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ETCHED IN STONE:
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY VISUAL AND MATERIAL EVIDENCE OF ŚAIVA ASCETICS AND YOGIS IN COMPLEX NON-SEATED ĀSANAS AT VIJAYANAGARA

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Abstract

This article reassesses the history of postural yoga in precolonial India by drawing attention to recently discovered visual material evidence of non-seated postures carved onto the pillars of Vijayanagara temples at Hampi in Karnataka. Based on inscriptional evidence dating to the early 1500s CE, these sculptures represent important and overlooked early visual evidence for the practice of standing postures, inversions, and complex "pretzel-shaped" balancing postures in late-medieval South India. A number of sculptures bear a marked similarity to certain non-seated *āsana*s featured in more modern postural yoga systems, and might represent some of the earliest evidence of their existence. To contextualize these images and understand their significance within the larger history of yoga, the article begins with a preliminary genealogy of *āsana* and postural yoga traditions, highlighting a particular shift from seated to non-seated *āsana*s that is evinced in both the textual and visual-sculptural record. The author suggests that this shift in psychophysical functionality and praxis of yogic *āsana* may have opened up new anatomical potentials for engaging the body within a yogic context, and that this shift, alongside intermingling with much older traditions of asceticism (*tapas*), may partially explain the surge in complex non-seated *āsana*s featured in many yoga texts following the sixteenth century. Drawing upon other archeological sites, textual, epigraphical, and visual materials, the article makes the case that some of the ascetic figures in complex yogic postures sculpted at Hampi are depictions of Nātha yogis performing the techniques of Haṭhayoga.

KEYWORDS
Medieval Yoga, Haṭhayoga, Āsana, Nātha yogis, Śaiva ascetics, Vijayanagara

Introduction[1]

While our knowledge of the techniques and traditions of medieval yoga has advanced considerably over the past decade, our understanding of the development of these traditions in precolonial India still remains in its infancy. Much of this history is currently being reconstructed using the philological tools of textual criticism, that is, through the detailed study of Sanskrit yoga texts.[2] Like the study of religion in South Asia more broadly, the study of premodern yoga has been pursued primarily through the investigation of key doctrines, philosophy, practices, and history of ideas as understood from authoritative texts. However, as the recent Smithsonian exhibition and publication, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* (Diamond 2013), has so elegantly reminded us, the turn to visual and material culture also provides a rich body of evidence that not only complements the textual record, but offers the historian of religion alternative points of entry for thinking about yoga's past. While the relationship between the textual and visual material record is not always clear or linear, when read together, I believe this interdisciplinary approach can provide us with a more nuanced understanding of yoga's past.[3]

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[1] I'd like to thank Zac Pelleriti from the Harvard Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology for first bringing my attention to the yogic sculptures at Hampi. I am grateful to Jinah Kim for her comments on an earlier draft of this essay, and for organizing the HAA285m Winter 2016 excursion to the Deccan, generously funded by Harvard's Department of Art History & Architecture, which afforded me the opportunity to conduct fieldwork at Hampi. Thanks to Anne Monius for her incisive comments on earlier drafts. I am grateful to James Mallinson and, especially, Jason Birch for their invaluable feedback, ongoing conversations, and generous sharing of unpublished texts and materials. I thank Anila Verghese and Anna Dallapicolla for taking the time to meet me at Hampi, and kindly answering my questions regarding Vijayanagara sculpture and architecture. Finally, I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers, Matthew Clark, Jacqueline Hargreaves, and Elizabeth De Michelis for their efforts in seeing this article through to completion. All translations from Sanskrit are my own unless attributed otherwise.

[2] The current five-year European Research Council "Haṭha Yoga Project," headquartered at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, is leading the way in this effort. The proposed project goals include the output of new critical editions and English translations of ten important texts of Haṭhayoga. While their methods are largely philological, the research team led by James Mallinson is also combining textual criticism with ethnography to investigate the contemporary practice and culture of Haṭhayoga traditions among modern Indian ascetics. See: http://hyp.soas.ac.uk. Accessed on: March 17, 2018.

[3] Mallinson's recent work (2013) on rethinking the sectarian identity of medieval yogis and ascetics in northern India—through a close analysis of Mughal paintings, coeval texts, and ethnography—provides a compelling interdisciplinary model for how reading the visual and textual record of premodern yoga and yogis can reveal enlivening new historical insights. For the broader turn to material culture within the study of Asian religions, see Fleming and Mann (2014).

In this study, I will introduce one sample of recently discovered visual material that I hope can shine new light on the historical development of physical yoga postures (*āsana*) during the early sixteenth century in Vijayanagara, South India. In January 2016, during a period of brief field work at Hampi,[4] I photographed and surveyed a number of sculpted images of ascetics performing yogic *āsana*s, displayed on the many pillared halls of the great Vijayanagara temple complexes. While a few of these images have been documented by art historians Anna Dallapiccola, Anila Verghese (1998) and Richard Shaw (2011), most of the postures have not been identified, and many of the figures remain entirely unaccounted for in existing scholarship. Nor has there has been any attempt to understand these unique images within the larger history of physical yoga traditions in premodern India, which this article will seek to provide.[5]

The observational and descriptive style of sixteenth-century Vijayanagara sculpted human figures (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 10) make these material depictions of yogis[6] in practice an important historical window onto yoga traditions in or around the capital city of the empire. Sectarian markers featured on some of the sculpted figures allow us to identify certain figures as Nātha yogis, and when read alongside the textual record, suggest that the reliefs are artistic renderings of the techniques of medieval[7]

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[4] The word "Hampi," anglicized from the Kannada *haṃpe,* derives its name from the eponymous goddess of the region along the Tuṅgabhadrā river, Pampā (or Pampē), whose presence predates Vijayanagara rule. The letter 'p' in old Kannada often changes to 'h' in more modern registers of the language (Verghese 1995, 16). Technically, Hampi (or *haṃpe*) is the name of the village surrounding the main Virūpākṣa temple, while the remainder of the capital city is referred to as "Vijayanagara." However, today, the entire approximately 25 square kilometer site is commonly referred to as Hampi, or the Hampi ruins, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In this article, I use the words "Hampi" and "Vijayanagara" interchangeably to refer to the capital city, although I favor the former when referring to the contemporary archeological sites.

[5] In addition to Hampi, sculptures of non-seated *āsana*s are found in other south Indian temples, including Śrīśailam, Śṛṅgeri, and the Raṅganātha temple at Śrīraṅgam, Tamil Nadu. Depictions of non-seated postures are also featured on the entrance gates at the famous Naṭarāja temple of Cidambaram, Tamil Nadu, though here the context is Śiva's dance (I thank Jason Birch for bringing this to my attention). Perhaps the earliest sculptures of non-seated *āsana*s have recently been observed by Mallinson (forthcoming b) on the northern gate at Dabhoi in Gujarat (1220–1230).

[6] In this article, I use the word "yogi" when referring to the practitioners of yoga broadly speaking; and the Sanskrit *yogin* when referring to a particular textual passage. Such yogis in the historical record were by and large ascetics—those who had renounced the conventional norms of society in pursuit of religious aims—though certainly not all ascetics practiced the methods that have constituted yoga (see Mallinson 2013a, 81: n. 1).

[7] In this article, I use the term "medieval" to reference the period between 600–1600 CE, and "late-medieval" to denote its upper terminus between 1200–1600 CE. However, this is largely a heuristic device. For a historiographical analysis of the limits of the medieval period in India, see Wedemeyer (2013, 58–66).

Haṭhayoga. In cases where more generic ascetics are depicted in non-seated postures, however, I suggest that this could be representing older traditions of ascetic postural practice (i.e., *tapas*) that influenced Haṭhayoga, as evinced by the incorporation of increasingly more non-seated *āsana*s in Haṭhayoga texts after the sixteenth century (Birch 2013; forthcoming 2018a).

The depictions of non-seated *āsana*s carved onto the pillared reliefs at Hampi are striking for their complexity and variation. The reliefs include standing postures, inversions, and unique "pretzel-shaped" balancing postures. Based on inscriptional evidence dating to the early 1500s CE,[8] these sculptures represent important and overlooked early visual evidence for the practice of advanced non-seated postures in late-medieval South India. Moreover, a number of images bear a marked similarity to certain non-seated *āsana*s featured in more modern postural yoga systems, and might represent some of the earliest evidence of their existence—visual, textual, or otherwise.

This article is organized into three parts. In the first, I begin with a preliminary genealogy of physical and postural yoga up to the medieval and early modern period, with particular attention to South India, in order better to assess the significance of the yogic imagery at Hampi in the early sixteenth century. Specifically, I highlight how an important shift from seated to non-seated *āsana*s is both evidenced in the texts and affirmed in the sculptural record,[9] and argue, moreover, that this shift in function of *āsana* opened up new anatomical potential and emancipatory ways of engaging the body in yogic praxis. Shifting our gaze to Vijayanagara, in part two, I provide a brief introduction to the empire in order to foreground the sociopolitical and religious context of the temples on the pillars of which these sculpted images are found, and to contextualize these yogic sculptures within the larger visual programs of the Vijayanagara temples. Turning to an analysis of the images, I attempt to identify

[8] Strictly speaking, the inscriptions provide dates for the erection of the temple complexes themselves, and not explicitly for each of the detailed carvings therein. While there is, of course, always the chance of a pillared-sculpture being a later addition, replacement, or repair, without any evidence indicating such a renovation, I assume the dates of the temples to accord with their sculptures. All dates in this paper have been converted to the Common Era; thus, the "CE" will be dropped henceforth.

[9] It should be cautioned that our understanding of the relationship between yoga praxis and textual production is still emerging. A moment of textual codification does not necessarily correspond to a moment of innovation in yogic praxis or the invention of an *āsana*. It is, in fact, more historically likely that just as with the temple sculptures, a moment of codification indicates, not the newness of a particular *āsana*, but rather the historical presence of such a practice prior to the produced text or sculpture, which is only being recorded for the first time.

particular *āsana*s,[10] where possible, citing parallel descriptions from premodern yogic texts. In part three, I turn to religious and yogic identity. Drawing upon other coeval archeological sites, textual, epigraphical, and visual materials, I make the case that some of the ascetic figures in complex yogic postures sculpted at Hampi are depictions of Nātha yogis performing the techniques of Haṭhayoga. I conclude by turning to an important literary source for the local region, the *Pampāmāhātmya,* to assess the context of these postures within the broader Śaiva milieu at Hampi. The importance of the visual material evidence at Hampi, when read against the textual record, suggests that various orders of yogis and ascetics were intermingling at Vijayanagara, and that this social milieu—alongside the shift in psychophysical function of *āsana* praxis—may partially explain why more non-seated *āsana*s found their way into yoga texts following the sixteenth century.

Part 1

Towards a Genealogy of Āsana: From Seated to Non-seated Postures

Today, in colloquial language, the term "yoga" is virtually synonymous with the practice of *āsana*, or bodily postures. Yet despite the primacy of *āsana* in contemporary expressions of transnational, anglophone yoga (Singleton 2010), the early history of yoga in India is surprisingly sparse regarding *āsana* praxis. Mark Singleton's landmark monograph *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (2010) has convincingly demonstrated that today's dominant forms of postural yoga are "not the outcome of a direct and unbroken lineage of *haṭha* yoga" but were, rather, birthed through "adaptation to new discourses of the body that resulted from India's encounter with modernity" (2010, 33). Drawing upon the pioneering work of Norman Sjoman (1999), Gudrun Bühnemann (2007), and others, and surveying the textual record available to him at the time, Singleton concluded:

> In sum, the Indian tradition shows no evidence for the kind of posture-based practices that dominate transnational anglophone yoga today (32).

[10] The appellations of particular *āsana*s often vary from text to text, as do their descriptions. Sometimes within a single text, variant names of a single *āsana* are given (e.g., *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.37). This is as true for premodern yoga texts, as it is among various contemporary yoga practice schools. Therefore, when I suggest Sanskrit names for sculpted *āsana*s at Hampi that have no textual or inscriptional appellation, this naming is, at best, provisional.

While the argumentative thrust of Singleton's work was not a history of yogic *āsana* in premodern India, but rather a pathbreaking study of the distinctive nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian and European physical cultural and ideological forces that have shaped the predominant practice and conception of yoga in modernity, nonetheless, some of the historical claims in *Yoga Body* regarding the evidence and diversity of *āsana* in premodern India can now stand to benefit from revision.[11] In the years since Singleton's publication, our understanding of yoga in precolonial India has improved considerably, as new evidence is currently being examined and brought to light in the form of unpublished Sanskrit yoga manuscripts.[12] In a groundbreaking article on the subject, Jason Birch (forthcoming 2018a, 98) has observed:

> In fact, it is clear that more than eighty-four *āsana*-s were practised in some traditions of Haṭha Yoga before the British arrived in India. The majority of these *āsana*-s were not seated poses, but complex and physically-demanding postures, some of which involved repetitive movement, breath control and the use of ropes. [...] When the above late-mediaeval yoga texts are taken into account within the broader history of Haṭha Yoga, it becomes apparent that there was a substantial increase in the number of *āsana*-s after the sixteenth century and, from the seventeenth century onwards, various lists of eighty-four or more *āsana*-s have been recorded. In contrast to this, very few *āsana*-s were mentioned or described in the early Haṭha texts, which can be dated from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries.

As Birch has demonstrated, the substantial increase in the number of *āsana*s taught in Sanskrit texts largely occurred in the seventeenth-century and thereafter. As I will demonstrate herein, the Vijayanagara temple sculptures of complex non-seated *āsana*s from the early sixteenth century are thus highly significant. The Hampi sculptures appear to anticipate the proliferation of *āsana* as evinced in the texts, while at the same time, some of the *āsana*s depicted at Hampi have no premodern textual referent (of

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[11] Singleton himself has acknowledged the shortcomings of these now-outdated historical claims regarding premodern *āsana* in the preface to the Serbian-language edition of the book (Singleton 2015, 4–5). He has been working to nuance this history through the recent publication of *Roots of Yoga* (Mallinson and Singleton 2017), and as one of the key researchers on the SOAS Haṭha Yoga Project.

