recognize in this (d)enunciation a "scientific" rationale, but Pushpa's rationale impeccably mimes the popularizing rationale adopted when archaeological objectives are "explained" to the populations in whose name the state claims to speak, whose transcendent "heritage" it seeks to guard. In Pushpa's statement, this vernacular "explication," the imposition of popular idiom from above, has been troped, turned upside down by subaltern speech into a counter-monument, a mnemo-topography and terrain that pries open the crypto-capitalism of the agrarian landscape. At the entrance of Qila Warangal today, an obelisk stands capped by a hammer and sickle in Raju's memory. Rather than represent the state's need to sanction a "people" acculturated by an invented and instituted history, the gravamen of this monument continually tests the state's tolerance.

13 Utsa Patnaik, *The Republic of Hunger, 1943–2004* (New Delhi: Sahmat, 2004), 28.

14 Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800* (New York: Other Press, 2003), 21.

15 "The rhetoric of this 'monument' is saturated with meaning, but with identical meaning. It is a tautological tomb...It is impossible to consider hagiography solely in terms of its 'authenticity' or 'historical value': this would be equivalent to submitting a literary genre to the laws of another genre – historiography – and to dismantling a proper type of discourse only in order to engage its contrary...[A] Life of a Saint is 'the literary crystallization of the perception of a collective conscience'...the combination of acts, places, and themes indicates a particular structure that refers not just primarily to 'what took place,' as does history, but to 'what is exemplary.'" de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 270.

16 Indeed, Indian cultural and public space is replete with busts of persons both historical and nonexistent whose hagiography is intended to guide the life of the exemplary citizen. Portraits, statues, temples, and historical names ornament every street corner, commemorating local politicians, school principals, social workers, freedom fighters, prime ministers, chief ministers, presidents, medieval kings, gods, goddesses.



Fig.10 "Martyr's Memorial," Qila Warangal, district Warangal, Andhra Pradesh.
Built for Guthikandula Raju by his mother Pushpa.

As a form of open provocation, its memorializing impetus renders visible the incommensurability—aporia—between popular and legal sovereignty. By January 2007, the police had destroyed two hundred of these family memoirs that, unlike the photo album packed away in a closet, make a direct claim on the public character of space, on the state's very territorializing power. In response, the Maoists have built more. These are counter-monuments precisely in that they notate the ever-present threat of demolition by the state; their counter-memory opens up the gap between legal and popular sovereignty.

It would of course be analytical folly to imagine the Maoist movement as an organic expression of subaltern dissent. Rather, these monument/follies must be seen as emblems of a political strategy: a decades-old, generationally handed-down exercise of organically linking the Maoist resistance with the anthropological texture of subaltern memorialization. The obelisk—the preferred form of the Maoist monuments—we have to remember, is as exotic to this context as were neoclassical exedra to Whig Britain.

I remind you of that word: *ancestrality*. As if to cover over this exotic juxtaposition, my guides—propagandists after a fashion—were intent on demonstrating the organic character of their movement.

The Maoist memorials are built by *shramadan* (customary gifts of labor) offered by members of guerilla's families and villages. Some of them commemorate a single fallen child, as in the case of the memorial built by Vamanna, who used his experience in the construction industry to make drawings and oversee the work himself. Others commemorate the dead of an entire district, as in the sixty whose places of birth and places and dates of death are recorded at the foot of the giant Husnabad memorial. When the giant, seventy-foot-tall memorial was unveiled in 1990, political exigencies were such that N. T. Rama Rao's Peronist government in fact patronized it, with the District Collector overseeing arrangements. The neoliberal regime of his son-in-law, Chandrababu Naidu, adopted a different stance, and his no-quarter-given policy toward the Maoists saw the same monument made into an example, summarily blasted with dynamite.¹⁷

¹⁷ Naidu himself survived an assassination attempt by the Naxalites on October 1, 2003, when his bulletproof car was blown up by mines in the Tirumala Hills.



Fig.11 Fallen hammer and sickle from CPI (Maoist) "Martyr's Memorial," Husnabad. Dynamited by police in 2004.

Indeed, this uneven character of police violence and erratic state repression strongly determines the spatial geography of these monuments, whose status becomes as if symbolic pieces of a giant and elaborate chess game. Beside the three monuments built side by side in the center of Paidipalli village (district Warangal) is a conspicuous mound indicating an unbuilt memorial that the police will not allow. Amongst the small tombstones between the road and the rail lines leading out of Bellampally in the coal-mining area of Adilabad is one that carries the name of Beda Ramaswamy, coal miner and Maoist labor organizer for the Singhaneri Karmika Samaigya (Singhaneri Worker's Association), killed by the police. Under threat from the police, no blacksmith in the area would undertake the work of forging the hammer and sickle, so Ramaswamy's mother had the tumulus itself painted red.