[12] While most premodern Yogaśāstras were composed in Sanskrit, there are important notable exceptions in vernacular languages, including: the Persian *Baḥr al-ḥayāt* (1550), the Kannada *Pāramārthaprakāśike* of Nijaguṇa Śivayogin (*c.* 15–17th century), and the Brajbhāṣā *Jogapradīpyakā* (1737). Important vernacular accounts of the techniques of Haṭhayoga are also found in sections of Jñāndev's *Bhāvārthadīpikā* (i.e., *Jñāneśvarī*) (*c.* 13th century) and the Tamil *Tirumantiram* (*c.* 13th century).

which we are aware), and a few appear to anticipate postural forms for which we have no record until perhaps the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.

In what follows, and building upon Birch's study, I will gesture towards a genealogy of premodern *āsana* in order to historically locate the sculpted representations of yogic praxis found on the pillars at Hampi. This will by no means be an exhaustive account or history of premodern *āsana*, but rather will serve two heuristic and historiographical functions for the purpose of this study: 1) to provide a template for a working chronology of *āsana*; and 2) to highlight a notable shift in the employment and functionality of *āsana*—in theory and praxis—from seated to "non-seated" *āsana*s.[13]

Āsana is commonly listed as one of several auxiliaries (*aṅga*) of yogic praxis featured throughout premodern yoga literature.[14] Early usages of the word *āsana* in Sanskrit texts refer to the physical act of sitting, or to the material seat one sits upon,[15] often for the purpose of meditation,[16] breath-control, or visualization practices (in later tantric traditions). Such meditative "seats" were utilized by ascetics (*śramaṇa*) across sectarian traditions in early India, including Buddhist, Jaina, Ājīvika, and Brāhmaṇical traditions, and are well-attested throughout Indian literature and visual art (Fig. 1). A case in point

[13] Admittedly, the phrase "non-seated *āsana*" is something of an oxymoron, if *āsana* is taken to mean "seat," its primary meaning in Sanskrit; that is to say, a "non-seated seat." However, by the late-medieval period, the notion of *āsana* came to refer to virtually any physical posture, not only seats—and not only yogic ones. As Mallinson writes, "the use of the word *āsana* to describe any sort of physical posture appears to have become widespread by the early 14th century, when the Maithili *Rasaratnākara* used it (along with *bandha*) as a term to describe positions for sexual intercourse" (Mallinson 2011a, 776). By the turn of the first millennium, Sanskrit texts on yoga began including non-seated postures, such as *mayūrāsana* and *kukkuṭāsana,* in teachings on *āsana* as an auxiliary of yoga (e.g., *Yogavasiṣṭha, Yogayājñavalkya, Haṭhapradīpikā,* etc.).

[14] Though currently no single authoritative study exists on the chronology and development of *āsana* in India, more detailed pieces of this history can be found in Sjoman (1999), Bühnemann (2007), Singleton (2010), Mallinson (2011a), Birch (2013; forthcoming 2018a), Mallinson and Singleton (2017, 86–126) and Maas (forthcoming 2018). Gharote's *Encyclopedia of Traditional Āsanas* (2013) remains a useful point of reference; however, one must maintain caution regarding its uncritical system of dating texts.

[15] For example, *Bhagavadgītā* 6.11–13.

[16] One of the earliest literary references to an *āsana* as meditative "seat" is found in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* (1st century), where the Buddha-to-be takes his cross-legged position under the *bodhi* tree, with firm resolve to remain seated until he has reached the final goal of *nirvāṇa* (*Buddhacarita* 12.120). I am grateful to Philipp Maas for drawing my attention to this passage (personal communication, September 2016).

Figure 1: Jina in seated *āsana*. Śravaṇabeḷagoḷa, Karnataka (author's photograph).

is expressed in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* (*c.* 4–5th century),[17] the earliest extant systematization of a school or philosophical system (*darśana*) of Yoga. Here *āsana* comprises the third auxiliary of the classical eightfold yoga (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*) schema. In laconic *sūtra* fashion, Patañjali states:

> Posture (*āsana*) [becomes] firm and comfortable (*sthirasukha*) through the relaxation of effort or absorption in the infinite. Thereby, one is unafflicted by pairs of opposites (*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46–2.48).[18]

[17] The title *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* is adopted to reflect both *sūtra* and *bhāṣya* layers of the text. While authorship of the *bhāṣya* has been most often ascribed (in both premodern sources and secondary scholarship) to the legendary sage Vyāsa or Vedavyāsa, some scholars, most recently Maas (2013), have challenged this view by advocating the theory of single authorship of both *sūtra* and *bhāṣya* by one Patañjali, thus rendering the *bhāṣya* an "auto-commentary" by the author himself. Not all scholars are in agreement with this position, however, and a discussion of divergent positions can be found in White (2014, 226–234).

[18] *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46–48 (*sthirasukham āsanam | prayatnaśaithilyānantasamāpattibhyām | tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ |*). Here I am following Maas, who has proposed that *sūtra*s 2.46-47 should be read as a single syntactical unit (Maas forthcoming 2018).

These three aphorisms (out of 195) are all we learn about *āsana* throughout the entire *sūtra* portion of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra.* However, in the *bhāṣya* on 2.46, the commentator goes on to list thirteen "or so" different *āsana*s, providing the earliest extant list of yogic postures in a Sanskrit text.[19] Though the *bhāṣya* does not describe them further, from later commentaries we learn that these *āsana*s are likely all seated postures for meditation[20] such as *padmāsana* ("lotus posture"), *bhadrāsana* ("blessed posture"), *vīrāsana* ("hero posture"), and *svastikāsana* ("auspicious posture"). They are to be employed by the yogi in order to still the body for a prolonged period of time, to assist in stilling the fluctuations of the mind (*yogaś cittavṛttinirodhaḥ*)—indeed, the cessative goal of Pātañjalayoga. In this way, establishing a "firm and comfortable" (*sthirasukha*) posture serves a functional role for cultivating single-pointed awareness, and operates within early Indian yoga systems as a foundational practice for stabilizing the body in order to control the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) and reign in the senses (*pratyāhāra*). *Āsana* thus enables the aspiring yogi to progress through the more subtle and refined inner auxiliaries (*antaraṅga*) of fixation (*dhāraṇā)*, meditation (*dhyāna)*, and ultimately, meditative absorption (*samādhi*).

This sedentary, ascetic nature of *āsana* was highlighted by Mircea Eliade,[21] who applied this view not only to Pātañjalayoga, but categorically to all later yoga traditions.[22] However, such an ahistorical and homogenous account of the continuity of *āsana* praxis in later Haṭhayogic sources is misleading and, as I will demonstrate, fails to account for the transition from seated to non-seated postures, and the re-envisioned functionality of *āsana* that ensued especially within medieval Haṭhayoga traditions.

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[19] *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46 (Maas, forthcoming 2018) (*tadyathā padmāsanaṃ bhadrāsanaṃ vīrāsanaṃ svastikāsanaṃ daṇḍāsanaṃ sopāśrayaṃ paryaṅkāsanaṃ krauñcaniṣadanaṃ hastiniṣadanam uṣṭraniṣadanaṃ samasaṃsthānaṃ sthiraprasrabdhir yathāsukhaṃ cety evamādi* |). Interestingly, the author of the *bhāṣya* concludes this list of *āsana*s with the word *ādi*, the Sanskrit equivalent to "et cetera", implying that even by the fourth or fifth-century, other postures would have been known. This is a poignant reminder that lists of *āsana* in Sanskrit texts are not intended as exhaustive accounts of *āsana* "on the ground," but more likely conceived to serve as reference points for yogic praxis.

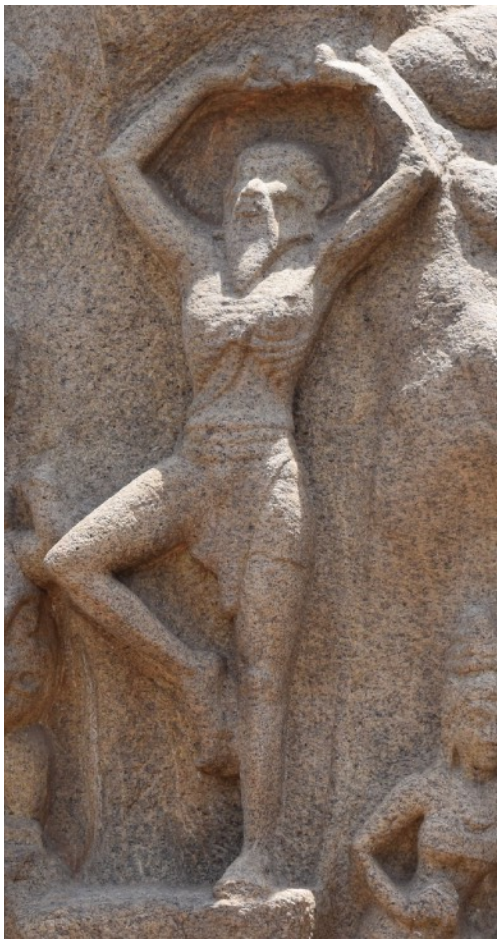
[20] Maas has shown that the likely oldest account and description of these postures is found in the *Pātañjalayogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa* attributed to a Śaṅkara (Maas, forthcoming 2018).

[21] Eliade viewed *āsana* as a "sign of transcending the human condition" through which the yogi becomes like a "plant or a sacred statue" (Eliade 1958, 54).

[22] Eliade states: "Lists and descriptions of *āsana*s are to be found in most of the tantric and Haṭha-yogic treatises. The purpose of these meditational positions is always the same: 'absolute cessation of trouble from the pairs of opposites' (*dvaṇḍvānabhighātaḥ*)" (Eliade 1958, 54).

While there are early textual references in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* epics to ascetic sages and gods performing variations of non-seated postures, such as standing on one foot (*ekapādasthita*), raising the arms above the head (*ūrdhvabāhu*), and hanging upside down from a tree, these are not described in the classical texts as yogic *āsana*s per se, but rather as practices of *tapas*.[23] However, as James Mallinson (2011a) has demonstrated, these early physical acts of asceticism pre-figure many later bodily yogic technologies. Here, the ascetic asserts exacting control over his mental and bodily faculties in order to generate an internal spiritual heat (*tapas*), obtain boons from gods, and ultimately eliminate the accumulation of *karma*—freeing himself from the trappings and suffering of perpetual rebirth in *saṃsāra*. Such ascetical feats are also well-known in Indian literature and art, one of the most famous examples being the relief of King Bhagīratha's penance carved at the *circa* seventh-century Pallava site, Mamallapuram, in coastal Tamil Nadu (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: King Bhagīratha as ascetic performing tapas; standing on one foot (*ekapādasthitam*) with arms raised (*ūrdhvabāhu*). Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu, c. seventh century (author's photograph).



By the turn of the first millennium, a new yogic orientation was underway which centered around the cultivation of the body and bodily techniques—including *āsana*. Around the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a corpus of Sanskrit texts teaching the techniques of Haṭhayoga (i.e., "the yoga of force")[24] emerged, systematizing and codifying this bodily-

[23] See, for example, *Mahābhārata* 1.81.16, 1.114.20, 3.185.4, 12.323.20, 12.327.41, 12.327.76-77, 12.331.47. On the relationship between descriptions of *tapas* and physical *yoga* in the *Mahābhārata,* see Hopkins (1901).

[24] On the "force" of *haṭhayoga*, see Birch (2011).

oriented form of yoga.[25] These texts are largely prescriptive and proscriptive soteriological treatises authorizing instructions for the aspiring yogi in matters of lifestyle and diet, the proper locale for praxis, a rudimentary metaphysics and theory of the body and its subtle energy channels, and overall, mapping a progressive curriculum of yogic practice, outlining the techniques said to culminate in the liberative state of *samādhi* (i.e., Rājayoga).

As Mallinson's work has convincingly shown, the Haṭhayoga texts represent a unique synthesis of (at least) two historical ascetico-yogic streams. The first is the older ascetic *tapas* traditions of *munis* or sages, illustrated by descriptions of yogic asceticism in the epics, and which can be traced at least as far back as the hagiographical accounts of the Buddha's forays as an ascetic in the Pali canon. The second stream is found in medieval tantric yoga traditions, in particular, Vajrayāna Buddhism (Mallinson forthcoming a) and Śaiva tantra, especially the Kaula Paścimāmnāya, or "Western Transmission," yoginī cult associated with the great *siddha*, Matsyendranātha (Kiss 2009; Mallinson 2011a). Many of the early Haṭhayoga treatises are attributed to Gorakṣanātha (Hindi: Gorakhnāth), the famed disciple of Matsyendranātha and alleged founder of the fledgling "Nātha *sampradāya*"[26] (about which we shall say more later). Other texts are attributed to a variety of authors, most of whom we know little about, and which reveal

[25] Birch has identified the earliest occurrences of the term *haṭhayoga* in eighth- to eleventh-century exegetical tantric Buddhist literature, wherein it is spoken of as a last-resort option for the Mantramārgin whose mantras are ineffective (Birch 2011, 535). However, it is not until the second millennium that these techniques were championed in Sanskrit literature. According to Mallinson (2011a, forthcoming a), the tantric Buddhist *Amṛtasiddhi* (*c.* 11th century) is the earliest text to prescribe some of the *mudrā*s and *bandha*s which would be subsequently taught in almost all Haṭhayoga texts, while the first Sanskrit text to explicitly teach a system of Haṭhayoga and call it as such is the Vaiṣṇava *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* (*c.* 12–13th century).