In many villages, the monument is in the central market square or the entrance from the road into the village. This open, recalcitrant capture of public space reflects the strong support of the entire village, something that the police are hard put to eradicate. In Zaffargarh (district Warangal), a mobile tea seller stands at the foot of the monument in the village square, the political statement integrated into the daily goings-on of the village, the buying of groceries, snacks, commodities of daily use. At Begumpet (district Karimnagar), the monument stands as sentinel at the very entrance of the village, announcing to all visitors the political sympathies of its denizens.

Where police presence is predominant, the Maoist strategy further exposes the contradictions of state power. The group memorial in the Subhasnagar suburb of Hyderabad, a colony for migrants built on private land donated by an industrialist and Maoist sympathizer, is built in the forecourt of a private house, walled off as a piece of private property. The paradoxical provocation is evident: the Maoist edifice invites the police to violate the supposed absolutism of the property laws in whose defense the modern state is premised, laws that on the other hand the Maoists consider their duty to violate.

For their part, the police employ a series of counter-icons to combat this symbolic terrain. At Bheerpur (district Karimnagar), the police gathered local villagers to build a memorial to victims of the insurgency, with a white flag planted pointedly in front of Maoist Group Chief Ganapathi's house in that village, imploring him to surrender. On the Maoist monument in Zaffargarh, the police pasted posters with mugshots of wanted guerillas just above the plaque carrying the names of the dead Maoists, announcing rewards for their surrender.



Fig.12 CPI (Maoist) "Martyr's Memorial" to cadre killed by police, Zaffargarh, district Warangal, Andhra Pradesh.

The four sides of the large Begumpet monument are scrawled with police messages: "Peace, not violence"; "What kind of values do you have? What have you done for your old parents? Leave your ways and look after your parents"; "O Chandranna [Maoist National Committee member, North Telangana unit], your principles are against the people and against the government"; "Rejoin the people, surrender and live, [signed] Begumpet Gramastalu [Villagers]." The Maoist follies of the Telangana landscape are nodes in a rural

Fig.13
CPI (Maoist) "Martyr's Memorial" to cadre killed by police, Paidipalli, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh. (facing page)



జననం జననం
అమలవోహన్ రెడ్డి
పద్మ సుధాకర్
సదాశివ

అమలవోహన్ రెడ్డి
పద్మ సుధాకర్
సదాశివ

అమలవోహన్ రెడ్డి
పద్మ సుధాకర్
సదాశివ





Fig.15 CPI (Maoist) "Martyr's Memorial" to cadre killed by police, Begumpet village, district Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh.

heterotopia, point-irruptions of the geographic imagination that set varying texts of power to work, defined as much by the various actors of the agrarian scene as their ever-shifting modes of relation to different forms of politics. Monuments, tombs, tumuli are architecture's empty containers, pure *parerga* without content. Relieved of architecture's classical association with shelter, they are tasked to operate entirely as relief, as spatial protrusions and lapidary inscriptions that reveal space itself as something written, inscribed, mapped.

Each obelisk is thus a test of territorial tolerance and provocation, embodying within it the incorporation of different scales of investment. At different levels, they "signal" a series of miscegenated messages, on the one hand the mourning of parents and siblings, on the other the perverse program of the neoliberal state to reproduce its unmodern subjects as unfree, productive constituencies. They are as much indexes of the nomadic war-machine of the police as of the ungoverned arm of liberal government, as of the substitutive play of infra-structural withdrawal and the interpellation

of peasant populations and movements by economic doxas. Most importantly, they manifest a complex weave of narrative and space in relation to different forms of authoritarian sanction. As objects creating a transposed field, like the "ruined" follies and Latin inscriptions in the Picturesque gardens of England and plantation America, the Maoist monuments invite an allusive literacy: to decode the abstract script of agrarian change, even concretions that offer the diacritical measure of an uneven field. In the variations of size and shape, degrees of completion, contending inscriptions, manner of attribution, each memorial attests to an inalienable singularity *and* a logic of the multiple, of bounded encryption *and* infinite dissemination: the creation of place in its myriad logics as a bounded site of arrival, departure, congregation, and its contrapurposeful opening into space as a global, valorized axiomatic. As the remembrance of violence, they remind us that the axiomatic of "space" is itself a violent insertion.