[26] While the majority of secondary scholarship on Nāthas tends to identify a distinct unified "Nāthism," *sampradāya*, or *panth*, organized around the central teachings and personality of Gorakṣanātha (see, for example, Briggs 1938; Das Gupta 1946; Banerjea 1962; Lorenzen and Muñoz 2011), Mallinson has challenged the historical claims of such an institutionalized *sampradāya.* Although its historical gurus, Matsyendranātha (*c.* 9th century) and his disciple Gorakṣanātha (*c.* 12th century), are known to have lived much earlier, according to Mallinson, "The earliest references to the Nāth ascetic order as an organized entity date to the beginning of the 17th century" (Mallinson 2011b). During the interim historical period, "there are numerous references to both ascetic and householder Nāths in texts, inscriptions, iconography, and historical reports" (Mallinson 2011b), however, according to Mallinson these refer to a loose body of charismatic individuals, teachings, and practices, not to any systematized Nātha doctrine or school. This argument, however, has been called into question by Monika Horstmann, who, reexamining the question of a Nātha order in light of unpublished vernacular Hindi-related sources, seeks to push back the emergence of an organized Nātha *sampradāya* to a period prior to the sixteenth century (Horstmann 2014).

the stamps of various medieval religious traditions such as Advaitavedānta, Śrīvidyā, Vaiṣṇavism, and Vīraśaivism.

Evidence suggests that several of these texts were written in South India and the larger Deccan region. For example, Jñānadeva's Marathi *Jñāneśvarī* (*c.* 13th century), whose sixth chapter describes the Haṭhayogic *bandha*s and ascent of *kuṇḍalinī,* was composed in Maharashtra, wherein Jñānadeva traces his spiritual lineage to several key Nātha yogis, including Matsyendranātha and Gorakṣanātha.[27] The *Śivayogapradīpikā* of Cennasadāśivayogin (*c.* 15th century), which integrates the techniques of Haṭha and Aṣṭāṅgayoga with ritual worship (*pūjā*) and devotion (*bhakti*) to Śiva, was likely composed in Karnataka or Tamil Nadu,[28] as was its Kannada prose rendition, the *Pāramārthaprakāśike* of the Vīraśaiva scholar, Nijaguṇa Śivayogin (*c.* 15–17th century). It is possible that the *Haṭhapradīpikā* of Svātmārāma (15th century) was composed in Andhra Pradesh (Reddy 1982, 15), possibly at or around the famous Śrīśailam temple.[29] Śrīnivāsa, the author of the *Haṭharatnāvalī* (17th century), resided in the Tirabhukta region of Andhra, and according to Reddy, was likely a Telugu Brahmin (Reddy 1982, 14). Furthermore, many of the late-medieval Yoga Upaniṣads were compiled in the south by followers of Śaṅkara's Advaitavedānta (Bouy 1994).[30] These texts indicate the presence of the techniques and traditions that comprise Haṭhayoga (even if they did not always call them *haṭha*) in South India from at least the thirteenth century—and particularly

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[27] In *Jñāneśvarī* 18.1733-1742, we find the following spiritual lineage: Matsyendranātha, Gorakṣanātha, Gahininātha, Nivṛttinātha, Jñāndeva (Kripananda 1989). Thus, Jñāndeva's guru's guru was a disciple of Gorakṣanātha, or to put it otherwise, Gorakṣanātha was Jñāndeva's great-grandfather-guru.

[28] I have located over a dozen manuscripts of the *Śivayogapradīpikā* from various archives in South India, all written in southern scripts, and I believe we can be quite confident of the text's southern origins. Despite the title of the Ānandāśrama edition (1978 [1907]), the majority of these manuscripts are titled and listed as *Śivayogapradīpikā*, rather than *-dīpikā,* and indeed, the text refers to itself as the *Śivayogapradīpikā* (1.2, 5.58); I am thus inclined to adopt the latter title. The author of this text, Cennasadāśivayogin, was likely a Vīraśaiva (e.g., *Śivayogapradīpikā* 3.61, 3.63), and it became an important yoga treatise within Vīraśaiva communities, as evidenced by a later Kannada commentary attributed to Basavārādhya, and a prose Kannada rendition and commentary, the *Pāramārthaprakāśike* of Nijaguṇa Śivayogin.

[29] Personal communication with James Mallinson. February 20, 2018.

[30] A corpus of 108 Upaniṣads was compiled and commented on by Upaniṣadbrahmayogin around 1750. Among these are found the so-called "Yoga Upaniṣads," nine of which Bouy observed, "bear a striking resemblance with works of the Nātha traditions." These are the *Nādabindu*, *Dhyānabindu*, *Yogacūḍāmaṇi, Nirvāṇa*, *Maṇḍalabrāhmaṇa, Śāṇḍilya, Yogaśikhā*, *Yogakuṇḍalī,* and the *Saubhāgyalakṣmī.* According to Bouy, "all these nine Upaniṣads, with the possible exception of the *Saubhāgyalakṣmī*, were either enlarged or wholly composed [...] in South India by an Advaitin" (Bouy 1994, 6).

during the fifteen-seventeenth centuries—providing precedent for the yogic sculptures we will encounter at Hampi in the early sixteenth century.

In general, authors of medieval yoga texts do not appear to have been concerned with providing exhaustive accounts of yogic theory and practice,[31] but rather were keen to integrate disparate traditions and techniques of yoga and attempt to synthesize them in a coherent and systematic manner[32]—perhaps for a broader, more public audience (Birch 2013, 2015, forthcoming 2018a, 2018b; Mallinson 2014, 2016). Although we cannot be certain of the material life and function of medieval yoga manuscripts, it is unlikely that they would have been used by yogis as how-to-guides, or to replace the oral instruction of a personal *guru*. Instead, the texts offer us historical moments of codification, synthesis, and reform, visions of what were perhaps oral renunciate traditions being recorded for the first time, or as was often the case, reinterpretations of techniques from earlier Sanskrit texts, detectable from the authors' highly intertextual borrowing of shared verses. Yet, for as much as the texts say, there is perhaps as much left unsaid. Relying solely on the textual record thus leaves us with an incomplete and partisan history of yoga's past. As I aim to show in this study, the visual record of sculpted yogis performing non-seated *āsana*s at Hampi may help to fill some of these lacunae, offering another type of codification rendered by Vijayanagara artists in stone. This is not to elevate the visual material over the texts, but rather is an exercise in reading them together. As we shall see, the temple sculptures do not always simply affirm the prescriptions of yogic texts, but as artistic renditions of yogis in practice, also complicate and add variance to our understanding of premodern yoga traditions.

In looking to the corpus of medieval yoga texts, Birch has noted the gradual shift from seated *āsana*s used primarily for meditation, as in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, to more complex non-seated *āsanas,* including balancing postures and inversions utilized for bodily-purification, harnessing subtle energies in the body, as well as for therapeutic aims (Birch 2013, forthcoming 2018a). As Birch notes, however, the earliest texts to teach the methods of Haṭhayoga, for example the *Amṛtasiddhi, Amaraughaprabodha,*

[31] Although later texts would resemble encyclopedic compendiums, collating quotations from earlier works, e.g. the *Yogacintāmaṇi, Upāsanāsārasaṅgraha,* and the *Yogasārasaṅgraha* (Bouy 1994).

[32] See, for example, Svātmārāma's impulse for unification in *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.3.

Dattātreyayogaśāstra, Yogabīja, etc., teach relatively few *āsana*s; and they are entirely seated postures such as *padmāsana* or *siddhāsana*.[33]

Mallinson has noted that the earliest textual references to non-seated *āsanas* have been found in large Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva tantric compendiums written around the turn of the first millennium (Mallinson 2014). While they are not devoted exclusively to the aims of yoga, they contain important yogic teachings, which to date remain sparsely studied. The Vaiṣṇava Pāñcarātrika *Vimānārcanākalpa* (*c.* 10th century) teaches the two-armed balancing posture, *mayūrāsana* ("peacock posture"),[34] while the *Kubjikāmatatantra* (*c.* 10th century), the "principal scripture" of the Paścimāmnāya branch of Kaula Śaivism associated with Matsyendranātha (Sanderson 2002, 1), is perhaps the first text to teach another important two-armed balancing posture, *kukkuṭāsana* ("cock posture"), where it is described as a tantric *karaṇa*.[35] During the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, for the first time in Yogaśāstras, we begin to find these same non-seated *āsana*s. The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* (1.67–82) describes ten *āsana*s, including *mayūrāsana* and *kukkuṭāsana*; the *Yogayājñavalkya* (3.1-18) describes eight, including *mayūrāsana*; while the *Śivayogapradīpikā* (2.12) also lists ten, including *ahibhujāsana,* a variant name of *mayūrāsana*, although it provides no description.[36]

The influential *Haṭhapradīpikā* of Svātmārāma (1450) is the earliest known work of Haṭhayoga to teach non-seated *āsana*s. Christian Bouy and, more recently, Mallinson, have convincingly demonstrated that the *Haṭhapradīpikā* is largely a compilation,

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[33] The *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Amaraughaprabodha* mention no *āsana*s; the *Yogabīja* (95) provides one, *vajrāsana* ("thunderbolt posture"). The *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* (34), although it mentions that there are 84 *lakṣa* (8,400,000) postures, teaches but one, *padmāsana*. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* (13–15) states there are as many *āsana*s as there are species, yet teaches two, *siddhāsana* and *padmāsana*. Likewise, the *Gorakṣaśataka* (3.96–115) describes two, *padmāsana* and *vajrāsana*. The *Śivasaṃhitā* (3.108–12) offers four, all of which are seated cross-legged postures employed for meditation (*dhyāna*), concentration on the elements (*dhāraṇā*), and breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), with the exception of the seated forward-bending *paścimottānāsana*. For all of the data set out in this note, see Birch (2013, forthcoming 2018a).

[34] Mallinson has surmised that "it seems likely that the practice of non-seated *āsana*s developed within a Pāñcarātrika milieu" (Mallinson 2011a: 775); however, further text-critical study remains to be done. The inclusion of *kukkuṭāsana* in the Śaiva *Kubjikāmatatantra* casts some doubt on the exclusivity of this claim.

[35] *Kubjikāmatatantra* 23.114–117. A much earlier textual reference to *kukkuṭāsana* is found in a Prakrit Jaina text, the *Yogibhakti* (*c.* 5th century); however, because there is no description, it is unclear if it is the same non-seated posture. I am grateful to James Mallinson for bringing this to my attention. Personal communication, February 23, 2017.

[36] It is interesting to note that the first non-seated *āsana*s to appear in texts are both arm-balancing postures named after birds: the cock (*kukkuṭa*) and peacock (*mayūra*/*ahibhuj*).

sourced from these earlier Sanskrit yogic works,[37] and thus, represents a survey course of the techniques of medieval yoga *en vogue* during the middle of the second millennium (Bouy 1994; Mallinson 2011a, 2014). This important treatise came to represent a *locus classicus* for the Haṭhayoga tradition, evident from the number of later works and commentaries that hold it in such esteem.[38] In his consolidation of medieval yoga systems, Svātmārāma describes fifteen *āsana*s including the non-seated postures *mayūrāsana, kukkuṭāsana*, *uttānakūrmaka* ("upward facing tortoise"), *dhanurāsana* ("bow posture"), and the supine *śavāsana* ("corpse posture"). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* becomes a touchstone from which we can witness a marked shift in the sixteenth century and onwards, as new *āsana*s were gradually introduced in texts. For example, we find twenty-one *āsana*s in the Persian *Baḥr al-ḥayāt*, thirty-two in the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā*, and then a tradition of eighty-four *āsana*s displayed in the *Haṭharatnāvalī* and the Hindi Brajbhāṣā *Jogapradīpyakā*. A unique illustrated manuscript of the latter has been brought to light and studied by Bühnemann (2007). The proliferation of *āsana*s in texts following the fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā* has been argued for by Birch, who in bringing to light unpublished yoga manuscripts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reveals the rapid expansion, innovation, and creativity of *āsana* in the early modern period (Birch 2013; forthcoming 2018a). Birch has found in texts such as the *Yogacintāmaṇi, Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati,* and the *Siddhāntamuktāvalī,* descriptions of over one hundred *āsanas*, including seated, standing, balancing, and dynamic moving *āsana*s, and even *āsana*s involving the use of ropes and a wall—all before the colonial period.

In the Haṭhayoga literature, *āsana* continues to serve a foundational role for engaging in *prāṇāyāma* and other auxiliaries of yoga,[39] however, is also associated with bodily

[37] For a detailed list of Svātmārāma's source texts and borrowed verses in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, see Mallinson (2014, 239–244).

[38] For example, *Yogacintāmaṇi* (16th century), Basavārādhya's commentary on the *Śivayogapradīpikā* (*c.* 16/17th century), *Haṭharatnāvalī* (17th century), *Jogapradīpyakā* (18th century). Commentaries on the *Haṭhapradīpikā* include the *Jyotsnā* by Brahmānanda (*c.* 1830), *Yogaprakāśikā* by Bālakṛṣṇa (19th century), and the Marathi *Haṭhapradīpikāvṛtti* by Bhojātmaja (1852). (Bouy 1996; Bühnemann 2007, 8; Birch 2011, 548).

[39] Most medieval Yogaśāstras understand *āsana* as the foundation for *prāṇāyāma, kumbhaka,* or *mudrā* practices (e.g., *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.55, *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.78). That is, while *āsana* may be an indispensable auxiliary (*aṅga*) of Haṭhayoga, *āsana* itself is not usually said to bestow the highest soteriological goal of yoga (i.e., *samādhi*), but rather prepares the body-mind to be most capable of engaging in the other methods that do. Although, at times the soteriological potential of *āsana* is suggested, when, for example, in the *Haṭhapradīpikā, matsyendrāsana* (1.27) is said to awaken *kuṇḍalinī*, while *siddhāsana* (1.35) "breaks open the door to liberation" (*mokṣakapāṭabhedajanaka*).

purification and therapeutic aims, often addressing particular ailments and disease within the yogi's body.[40] As the *Haṭhapradīpikā* states:

> *Āsana* is described first because it is the first auxiliary of Haṭha[yoga]. One should perform it, for *āsana* [results in] steadiness, freedom from disease, and lightness of body.[41]

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* and other texts such as the *Haṭharatnāvalī* (often quoting the *Haṭhapradīpikā* directly) advertise particular health benefits associated with the successful performance of individual *āsanas.* For example, the *Haṭharatnāvalī* states that the application of *bhadrāsana* removes "all diseases and toxins."[42] The *Haṭhapradīpikā* declares that *mayūrāsana* "quickly destroys all diseases such as swelling in the body, abdominal disease, etc., and conquers the disorders (*doṣa*)."[43] *Śavāsana* "removes fatigue and causes mental repose,"[44] the seated spinal twist, *matsyendrāsana,* "awakens *kuṇḍalinī,*"[45] while the seated forward-bending *paścimatāna* (i.e., *paścimottānāsana*) "causes the vital air to flow along the backside."[46]

Such postures then (including seated ones), were, according to the texts, no longer employed solely for the purpose of attaining firm seats for prolonged meditation or breath-control, but were performed more actively and

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[40] A unique fifth chapter in the Kaivalyadhama edition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* is dedicated to the eradication of imbalances and diseases in the body. According to Christèle Barios, this interpolation, however, which is found in only two manuscripts of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, is none other than the tenth chapter on yogic medical treatment (*cikitsā*) of the *Dharmaputrikā* (*c.* 10th century), a text of the Śivadharma corpus (Barois forthcoming). Birch has suggested that Kaivalyadhama's inclusion of this tract on Āyurvedic theory in their critical edition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* reflects the modern scientific and therapeutic orientations of Swami Kuvalayananda and his tradition, more than Svātmārama's fifteenth-century yoga text (Birch forthcoming 2018b).

[41] *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.17 (*haṭhasya prathamāṅgatvād āsanaṃ pūrvam ucyate | kuryāt tad āsanaṃ sthairyam ārogyaṃ cāṅgalāghavam ||*) = *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.5.

[42] *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.30 (*sarvavyādhiviṣāpaham*).

[43] *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.31ab (*harati sakalarogān āśu gulmodarādīn abhibhavati ca doṣān āsanaṃ śrīmayūram |)* = *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.43ab.

[44] *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.32cd (*śrāntiharaṃ cittaviśrāntikārakam*).

[45] *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.27c (*kuṇḍalinīprabodha*) = *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.58c.

[46] *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.29b = *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.67b.

dynamically (i.e., stretching, pressing, twisting, bending, balancing, etc.) to cure the disorders (*doṣa*) and diseases (*roga*) of the body, develop health (*ārogya*), and manipulate subtle energy (*kuṇḍalinī, prāṇa*) within the yogi's body. I suggest that this significant shift in the psychophysical functionality and purpose of *āsana* opened new avenues for the anatomical potential of the body in yogic praxis. As previously noted, although the growing development of *āsana* traditions can be detected in Sanskrit texts following the fifteenth century, much of the proliferation of non-seated *āsana*s in yoga literature does not occur until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Birch 2013, forthcoming 2018a). As we will see, this makes the sculpted images of yogis performing complex non-seated *āsana*s on the temple pillars at Vijayanagara in the early 1500s especially noteworthy.

In order better to locate yoga within the sociopolitical and historical context of late-medieval Vijayanagara, let us now turn to a brief introduction to the empire, and the importance of religion and state-sponsored temple building for the *rāya*s, or kings, upon whose temples the yogis are etched in stone.

Part 2

2.1 Vijayanagara Temples, Religion, and Sculptural Style

The Vijayanagara Empire is named after its capital, "the city" (*nagara*) of "victory" (*vijaya*), popularly known today as Hampi, which lies along the Tuṅgabhadrā river in northern Karnataka. Perhaps the greatest empire South India has known, the Vijayanagara kings reigned from approximately 1336–1565 CE, rivaling the Deccan Sultanates and Mughal Empire of the north by creating a vibrant cosmopolitan civilization and polity. While an early historiography of Vijayanagara often framed the rise of the empire in religious ideological terms—as a Hindu kingdom that sought to assert its sovereignty vis-à-vis the oppression of an impending Muslim north—more recent scholarship has complicated and enriched the simplicity of this dichotomous religious narrative. Vijayanagara rulers not only allowed Islamic worship and the building of mosques within the capital city (Verghese 1995, 125–28), but as Phillip Wagoner has demonstrated, the Vijayanagara kings freely drew upon Islamicate cultural, royal, and political idioms in the court, incorporating features of Islamic architecture, as well as employing Muslim soldiers within the military (Wagner 1996). Nonetheless, it is clear from the inscriptional record that the Vijayanagara rulers

cultivated a self-consciously Hindu identity,[47] even if the specific sectarian allegiances would shift over time.

The founding Saṅgama *rāya*s were avowedly Śaivas,[48] they had Śaiva Kālāmukha[49] *rājagurus*, and their epigraphical sign-off was "Śrīvirūpākṣa," in deference to their patron deity, the "uneven-eyed" Śiva. Yet, there was a marked transition in the kingdom from Śaivism to Vaiṣṇavism under later Saḷuva and Tuḷuva rule, when the Śrīvaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja received state-favor beginning with Sāḷuva Narasiṃha (r. 1485–1491). Furthermore, Jainism, which had for centuries been the dominant religion in the Karnataka region (although its influence had waned considerably by the Vijayanagara period), continued to receive patronage by Vijayanagara kings (Verghese 1995, 7). Indeed, to claim Vijayanagara as a uniformly Hindu polity fails to pick up these subtleties and varieties of religious difference, only briefly mentioned here.[50] As Valerie Stoker has demonstrated, the religious diversity at Vijayanagara amounted to, not simply an ethos of religious pluralism or ecumenicalism, but the cultural and economic conditions of *realpolitik* that also gave rise to hostile polemics and sectarian rivalry between competing groups of Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, as well as Mādhva Brahmins and Śrīvaiṣṇavas, all of whom were contesting for royal patronage within the capital (Stoker 2011, 2016).

The royalties for the victors of such patronage resulted in one of the enduring legacies and greatest contributions of the empire, what historians refer to as the "Vijayanagara temple style," which drew upon earlier Hoysaḷa, Kākaṭīya, and Cōḷa styles, and matured into its own by the mid-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries (Stein 1989, 111). The Vijayanagara rulers commissioned the building of many great temple complexes within the capital city, particularly during the reigns of the great Kṛṣṇadevarāya (r. 1509–1529)

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[47] See, for example, the royal Saṅgama inscription of 1352, issued by Devarāya II, "Sultan among Hindu kings" (*hindurāyasuratrāṇa*), in Wagoner (1996, 853).

[48] There is some debate regarding the sectarian affiliation of the early Saṅgama kings. Many contend that the early Saṅgamas were disciples of the influential Smārta Brahmin, Vidyāraṇya of the Śṛṅgeri Maṭha, while according to Verghese, "a careful study of the epigraphical and literary sources reveal that the *rājagurus* of the early Saṅgamas were Kāḷāmukhas" (Verghese 1995, 7). For a critical assessment of the religious orientation of the Vijayanagara rulers, see Clark (2006, 193–202).

[49] Sanderson observes that the form "Kālāmukha" is simply the south-Indian version of the term "Kālamukha" (Sanderson 2006, 151–52). Given the provenance of this study, then, unless directly quoting, I use the appellation Kālāmukha.

[50] According to historians Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot, "This interpretation, which sees the Vijayanagara kingdom as inspired by and imbued with a deep sense of Hindu nationalism, is clearly anachronistic—a case of projecting a present-day situation back into the past" (Asher and Talbot 2006, 64).

and his half-brother and successor, Acyutarāya (r. 1529–1542). These temples functioned not only as vital centers of trade, calendrical festivals, and religious worship within the city, but also served to boast the cultural power of the empire over other neighboring chiefdoms in nearby Tamil and Andhra lands (Stein 1989, 112).

Today, the remains of detailed architecture, inscriptions, sculptures, and iconography make these medieval temple sites a rich historical archive for investigating courtly, religious, and sociopolitical life during the Vijayanagara period. Anna Dallapicolla and Anila Verghese have surveyed much of this visual material in their detailed study, *Sculpture at Vijayanagara: Iconography and Style* (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998). The authors note that "the capital was, so to speak, an experimental ground for the artists," where "different artistic traditions were eventually mingled and transformed according to a newly created aesthetic" (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 6). Drawing upon earlier imperial styles, this newly created aesthetic, or Vijayanagara sculptural style, featured numerous types of sculptures carved across the capital's great temple complexes, including narrative reliefs, divine personages, animals, religious icons, and a multitude of human figures.[51]

Vijayanagara sculptural tradition continued to mature towards the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as the attention of sculptors began to focus "on the embellishment of newly built pillared halls" within the great temple complexes (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 8). Artisans (*śilpin*) began to experiment with techniques for carving figures out of the large granite boulders native to the Hampi region. They created composite pillars "constituted by central shafts and clusters of subsidiary colonettes and piers adorned with three-dimensional" human, animal, and divine figures "emerging," as it were, out of the standing pillars, "thereby giving the impression of free-standing statues" (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 8). Thousands of these three-dimensional sculpted figures can be found today within the remains of the many halls (*maṇḍapa*) decorating the major temple complexes at Hampi. The iconographic programs of these *maṇḍapa*s feature a wide range of both idealized and

[51] According to Dallapicolla and Verghese, the oldest "narrative friezes" are located on the Mahānavamī platform in the "royal centre" of the capital, "depicting life at court, with the king in all his might and splendour" (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 26). There we see descriptive renditions of wrestling and boxing matches, hunting scenes, parading horses, music, dance (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, pls. 94-98), and narrative reliefs of the principle festival of Mahānavamī Vijayadaśamī, a sumptuous celebration commemorating the victory of the goddess Durgā over the evil demon Mahiṣāsura. This annual celebration became a *kṣatriya* ritual utilized by Vijayanagara rulers to gather and inspect the military before embarking for battle (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 26–27), and left a lasting impression on foreign visitors such as the Portuguese, Domingo Paes (Sewell 1972 [1900], 262–64).

descriptive elements. While for sculptures of deities and religious icons, Vijayanagara sculptors generally followed the artistic guidelines of prescriptive texts (*śilpaśāstra*), according to Dallapicolla and Verghese, for "the portrayal of human beings, however, they relied more on observation than on prescriptions of the texts" (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 10). This is borne out by the detailed attention given to the figures' varied styles of dress, jewelry, hairstyles, accoutrements, and in the case of yogic postures, the sculptors' close attention to specific positions and physical anatomy. The composite temple pillars display granite reliefs of many types of sculpted figures: animals and birds, courtiers, soldiers, foreigners, musicians, female and male dancers, religious virtuosos, and numerous ascetics—including, as Verghese has noted, some "complicated *yōgic* ones" (Verghese 1995, 111). However, according to Verghese, "since they are represented in a stereotyped manner, it is almost impossible to group them according to sects and sub-sects" (Verghese 1995, 111).

In part three, I will expand on and revise Verghese's preliminary assessment to reconsider the question of sectarian identity of the ascetics performing complex yogic *āsana*s at Hampi. I argue that the observational and descriptive orientation of Vijayanagara artisans suggests that these figures performing yogic postures were not simply idealized or generic renderings of semi-divine beings, but rather point to contact with living yoga and ascetic traditions under the empire. As we proceed, I will highlight evidence that suggests the influence of tantric Śaiva and *siddha* traditions on the iconographic programs at Vijayanagara, and argue that at least some of the ascetics in question are Nātha yogis performing the techniques of Haṭhayoga. Let us now turn to the sculpted reliefs.

2.2 Locating Yoga at Vijayanagara: Yogis Etched in Stone

The first set of images is located in the Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex, one of the last major temples built before the fall of the Vijayanagara empire in 1565. Incorrectly referred to today as the Acyutarāya, or Acyutadevarāya temple, the foundational inscription reveals that the temple was installed by the emperor's brother-in-law, the "Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara" Hiriya Tirumalarāja Voḍeya, on Sunday April 26, 1534.[52] The temple is located in the "sacred centre" of the capital city, south of the Tuṅgabhadrā river, and situated below the iconic Mataṅga hill (Fig. 3). The complex runs along the north-south axis, with the *garbhagṛha* at its center, housing the Śrīvaiṣṇava deity, Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha (also known as Veṅkaṭeśvara)—although today no image of the deity

[52] The inscription in Kannada, located along the left-side wall of the northern outer *gopuram*, is published in *SII Vol. IV* nos. 268-69*; SII Vol. IX,* no. 564 and 598; *ARSIE* 1904 no. 16; and Patil 1995, nos. 256–59.