"It's terrible, it's fine": Mao's famous antinomy in his *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* might be

Fig.14 Monument for Vamanna's son built by Vamanna, Hyderabad. (facing page)

said to reveal conflict at the very pores of so-called culture: the corpse of the martyr pits the state and the revolt as two autonomous and opposed sequences within the same mnemonic terrain.¹⁸ When a memorial is inaugurated, relatives of the martyr mourn the deceased again, performing the mnemonic displacement materialized in the monument. Maoist commemoration ceremonies strongly follow customary funerary practice. Like traditional practices of remembrance, tribals and peasants sing and dance, only this time with Maoist-tinged lyrics of popular resistance, thus imbricating adivasi (aboriginal) and dalit (lower caste) culture organically into political movement. The Maoist movement thus effects something of a *counter-interpellation*—Louis Althusser’s expression is useful here—of the customary. Orators and artists from “front” organizations give eulogies, extolling the sacrifices of the martyrs, individuating through a life-narrative the proximal identification of the Maoist movement to everyday conflicts of power. The legendary Naxalite poet Gaddar will appear at each of these events. He has spent decades traveling around the countryside documenting local legends and song forms; to date, he has composed an extempore poem honoring *each* slain guerilla, a veritable hagiographic archive that is reported to have been gathered in twelve notebooks, a lyric chronicle of the insurgency.



Fig.16 Zaffargarh monument.



Fig.17 Begumpet village, Karimnagar. Police posters and writing on Maoist monuments, offering money and threats to Naxalites to surrender themselves.

The rituals enacted in front of these memorials draw on widely recognized folkloric traditions: elements of what Rao et al. have called “mnemo-history,” indigenous traditions of weaving empirical facts of history with mythic patterns of storytelling. In this sense, the funerary columns of the Naxalites derive as much from ancient tribal commemorative practices as the monumentalizing impress of “Asiatic Communism.” Thus the Maoist memorials not only form an index of the death of individuals and the commemoration of a collective struggle, but also mourn the demise of the autonomy of an entire civilizational rubric dating back to India’s prehistory, now increasingly hemmed in by the expropriative, modern descendants of the subcontinental powers.

Given this organic imbrication, the authorities well understand that the culling of the Maoist movement cannot be constrained to a mere police operation, with the clinical framing of disciplinary action that accompanies a law-and-order outbreak. At its spearhead, the state understands well that what it is confronting here is an entire ideological theater of conflict, drawn from substantial popular will. The challenge for the state here is to pry culture apart from politics, to batten down an entire array of cultural existence now concretized into insurgency. In repressing this organic correlation, the state plays out here in its very design, its architectonic.

To a philosopher it will seem extraordinary that mere words—and that too the ungrammatical sentences scribbled on a series of FIRs [First Information Reports] by semi-literate policemen—can change material reality, can convert a free citizen into a threat to the Security of State, and thereby a prisoner-without-trial. When the reality itself is a tissue of fabrications masquerading as truth even mere gestures can change it. And this epistemological inversion is sanctified by [Indian] Courts which have repeatedly held—in decisions challenging preventive detention warrants—that mere multiplication of as yet unproved charges is sufficient to make a free citizen a danger to Public Order.¹⁹

In a “thickly” organized insurgency—one can resituate Clifford Geertz’s exemplification of winks, *mutatis mutandis*, in the use of this adverb²⁰—police action does not necessarily

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Mao Tse-tung, *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965). Ranajit Guha treats this theme magisterially in the chapter on ambiguity in his book *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 89.

19
See K. Balagopal, *Probings*, 103-4. Balagopal’s extensive dispatches in the *Economic and Political Weekly* extensively detail police killings in Andhra Pradesh. As for extrajudicial detainees, the weaknesses of the Indian legal code with regard to stipulations on public order are used to repeatedly throw people into jail with new charges, picking them up from the door of the prison every time they are released on bail, each time subjecting the undertrial to new cycles of torture and beatings. After the third or fourth time, the multiplication of charges is considered enough to clamp down a National Security Act Warrant, the unsubstantiated charges thus performing a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

draw from credible intelligence. The calculus here is more often than not defined quantitatively rather than qualitatively: A provocation was met with A' response, B Naxalite raid was followed up by B'+ arrests. Cause and effect need not be linked. The police operate in the mode of the "theoretical" pronouncements spouted by academics, drawn out of the compulsions of an internal framework of disciplinary judgment and advancement, of tenurial rewards and promotions within the organization. (To extend the metaphor, the interior ministry produces statements that are akin to those by university deans, full of transcendent truths and universal, imminent "solutions," aimed more at soliciting their financiers.) In the process, to quote Strelnikov from *Dr. Zhivago*: "A village is burnt, the point is made."



Fig.18 Maoist front organizations inaugurating various new memorials. Film courtesy of Amarulla Vandu Mitrala Sangam.