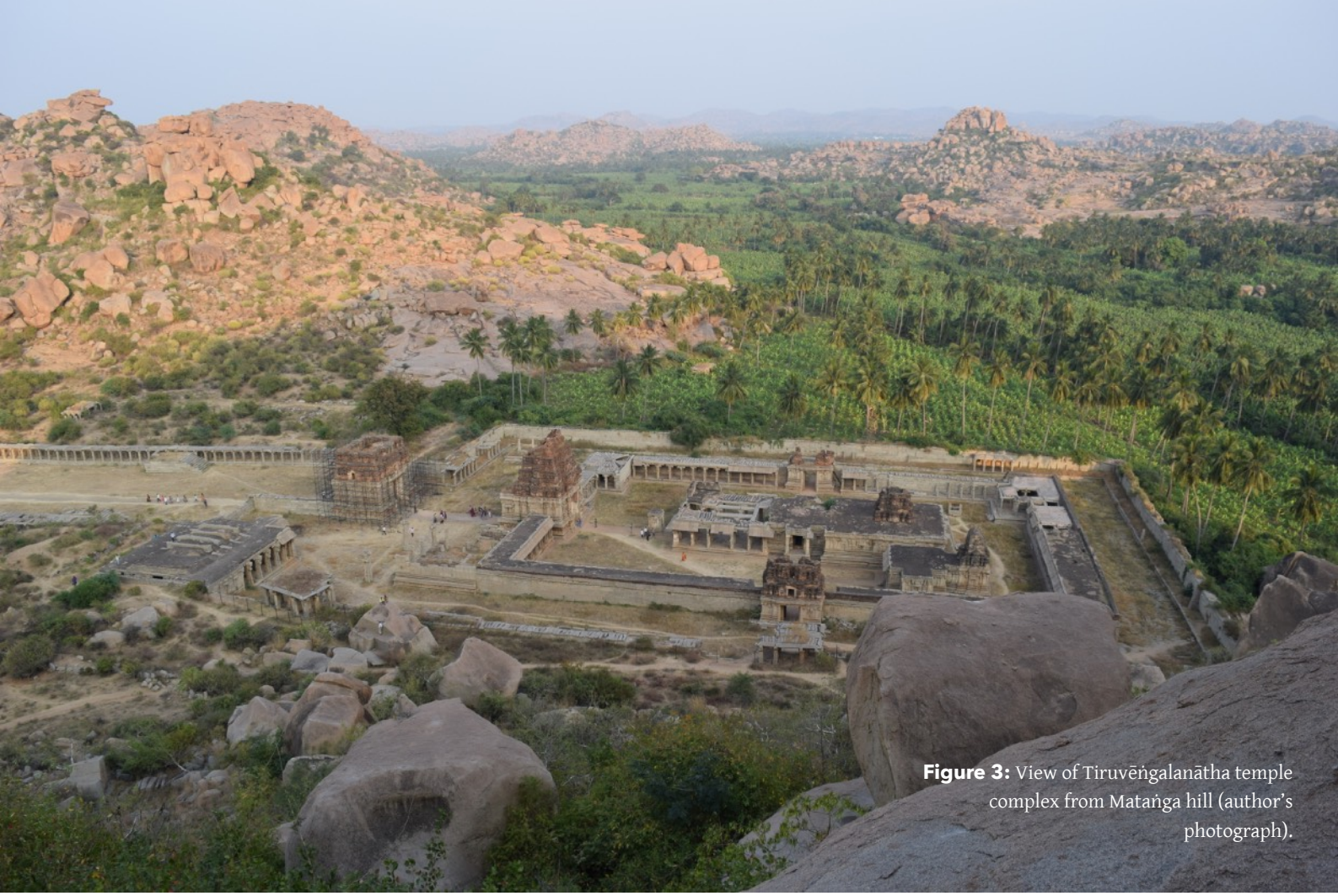

Figure 3: View of Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple complex from Mataṅga hill (author's photograph).

Figure 4: Interior of hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple complex (author's photograph).

remains. This comprises the largest Vijayanagara temple dedicated to Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha, one of the most popular forms of Vaiṣṇava worship favored by the Tuḷuva rulers.[53]

In the far north-west corner of the outer wall (*prākāra*) of the main temple is a hundred-columned *maṇḍapa*[54] featuring some of the most elaborately carved images in all of Hampi. Given its multi-tiered structure and acoustical capacity, it was likely used as a performance hall for religious recitations and ceremonies (Fig. 4).[55] While Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha is a Śrīvaiṣṇava temple, the range of visual reliefs carved onto the pillars of this *maṇḍapa*, like the majority of Vijayanagara temple halls, features a wide range of religious iconography that cuts across sectarian lines. Thus, in a temple devoted to a form of Viṣṇu, it is common to see sculpted reliefs of Śiva, Bhairava, Narasiṃha, Śaiva ascetics, and Vaiṣṇava Āḻvārs, sometimes displayed on a single pillar, such as at Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha.[56] According to Dallapicolla and Verghese, the diverse array of ascetic and yogic imagery carved upon these and other temple pillars "served mainly as decorative motifs" (1998: 80). Their scattered placement across the many temple pillars at Hampi suggests a loosely arranged visual program wherein Vijayanagara artisans may have enjoyed freedom for creativity and experimentation,[57] and there

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[53] During the first half of the sixteenth century, as royal allegiance shifted from Śaivism to Vaiṣṇavism, the Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha cult was immensely popular and received generous patronage under Tuḷuva rule. According to Verghese, "the existence of eight temples dedicated to this deity in the city and its suburbs is revealed by epigraphical and sculptural evidence," and by the rule of Sadāśiva (r. 1542–65), Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha "had become the most important Vaishnava deity in the empire" (Verghese 1996, 189–90).

[54] The hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa* was a common feature of sixteenth-century Vijayanagara temple building. In addition to the one found at Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha, there are also hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*s at the Virūpākṣa, Viṭṭhala, and Mālyavanta Raghunātha temple complexes. For more architectural details of these and other major Vijayanagara temples and structures, see Michell and Wagoner (2001).

[55] Personal communication with Anila Verghese and Anna Dallapicolla at the Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex, Hampi, January, 2016. Vasundhara Filliozat similarly observes the acoustical capacity of this hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*: "Good acoustics is another extraordinary quality of these *maṇḍapas*. If a person sings from the platform, which is at the other end of the *maṇḍapa*, one can hear the artist even at the entrance" (Filliozat 1985, 309).

[56] This type of sectarian cross-pollination in sculpted imagery at Hampi is not unique to Vijayanagara, but is common in many regions and imperial temples of southern India.

[57] The experimental nature of Vijayanagara sculpture traditions in relation to other south Indian dynasties should not be overstated, however, and requires further comparative study of southern dynastic temple sites including Cōḷa and Hoysaḷa, which is beyond the scope of this study. For an example of Vijayanagara appropriation of earlier Cāḷukya temple styles, see Wagoner (2007).

does not appear to be any particular spatial sequence or measured schema to the orientation of pillar sculptures.[58] While the majority of Hampi ascetics are featured in traditional seated yogic *āsanas,* it is the unique reliefs of more complex non-seated *āsana*s that warrant attention herein.

Walking up the eastern steps of the *maṇḍapa*, along the first row of pillars second to the north, on the middle panel facing east, is a sculpted figure performing a one-handed balancing posture (Fig. 5). The ascetic's legs are crossed and lifted in a figure-four formation. The left arm extends downwards and through the aperture of the legs, resting the weight of the body on the left hand. The right arm is extended outwards, the hand fixed in a downward-facing *mudrā* with the thumb and index-finger touching. The figure has large hooped earrings, and his matted hair (*jaṭā*) is fixed in an ornate bun at the top of his head. In between his legs, is the faint protrusion of the ascetic's cloth *dhotī*, who otherwise appears naked.

The first pillar of the following row depicts a more challenging one-handed balancing *āsana* carved on the middle panel, facing east (Fig. 6). With the left leg fastened behind the head, the figure's left arm extends down, balancing his weight on the left hand. The right leg is bent and lifted, while the right arm hooks underneath the back of the knee. In his right hand, although difficult to make out,[59] the ascetic appears to be holding an *akṣamālā* (likely *rudrākṣa* seeds, or possibly bone ornaments[60]) for the practice of mantra recitation (*japa*). Again he wears a large hooped earring on the right side, another variation of the medieval matted hair bun atop the head, and an armlet or piece of jewelry wrapped around the upper right arm—all key iconographic features encountered throughout many of the yogic sculptures at Hampi. Though the same postures are found repeated at Hampi like a visual trope, sometimes within a single *maṇḍapa* (Fig. 7), the specificity of the bodily configurations displayed in this and other sculptures of *āsana* suggests that they are not simply generic or idealized yogic postures, but rather particular ones.

It is worth pausing here to note that these postures do not look particularly *sthirasukha,* or suitable for prolonged meditation *à la* Patañjali. Thus, they seem to suggest ulterior

[58] Personal communication with Anna Dallapicolla, January, 2016.

[59] Many Hampi sculptures are fractured, decayed, or difficult to decipher. Dallapicolla and Verghese lament, "It is unfortunate that the granite of the sculptures is no longer covered with the original plaster work and, therefore, the fine and sensitive modeling cannot now be appreciated" (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 7).

[60] A necklace of bone ornaments is one of the standard accoutrements of the antinomian Śaiva ascetic order, the Kāpālika "skull-bearers," about which I shall say more below (see Törzsök 2012).

Figure 5: Ascetic in one-handed balancing posture with right hand in *mudrā*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple (author's photograph).

Figure 6: Ascetic in one-handed balancing posture while holding an *akṣamālā*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple (author's photograph).

Figure 7: Ascetic in one-handed balancing posture while holding an *akṣamālā*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple (author's photograph).

sensibilities: bodily purification and the manipulation of vital-energies common to Haṭhayoga, or perhaps the ascetic cultivation of *tapas.* The oft-blurred division between ascetic *tapas* and yogic praxis is an ancient one,[61] and indeed, with no accompanying textual evidence upon which to draw, it is difficult to apply any hard categorical distinctions between *tapas* and yoga praxis to the visual material at Hampi. As Mallinson (2011a) has demonstrated, there is clear evidence in the textual record of reuse and adaptation in Haṭhayoga traditions borrowing from the earlier methods of *tapas*,[62] and here I suggest that this ascetico-yogic recycling is also displayed visually in the Vijayanagara sculptural record.

Further, while they may have simply served as visual embellishments for the Vijayanagara sculptors, depictions of yogis with the *mudrā* or *akṣamālā* in-hand might also reflect a difference in practice than what can be gleaned simply from the texts. Nowhere, to my knowledge, in a medieval text of Haṭhayoga, does an author prescribe non-seated *āsana*s to be practiced simultaneously with hand *mudrā*s, or while engaging in *japa*—which is, of course, not to say that yogis did not perform them. Mantrayoga, although featured alongside Haṭhayoga as one of the four standard yogas in medieval yoga texts,[63] is often conspicuously absent from the Haṭha synthesis.[64] In its place is often the *ajapā* mantra, the "unpronounced" mantra of the exhalation and inhalation of

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[61] For example, on the relationship between *tapas* and yoga in the *Mahābhārata,* see Hopkins (1901). The *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* understands *tapas* as one of three components of the yoga of action (*kriyāyoga*), as well as one of five preliminary observances (*niyama*) of the eight-limbed yoga (*aṣṭāṅgayoga*). Later Haṭhayoga treatises complicate matters further (Birch 2011). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.61, quoting the "sayings of Gorakṣa" (*gorakṣavacana*), warns against yoga practices that are injurious to the body (*kāyakleśavidhi*). Birch has identified that Brahmānānda, in his *Jyotsnā*, understands *kāyakleśavidhi* to include excessive sun salutations (*bahusūryanamaskāra*), excessive weight lifting (*bahubhārodvahana*), and other forms (*ādirūpām*) (Birch forthcoming 2018a).

[62] Mallinson has argued that the earlier *tapas* practices of ascetics paved the way for many of the *āsana*s and *mudrā*s of medieval Haṭhayoga, as evidenced in the reuse and adaptation of such techniques in later yoga texts (Mallinson 2011a). A salient example of this ascetico-yogic recycling is in the eighteenth-century *Jogapradīpyakā,* which although the text does not call its yoga Haṭhayoga, includes many *haṭha* techniques within the framework of *aṣṭāṅgayoga.* Among its eighty-four *āsana*s, the *Jogapradīpyakā* describes the inversion, *tapakāra āsana* ("the ascetic's posture"), which appears to be a reformulation of the ancient "bat penance" (Pali: *vaggulivata*) austerity, in which the practitioner hangs by the legs upside down from a tree. See, for example, the cover image of Mallinson and Singleton's *Roots of Yoga* (2017); and Bühnemann (2007, 50).

[63] Mantrayoga, Layayoga, Haṭhayoga, and Rājayoga are the standard tetrad of medieval yogas, first grouped together as such in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra.*

[64] Mantrayoga is recommended for the least capable student in both the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and *Amaraughaprabodha.* I thank Jason Birch for this observation.

breath, *HAṂ SAḤ* (alternatively *SO' HAṂ*) which would thus require no *akṣamālā* or material instrument.[65] Though in visual art the *akṣamālā* is one of the characteristic insignia of premodern Indian ascetics, accompanying such a complex pretzel-shaped *āsana* would mark a challenging feat for the yogi to perform, while balancing on one hand.[66]

Underneath Figure 6, on the south-facing lower panel of the same pillar, is a bearded ascetic standing on one leg, balancing on the toes of his extended left foot, hands pressed together in *añjalimudrā* (Fig. 8). His long flowing dreadlocks (*jaṭā*), cleverly depicted by the artisan, extend outwards like the branches of a tree. His other features are stark: the prominent mustache and beard, large nose and arched eyebrows, large pendant earrings, the loin cloth fixed around his waist, and a jeweled plate or neck ornament[67] draped around his chest. His fixed standing posture is suggestive of the ancient *tapas* practice of standing-on-one-leg (*ekapādasthita*) (Fig. 2). However, by at least the eighteenth century, yoga tradition would come to know this type of standing posture as a distinct *āsana*, namely *vṛkṣāsana*, the "tree posture." As the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* states:

> And having placed the right foot on the area at the base of the left thigh, then [the *yogin*] stands on the ground like a tree. This they know as the Tree Posture (*vṛkṣāsana*).[68]

The figure in the Hampi sculpture goes one further in his *tapas*, balancing on the tip of the toes, increasing the difficulty of this standing posture. The tree-like rendering of

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[65] On the *ajapā* mantra, see e.g. *Gorakṣaśataka* 42–44 (Nowotny ed.) and *Śivayogapradīpikā* 2.28. While the *Śivayogapradīpikā* describes the Mantrayogin as one who performs the one-, two-, six-, or eight-syllabled mantras (1.5), the author later equates Mantrayoga with Ajapāyoga (2.26a), and proceeds to provide a description of its technique (2.28–34). Thus, while the *Śivayogapradīpikā* acknowledges that some yogis practice various mantras, it advises for the higher course of Śivayoga only the repetition of the "unpronounced" *ajapā* mantra.