Indravelli is one such burnt village. On April 20, 1981, the village was encircled by four platoons of police on a shandy, or market, day. On that day, a Maoist-affiliated civil society organization had called a meeting in the afternoon. As hundreds of unarmed tribals—as was their wont—came in to Indravelli, on foot, on buses, not knowing the restrictions the police placed on right of assembly, they were made to dismount, beaten, and ordered to go back. Around 4 p.m. police released tear gas, then took up positions on the treetops, behind haystacks, and commenced firing. As the tribals fled, a police jeep suddenly met them head-on after emerging from a nearby school where it was billeted, and opened fire at point-blank. No bodies were handed over to the families of the deceased. The Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee estimated that more than sixty tribals were killed on that day. Gonds who deposed before the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee testified that bodies were being recovered from tanks, rivulets, and bushes for a week afterward.



Fig.19 Strip mining, Godavari Khani Coal Fields, Singaneri Collieries, near Bellampalli, Andhra Pradesh.

On the road out of the mining region of Bellampalli, my companions whisper nervously as we pass what they recognize as a death squad, five moustached men in an open, commandeered jeep, weapons kept out of sight, a pot-bellied subinspector riding in front.²¹ The road to Indravelli from

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"From the mid-1980s brutal special police forces meant for eliminating [Maoists] came into being and were allowed to operate totally incognito, the most successful being the Grey Hounds, which is a well trained anti-guerilla force that lives and operates as the [Maoists] armed squads do and is bound by no known law, including the Constitution of India." K. Balagopal, "Maoist Movement in Andhra Pradesh," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 22, 2006, 3185.

Bellampally snakes up and into the Satnala mountain range that traverses Adilabad district at the northern escarpment of the Deccan Plateau, defining the lower edge of the Vindhya Range that divides north and south India. We are in the back of the Maoist hand. The dominantly Gond tribal hamlets and villages that nestle in these hills are materially different from the ones abutting the heavily trafficked truck and bus routes down in the plains. In Andhra Pradesh, one major highway cuts across through these hills from north to south, Highway No. 7, the route from Delhi to Hyderabad. Indravelli is a somewhat bustling market street some thirty miles from this deserted stretch of national highway. There are no family cars or sedans here—no signs of the famed newly rich Indian middle class—only jeeps, motorcycles, small trucks, bicycles, and a large assortment of cattle-driven vehicles. Occasionally, a state transport bus weaves through the jaywalked road.



Fig.20 The Indravelli memorial, with inscribed plaque below. Note the shorter stake in photograph above: an aboriginal tribal totem.

The Indravelli monument stands in a cleared field one mile farther down the road from the market. The original monument was demolished by the government in the 1980s, only to be rebuilt in its current form in 1987, again by the aforementioned N. T. Rama Rao's party in a cynical effort to win votes in the tribal electorate. The Indravelli structure is the only one with a plaque in English and Hindi, two languages exotic to the dialects and languages spoken in this region: "Those mountains red, and the flowers red, and their death red, and our homage red." In a manner of speaking, these "global" languages

offer the antiphon to the global axiomatic of the ASI plaques in front of the Hanumakonda temple. At an epistemic remove, in front of the memorial is a small, wooden tribal totem for the dead, also painted red, these hyphenated tumuli once again emphasizing the organic linkage between tribal culture and political movement. On April 20 every year, tribals from around the area congregate in this field in remembrance of those killed in 1980. The day is attended by a heavy police presence. The police station in Indravelli is a short distance from the monument, at the western edge of the town. It is heavily fortified, surrounded by high walls and barbed wire, with two gun turrets peeking out from above the encampment.

Because of this watchful presence, the Indravelli monument is the least kept up of all the monuments that we have seen, its base and plaque set upon by weeds, a kind of censorship by horticulture, if you will. After photographing the monument, I indicate my interest in photographing the police station here as well. My companions strongly demur; these are kinds of things that invite extra-judicial lockup. Since no Americans or tourists venture this far, it's impossible for me to playact the wanderlust-driven ingenue. No alibi—no "global heritage" or "architectural interest"—here, I take a high-speed photograph through tinted car windows as we drive past in some haste.



Fig.21 Indravelli police station.

Note: In October 2009, the Central Government of India launched Operation Green Hunt, a military operation overseen by the Minister of Home, P. Chidambaram, an ex-Harvard professor with significant ties to major mining companies. At its inception, Green Hunt envisaged a period of five years for operations to be completed. Twenty-seven battalions from various Indian military outfits, including counter-insurgency specialist units, were to be supported by Russian-made MI-17 helicopter gunships of the Indian Air Force.