[66] It is possible that an *akṣamālā* (along with a mantra) might have been used to count the length of time that the practitioner would hold an *āsana*, although we are not aware of any textual evidence supporting this. I thank Jason Birch for this suggestion.

[67] The jeweled neck ornament may indeed be the *rucaka*, one of the six insignia (*mudrikāṣaṭka*) of the Kāpālika ascetics. The other five Kāpālika insignia are the necklace (*kaṇṭhikā*), earring (*kuṇḍala*), the crest-jewel (*śikhāmaṇi*), ashes (*bhasma*), and sacred thread (*yajñopavītam*), see Lorenzen (1972, 2: quoting Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya* 2.35).

[68] *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 2.36 (*vāmorumūladeśe ca yāmyaṃ pādaṃ nidhāya tu | tiṣṭhati vṛkṣavad bhūmau vṛkṣāsanam idaṃ viduḥ ||*).

the ascetic's hair combined with the posture of standing "on the ground like a tree" make one wonder how much earlier the name *vṛkṣāsana* may have been in parlance, and raise the question of influence between text, image, and oral practice traditions. Indeed, it is possible that the *vṛkṣāsana* of the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* was influenced by this much older method of *tapas.*

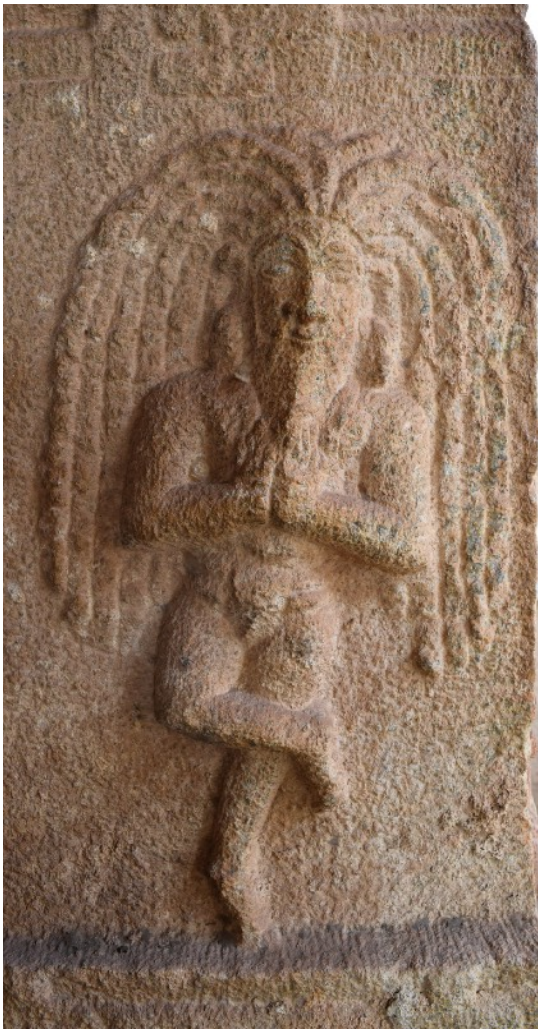


Figure 8: Ascetic with *jaṭā* tree-like hair performing *tapas*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple (author's photograph).

The yogic tree imagery is also not unique to Hampi. This, and several other figures, demonstrate strong parallels with contemporaneous sculpted reliefs of ascetics along the wall (*prākāra*) of the Mallikārjuna temple at Śrīśailam.

Perched upon the Nallamala hills, above the banks of the Kṛṣṇā river in modern-day Andhra Pradesh, about 175 miles (385km) north-east of Hampi, Śrīśailam is an important temple site that has been long-renowned as a great center and pilgrimage destination for Hindu and Buddhist *siddha*s and yogis. Numerous sculpted reliefs bearing their narratives and iconography (Shaw 1997; Linrothe 2006). During the Vijayanagara period, Śrīśailam was one of the most important Śaiva pilgrimage centers of the region, and was visited and patronized by Vijayanagara kings, including the great Kṛṣṇadevārāya (Shaw 2011, 237). Richard Shaw has highlighted important iconographic associations and shared features of ascetic imagery across Hampi and Śrīśailam, as well as at the Smārta Brahmin *advaita maṭha*s in Śṛṅgeri, Karnataka, often linked to the early rulers of the Vijayanagara empire. His comparative work yields the presence of a shared "*siddha* iconography"—ascetics adorned with large hooped earrings, long matted, sometimes flaming hair, waistbands, necklaces, armlets, hands in *mudrās,* and other yogic accessories and props such as the "yoga staff" (*yogadaṇḍa*) and "yoga

Figure 9: Ascetic with *jaṭā* tree-like hair, seated in *siddhāsana*. North side of the east *prākāra* wall, Śrīśailam. Photograph courtesy of Rob Linrothe.

strap" (*yogapaṭṭa*)—found across all three of these important Vijayanagara temple sites (Shaw 2011, 242). One particularly rich site for this type of imagery is the *prākāra* wall surrounding the Mallikārjuna temple at Śrīśailam, which, like the many temples at Hampi, features a dazzling array of ascetic and *siddha* figures, some in yogic postures. Based on shared architectural and iconographic themes, it is highly likely that the sculpted reliefs of ascetics at Śrīśailam and Hampi were fashioned during a close period of production, and possible that its artisans would have been aware of each other, if not from a shared occupational network.[69]

Along the north side of the Mallikārjuna *prākāra*, one encounters a seated ascetic figure with long matted hair (Fig. 9), whose features (despite the absence of the neck ornament) are so similar to the one at Hampi (Fig. 8) that one wonders whether the artisans were depicting a unique personality or ascetic figure. Indeed, many of the Śrīśailam reliefs depict narrative cycles of legendary *siddhas*, including widely known stories of prominent Nātha yogis like Matsyendranātha, Gorakṣanātha, and Caurańgī (Linrothe 2006a, 128–32). Could this dreadlocked ascetic also be a celebrated *siddha* or

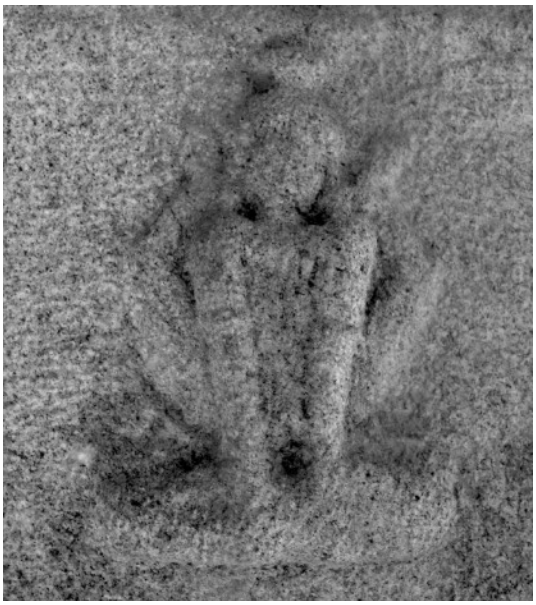
[69] An inscription in the Mallikārjuna temple states that it was renovated in 1510-11 at the hands of the "master mason," Kondoju (Shaw 1997, 162; Linrothe 2006a, 127). However, according to Shaw, "[i]t seems likely that the carvings of the thousands of panels on the prakara was [sic] not carried out at a single period but, perhaps, over several creative periods during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries" (Shaw 2011, 239).

yogi, well-known to Vijayanagara artists?[70] Or perhaps, a more general *siddha* visual trope? Linrothe offers the following observations:

> The sheer variety of siddha images on the *prakāra* walls tempts one to believe the artists knew them firsthand. The conviction with which poses, gestures, hair styles and behaviors are rendered would seem to suggest familiarity with the many siddha types that we may assume were present at the time, just as they continue to congregate there today [...] familiarity with actual models on the part of the artists at Śrīśailam, which textual evidence also encourages us to assume, is not a far-fetched notion (Linrothe 2006a, 128).

Although the historicity of many *siddha* figures is often beyond reach, in medieval India, they were undoubtedly celebrated as real people, often as teachers (Linrothe 2006b, 82). It is likely that artisans drew upon larger regional and even transregional *siddha* visual tropes, and then adapted those conventions in local ways,[71] perhaps based on first-hand contact with *siddha* and yoga traditions. So too, at Hampi, the variety, attention to bodily position, and specificity of the yogic *āsanas*—especially when paralleled with the textual evidence—suggest the familiarity of the sculptors with yogis present in or around the capital city.

Figure 10: Ascetic in two-handed balancing posture. West colonnade along the interior of the *prākāra*. Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple (author's photograph).



Returning to Hampi, moving into the

[70] It is possible that the standing ascetic in Figure 9 is a depiction of Arjuna performing tapas, as narrated in a well-known episode from the Mahābhārata. Indeed, other sculpted reliefs from south Indian temples depict Arjuna's tapas in a very similar manner of standing on one leg (e.g., at Cidambaram and other temples in Tamil Nadu). However, such sculptures always feature the iconic boar below or surrounding Arjuna, who, as the story goes, interrupted Arjuna's *tapas*. The boar is notably absent from the Hampi figure which thus raises doubts as to whether this is Arjuna. I am grateful to Jason Birch for bringing this possibility to my attention.

[71] I thank Rob Linrothe for this suggestion. Personal communication, February 11, 2017.

west colonnade along the interior of the *prākāra* walls at Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha, along the second column from the western wall, second pillar from the north, we find a different non-seated balancing posture, sculpted on the middle panel, facing east (Fig. 10). The yogi figure extends the arms down, resting the weight on both hands, while the legs and feet encircle behind, resting upon the shoulders. This posture is quite similar to what is today known as *dvipādaśīrṣāsana*[72] in the intermediate series of Pattabhi Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga system.[73] In the seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī*, composed in nearby Andhra, a similar posture is called *phaṇīndrāsana* ("lord of snakes posture"). The author Śrīnivāsa describes it:

> One should encircle the neck with the two feet, face turned upwards, supported by the hands. May the "Lord of Snakes Posture" (*phaṇīndra*), which destroys all disease, always bestow happiness upon you.[74]

Continuing the tour of Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha, in an open *maṇḍapa* on the outer northern side of the main temple shrine, third row from the west, second pillar from the north, on the bottom panel, facing east, we see another more difficult variation of the same posture (Fig. 11). Here only, the figure is balancing entirely on the left hand, while the right arm extends upward, palm facing the sky. A simple loin cloth covers his groin, while a pointed cap crowns the top of his head. While at first glance, this may appear to be yet another of the many interesting hair styles adorning sculpted ascetics at Hampi,[75] a closer examination reveals that it is a hat; and moreover, possibly an indicator of the sectarian affiliation of this particular yogi. Mughal and later Jodhpur paintings often depict Nātha yogis wearing pointed black caps (Fig. 12) similar in shape

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[72] In Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa, pressing down and balancing on both hands is the dynamic *vinyāsa* movement, rather than a static *āsana*, used to transition from *dvipādaśīrṣāsana* to the next posture in the sequence, *yoganidrāsana*. See: https://www.ashtangayoga.info/practice/intermediate-series-nadi-shodhana/item/way-out-303/. Accessed on: December 29, 2016. I am grateful to Naomi Worth for clarifying this for me.

[73] It is important to note that I am not making a genealogical argument here that contemporary yogis were practicing some sort of medieval Vijayanagara yoga, nor am I arguing that the ascetic depicted at Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha was practicing *dvipādaśīrśasana* per se. My point, rather, in referencing Jois' Ashtanga Vinyasa system is to show that some of the sculpted images at Hampi appear to at least anticipate some of the physical forms common to expressions of modern postural yoga.

[74] *Haṭharatnāvalī* 3.65 (*atha phaṇīndrāsanam | pādābhyāṃ veṣṭayet kaṇṭhaṃ karayoḥ saṃsthitonmukham | phaṇīndraṃ sarvadoṣaghnaṃ vo bhūyāt sukhadaṃ sadā ||*). For other examples of similarly shaped *āsanas* in later yoga texts, see *brahmāsana* in *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* 2.120; *Jogapradīpyakā* 344-45; *hastāsana* in the *Jaina Yogāsanam* 93.

75 On the detailed variety of hairstyles as reflected in Vijayanagara sculpture and painting, see Kumari (1995, 37–44).

Figure 11: Nātha yogi with pointed cap in one-handed balancing posture. North side of main temple shrine. Tiruvēṅgalanātha temple (author's photograph).

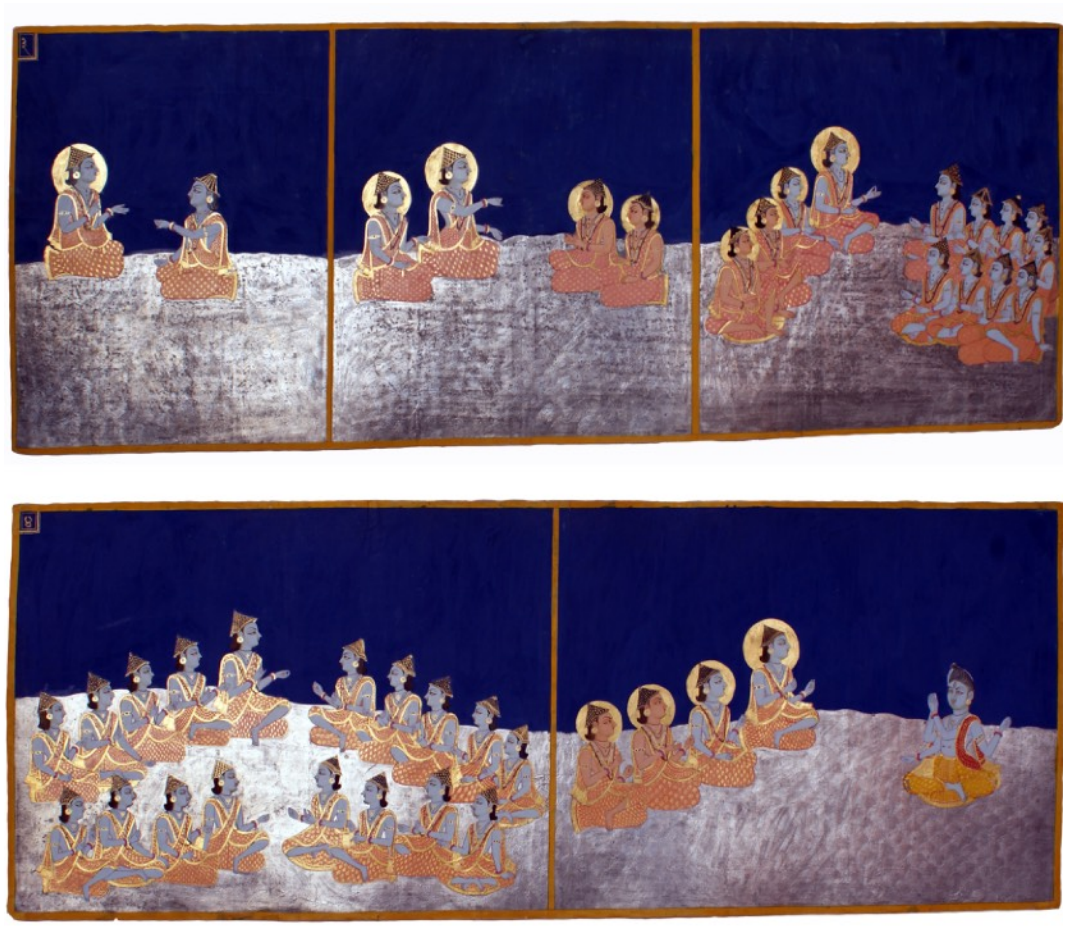

Figure 12: *The Transmission of Teachings*, folios 3-4 from the *Nāthcarit*. Painting by Bulākī. Jodhpur, Rajasthan, 1823 (Saṃvat 1880). Opaque watercolor, gold, and tin alloy on paper, 47×123cm. Merhangarh Museum Trust.

and style to the one sculpted at the Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple.

Nearby, in the south-western corner of the *maṇḍapa,* we find a pillar featuring a unique pair of balancing postures displayed side-by-side on the upper panels (Fig. 13). The image on the right (facing north) depicts a yogi performing a difficult posture from the front; while the image on the left (facing east), displays another posture from the unusual posterior view. Although difficult to confirm, given their proximity on the pillar and their similarity postural type, it is possible the artisans were depicting the same yogi performing two distinct postures, with the sense of movement from one posture to another. The image on the right (Fig. 14) is a familiar Hampi posture: the right leg is bent in front of the body, with the right arm tucked underneath the right knee. The left leg is wrapped behind the head. The yogi balances on his left hand, while holding an *akṣamālā* in his right hand. The image on the left (Fig. 15), however, is quite different. Displayed from behind, the yogi's left leg is bent horizontally, resting the left foot on the inner right thigh. His right leg extends upwards, wrapping around the back of the neck. The yogi leans over his left leg, pressing down and balancing his weight on both hands. This posture is strikingly similar to the modern yogic *āsana*, *virañcyāsana* ("the posture of the [sage] Virañci"). A black and white photograph (Fig. 16) depicts a young T.R.S. Sharma, a student of the influential twentieth-century yoga revivalist Tirumalai Kṛṣṇamācārya, performing *virañcyāsana* in front of the Mysore Palace in 1941.[76] We know of no premodern yoga text that describes a posture named *virañcyāsana,* or of a balancing *āsana* described in this fashion—making the visual depiction at Hampi particularly noteworthy.[77]

Hampi ascetics in non-seated yoga postures are depicted not only at the Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple, however, but also at several other major temple complexes within the capital. Two inverted postures are of particular interest. The first is found in the free-standing *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* in the north-eastern corner of the Viṭṭhala temple complex.[78] Here, on the upper panel of a pillar in the far north-eastern corner of the *maṇḍapa* is a depiction of a yogi balancing upside down, with the soles of the feet pressed together (Fig. 17). He presses his weight off the left hand, while resting his chin

[76] This photograph is also published in Singleton (2010, 187).

[77] For a seated variation of *virañcyāsana*, see Iyengar (1994 [1966], pls. 386–89).

[78] Michell and Wagoner note that this particular "structure is without any historical records," though construction of the Viṭṭhala temple may have begun in 1505 by the first powerful Tuḷuva king, Vīra Narasiṃha. Additional structures within the Viṭṭhala complex bear inscriptions dating from 1513–1545. The *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* likely falls somewhere during this period of the first half of the sixteenth century. For this, and more details of the Viṭṭhala temple's architecture, see Michell and Wagoner (2001, Vol. 1: 217-29).

Figure 13: Ascetic(s) in balancing postures. South-west corner of main temple *maṇḍapa.* Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 14: Ascetic in one-handed balancing posture with *akṣamālā* in right hand. South-west corner of main temple *maṇḍapa.* Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 15: Posterior view of ascetic in two-handed balancing posture, with right leg behind the head. South-west corner of main temple *maṇḍapa*. Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex (author's photograph).

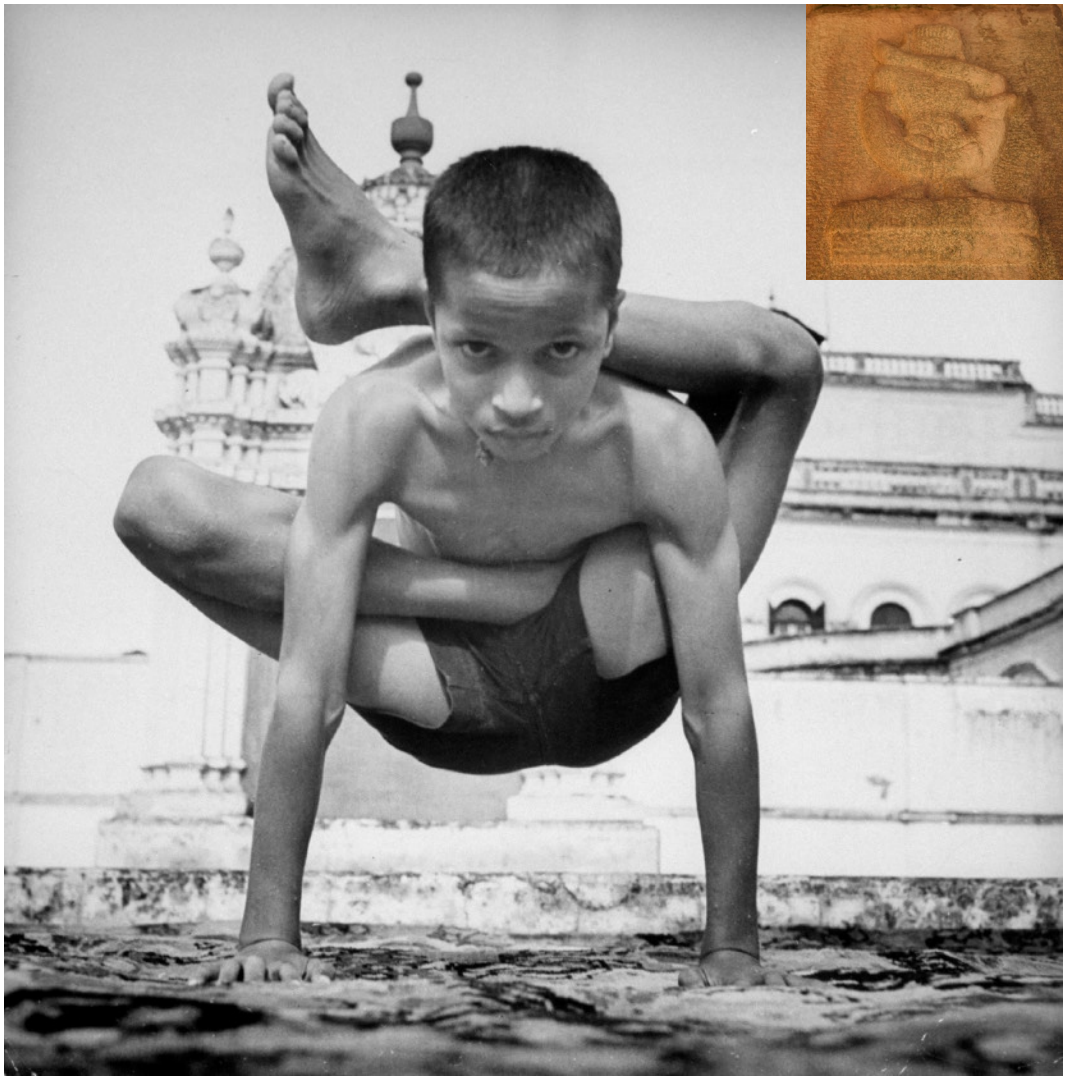

Figure 16: A young T.R.S. Sharma performing *virañcyāsana* in front of the Mysore palace, 1941. Photo by Wallace Kirkland. The LIFE Images Collection, Getty Images. (Fig. 15 inset.)

for support on a *yogadaṇḍa* ("yoga staff")[79] held tightly in his right. The yogi's *jaṭā* hairstyle is adorned like a flaming headdress, and he wears an armlet fixed around his right bicep.

[79] The *yogadaṇḍa* is one of the insignia found amongst medieval Nātha yogis in the textual and visual record; however, as it is common to other ascetic orders, it alone cannot be considered a sectarian marker as such (Mallinson forthcoming b).

The second inversion is located in an outer *maṇḍapa* of the so-called "underground" Virūpākṣa or Prasanna temple in the "royal centre" of the city.[80] Figure 18 depicts a wild looking, long-haired yogi balancing upside down in what appears to be a type of reversed *padmāsana*—a strong backbend in which the legs are crossed behind and resting on the buttocks. The lines of his loin cloth are visible, indicating his ascetic stature. His hands and chin balances on a *yogadaṇḍa*, that rests on some sort of mound—possibly the fires of a *pañcāgni*-like *tapas* practice,[81] or more likely, the skeletal remains or pyres of a cremation ground (*śmaśāna*) utilized in tantric *sādhana.* The use of yogic props like the *yogadaṇḍa* as depicted in these sculptures also appears unique when read against the textual record. To my knowledge, no premodern yoga text prescribes *yogadaṇḍa*s to aid the practice of non-seated *āsana*s.[82] Yet, when read across Vijayanagara temple sites, it is not particularly surprising. Numerous images of yogis and ascetics are found to be utilizing *yogadaṇḍa*s across the pillared-carvings of temples at Hampi, Śrīśailam, and Śṛṅgeri—although they are typically supporting seated postures, rather than inverted ones (Figs. 27–28).

Four more non-seated *āsana*s are found at the iconic Virūpākṣa temple, the history of which long predates Vijayanagara rule. However, important architectural renovations were commissioned during the reign of Kṛṣṇadevarāya (1509–1529).[83] In the south-east corner of the complex, within the south colonnade, on the second row of columns, third from the wall, on the middle south-facing panel is another type of advanced two-handed balancing posture (Fig. 19). The yogi presses his hands onto a raised platform. The left leg wraps around the extended left arm and tucks under the right, while the right leg tucks back, pressing into the back of the head. Again we see the large hooped

[80] According to Fritz and Michell, the site, which features a "15th-century *gopura*," was once partly buried "underground" but has been fully exposed through excavation. "The core sanctuary is now empty," but an inscription reveals "that the temple was originally consecrated to Virupaksha. Considering its proximity to many of the residential structures of the royal centre, the 'underground' temple may have been used by members of the king's household" (Fritz and Michell 2003, 75).

[81] For a contemporary example of an ascetic practicing a yogic inversion encircled by fires, see Mallinson (2011a, 779: Fig. 3).

[82] However, that is not to say that the texts prohibit the use of *daṇḍa*s. Omission does not always equal absence. Yogaśāstras often omit details that may have been provided by a *guru,* and that may have varied from one tradition to another, such as sequences, breath count, time in posture, etc. I am grateful to Jason Birch for suggesting this.

[83] The dated inscription found on the *mahāraṅgamaṇḍapa,* for example, is notable for its edict honoring the coronation of Kṛṣṇadevarāya in 1510; published in *ARIE* 1889, no. 29; *EI* 1 (361–71); *SII* IV, no. 258; and Patil 1995, no. 104 (Michell and Wagoner 2001, Vol. 1: 115). For further details of the Virūpākṣa temple's architecture, see Michell and Wagoner (2001, Vol. 1: 111–38).

earrings and flame-like matted hair. Just down the hall, on the western end of the south colonnade, third row, first pillar from the wall, on the east-facing upper panel, we see the same balancing posture, only this time the yogi is flanked by an ascetic devotee[84]

Figure 17: (Above) Inverted ascetic with *yogadaṇḍa*. *Kalyāṇamaṇḍapa*, north-east corner of the Viṭṭhala temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 18: (Above right) Inverted ascetic in reverse-*padmāsana* resting on a *yogadaṇḍa*. Outer *maṇḍapa* of Prasanna temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 19: (Right) Ascetic in two-handed balancing posture. South-east corner, south colonnade, Virūpākṣa temple complex (author's photograph).

[84] Alternatively, this figure could be a donor (*dānapati*) dressed in ascetic's garb.

Figure 20: Ascetic in two-handed balancing posture flanked by kneeling devotee. South-east corner, west end of south colonnade, Virūpākṣa temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 21: Ascetic in variation of *kukkuṭāsana*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Virūpākṣa temple complex (author's photograph).

kneeling in an act of homage (*namaskāra*) to the balancing yogi (Fig. 20). This devotional *guru-śiṣya* ("teacher-student") scene is evocative of the lineage-based, and perhaps didactic modes of physical yogic praxis.

Located in the south-western corner of the Virūpākṣa enclosure is another hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa,* attributed to Kṛṣṇadevarāya (Fritz and Michell 2003, 61). Here, are two more non-seated *āsana*s of particular significance. As one walks up the steps to enter the *maṇḍapa*, on the first row of the northern side, along the second pillar, on the upper panel facing-south, is a yogi depicted in what appears to be a variation of *kukkuṭāsana* ("cock posture").[85] His arms are pressed down through the legs, the soles of the feet touching (Fig. 21). Again, we see the flame-like *jaṭā* hairstyle. This sculpture and the one at Śrīśailam (Linrothe 2006, 139) are perhaps two of the earliest known visual depictions of *kukkuṭāsana.*

Within the same *maṇḍapa*, towards the south-east corner, fourth row in from the southern wall, third pillar from the east, we find another non-seated *āsana* sculpted on the middle panel, facing east (Fig. 22). Here we find what is commonly known in

Figure 22: (Left) Nātha yogi in inverted posture. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Virūpākṣa temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 23: (Above) Close-up of Nātha yogi with *siṅgī*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Virūpākṣa temple complex (author's photograph).

[85] Most textual descriptions of *kukkuṭāsana* describe the legs lifted in *padmāsana* and not with the soles of the feet together. However, the seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī,* though it teaches but one version wherein the yogi adopts *padmāsana* (3.73), mentions that there are five variations of *kukkuṭāsana* (3.17). Perhaps Figure 21 is depicting one of these variations. I thank Jason Birch for bringing this to my attention.

modern postural yoga as *ūrdhvadhanurāsana* ("upward bow posture")[86] or *cakrāsana* ("wheel posture"), depending on the school. The earliest textual reference to a posture such as this may be in the eighteenth-century *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* (16), which describes a posture called *paryaṅkāsana* ("sofa posture") as follows:

> Lying down, having supported [himself] with the palms of the hands on the ground, [and] having firmed the ground with the soles of the feet, [the *yogin*] should raise the navel-region upwards—this is the Sofa Posture.[87]

While classical descriptions of a "sofa" posture (i.e. *paryaṅka*) suggest a seated posture for meditation, in which the yogi sits down as if *on* a sofa,[88] here the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* appears to describe a posture in which the yogi's own body presses up off the ground to become the shape *of* a sofa. Unlike the modern *ūrdhvadhanurāsana* in which the shoulders, knees, feet and hands are all held in one parallel line (see Iyengar 1994 [1966], pls. 479–82), in Figure 22 the posture is shown with the yogi's hips and torso twisted toward the side (frontal view), the knees and feet pointing outwards to his left.

While this posture might appear at first-glance similar to other sculptural depictions of dance, acrobatics, or other physical traditions of premodern India (see, e.g., Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, pl. 102), the familiar *siddha* accoutrements of the figure's garb clearly indicate that this is indeed an ascetic or yogi: the loin cloth, right-arm band, flaming *jaṭā* hairstyle, and necklace. As we shall see, a closer inspection of the necklace in particular reveals important sectarian information that allows us to confidently identify this figure as a Nātha yogi. This data will also permit us to reflect more broadly on the religious identity and milieu of the sculpted figures at Hampi.

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[86] The earliest textual reference and visual depiction of *ūrdhvadhanurāsana* I am aware of is from a *circa* nineteenth-century illustrated Jaina manuscript entitled *Yogāsanam* (34).

[87] *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* 16 (f. 5v) (*uttānaśayanaṃ hastatalābhyāṃ bhūmim avaṣṭabhya pādatalābhyāṃ bhūmiṃ dhṛtvā nābhipradeśaṃ ūrdhvaṃ kuryāt paryaṅkāsanaṃ bhavati*).
This posture is also depicted in the mid nineteenth-century *Śrītattvanidhi* (5). Another similar *āsana* is the *ākāśatānāsana* ("extending through space posture") as taught in the *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* (2.127-28), a later six-chapter recension of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* from Jodhpur (18th century). Thanks to Jason Birch for bringing this to my attention.

[88] For example, *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46 and its commentaries. See above, n. 19.

Part 3

3.1 The Presence of Nātha Yogis at Vijayanagara

While much ink has been spilt by scholars concerning the Nāthas, or Kānphaṭās (lit. "split-eared"),[89] in the north-western, northern, and eastern parts of South Asia (Dasgupta 1976; Lorenzen and Muñoz 2012), the textual, epigraphical, and sculptural records reveal that the Nāthas had a strong presence in South India in the periods prior to, during, and post-Vijayanagara, particularly in the larger Deccan and Andhra regions (Saletore 1937). Mallinson has argued that the Nāthas likely originated in the Deccan, where the "majority of early textual and epigraphic references to Matsyendra and Gorakṣa" are found (Mallinson 2011b).

A closer inspection of the *ūrdhvadhanurāsana*-like figure in the Virūpākṣa temple (Fig. 23) reveals that the yogi in question wears a necklace adorned with an animal horn[90]—the key insignia of the Nātha yogis, known as the *nād* or *siṅgī* (Hindi).[91] Other coeval visual evidence confirms the Nāthas wearing *siṅgīs*, particularly in Mughal paintings. For example, in a late sixteenth-century illustrated manuscript of the *Bāburnāma*, an encampment of Nāthas features yogis sporting the *siṅgī* around their necks (Fig. 24). More local to Vijayanagara, in the early 1520s, the Portuguese traveler and visitor to the

[89] They are "split-eared" on account of the large thick hooped earrings modern adherents wear through the cartilage of their ears, which are split open by the *guru* upon initiation. However, as Mallinson has observed, the piercing of the cartilage rather than the lobe of the ear appears to be a later development, and does not appear visually on Nāthas until Mughal paintings in the second half of the eighteenth century (Mallinson 2013b). Indeed, the sculpted reliefs of Nāthas at Hampi feature large earrings pierced through the lobes only. Although Figure 29 reveals Matsyendranātha with large split or plugged earrings, they are clearly pierced through the lobe, and not the cartilage as we find amongst Nātha initiates today. Thus, the characterization is a bit misleading, when Verghese states that Matsyendranātha is "occasionally shown with the slit ear-lobes and large earrings typical of the *kānphaṭas*" (Verghese 1995, 113).

[90] According to Briggs, the *siṅgī* is often made from the horn of a deer or rhinoceros. He relates the Nātha use of the horn to a legend involving king Bhartṛhari, a key disciple of Gorakṣanātha. "Once his seventy queens urged him to go hunting. While he was away he ran across a herd of seventy hinds and one stag; but was unable to overtake the stag. Finally, a hind asked the stag to allow himself to be shot, and he agreed, on certain conditions, one of which was that his horn should be used for the Yogi's whistle." For this, and descriptions of the modern use of such a horn in Nātha daily praxis, see Briggs (1989 [1938], 11-12).

[91] According to Mallinson (forthcoming b), "The earliest textual reference to the wearing of the *siṅgī* or horn by yogis is in a description by Ibn Batuta recorded in 1361."

capital city, Domingos Paes, reported *jogis* blowing horns in a local temple.[92] Indeed, many other sculpted figures at Hampi feature ascetics wearing what appears to be a Nātha *siṅgī* draped around the neck (e.g., Fig. 25). Numerous sculptures scattered across the temple pillars also appear to display other Nātha insignia. In addition to the *siṅgī* and the pointed hat (Figs. 11-12), many ascetics are shown wearing a distinctive coat (*kanthā*, *gudarī*) (Fig. 26) often made of patchwork, also common to depictions of Nāthas in Mughal-era paintings (see bottom right quadrant of Fig. 24).[93]

Figure 24: Encampment of Nātha yogis. *Bābur's visit to Gorkhatri in 1519*. By Kesu Khurd. India, Mughal dynasty, 1590–93. © British Library Board (Or. 3714 fol.320v).

Epigraphical evidence as early as the late-thirteenth century confirms the presence of Nāthas in the Karnataka region predating Vijayanagara rule, particularly at Kadri *maṭha* on the Malabar coast, perhaps "the oldest Nāth monastery still in use" (Mallinson 2011b, 413).[94] "In 1505/1506 the Italian traveller Ludovico di Varthema reported how the 'King of the Ioghe,' [i.e. *jogi*, yogi] enjoying the protection of the Vijayanagar Empire, did indeed live like a powerful king" when he ruled over "about thirty thousand people" (Mallinson 2011b: quoting Badger 1863, 111–12). Today, the head of the *maṭha* is still known as the "King of the Yogis," or *rājā yogi* in Hindi (Mallinson 2011b, 413), and an annual pilgrimage to Kadri monastery of itinerant Nātha yogis is still performed in

[92] See the narrative account of the Portuguese traveler, Domingos Paes (written c. 1520-22), in Sewell (1970 [1900], 255).

[93] Mallinson notes that "Nātha yogis may have adopted the wearing of cloaks from Sufi practice." On this and more detailed accounts of Nātha insignia from textual and visual sources, see Mallinson (forthcoming b).

[94] See Saletore (1937) for an overview of these inscriptions, and Mallinson (2011b) for a critical assessment of this material evidence.

Figure 25: Seated Nātha yogi with *siṅgī*. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 26: Nātha with cloak. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Virūpākṣa temple complex (author's photograph).

Karnataka (Bouillier 2009).

By the middle of the second millennium, there is literary and visual evidence to suggest that a Nātha order was taking shape in South India. The fifteenth-century Telugu *Navanāthacaritramu* ("Deeds of the Nine Nāthas") by Gauraṇa, a Vīraśaiva scholar based at Śrīśailam in Andhra, is the first text to provide a list of nine Nāthas, including important hagiographies of seminal Nātha figures like Matysendranātha and Gorakṣanātha, and regionalized tales of their yogic feats and attainments (Reddy 2016). By the early sixteenth century, at Hampi, we begin to see the development of a unique south-Indian *navanātha* iconographic program, sculpted visually across the Vijayanagara temple pillars: distinct ascetic figures seated on animal vehicles (*vāhana*). In the hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa* at Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha, for example, a Śaiva ascetic is seated atop a large scorpion blowing a long horn (Fig. 30), and another on a tortoise. At the Virūpākṣa temple, an ascetic rides atop a strange "cross between a boar and a mouse" (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 80). Most prominent, however, are more than one hundred images of Matysendranātha seated upon his iconic fish *vāhana*,[95] found within the *maṇḍapas* of almost every major temple complex at Hampi (Figs. 27–29).[96] Several of these images also include the Nātha *siṅgī* draped around his neck (Fig. 27). While these ascetics sculpted on animals are not grouped collectively in any particular fashion, and are scattered individually across the many temples at Hampi, by the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a more fully-fledged and consolidated *navanātha* iconographic program can be detected in the surrounding region.[97] Verghese has drawn attention to a visual panel of Nāthas at the Someśvara temple at Ulsoor, a suburb of modern Bangalore (Verghese 2000). Here, in this post-Vijayanagara, Nayaka representation, are nine Nāthas sitting prominently on their animal *vāhanas*. In addition to the fish, scorpion, boar, and tortoise witnessed at Hampi, at Someśvara, Nāthas are also found seated on a bear, antelope, *makara* (sea creature), snake, and lion (Fig. 31). A very similar *navanātha* visual program is found nearby at the Jalakateśvara

[95] On the myth cycles relating Matsyendranātha and fish, see Briggs (1989 [1938], 231-32); Dasgupta (1976, 382-84); White (1996, 222-229).

[96] The abundance and popularity of the Matsyendranātha fish imagery at Hampi temples is second-to-none, rivaled perhaps only by images of Narasiṃha and Vaiṣṇava Alvars.

[97] A *navanātha* visual program can also be detected at Śṛṅgeri, potentially earlier than the post-Vijayanagara carvings. I wish to thank James Mallinson for informing me of this. Personal communication, February 23, 2017.

Figure 27: (Top) Matsyendranātha seated on large fish *vāhana* with *siṅgī* and staff. Outer *maṇḍapa* of Prasanna temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 28: (Top) Matsyendranātha in seated twist, furnished with *yogapaṭṭa* and staff. *Mahāraṅgamaṇḍapa* of the Virūpākṣa temple (author's photograph).

Figure 29: (Bottom) Matsyendranātha with large split-earrings (author's photograph).

Figure 30: (Bottom) Nātha seated on large scorpion *vāhana* with Śaiva *triśūla* and horn. Hundred-pillared *maṇḍapa*, Tiruvēṅgaḷanātha temple complex (author's photograph).

Figure 31: Nine Nāthas (*navanātha*) seated on animal *vāhanas*. Someśvara temple at Ulsoor, Bangalore (author's photograph).

temple, which I also visited.[98] While a more detailed analysis of the *navanātha* iconographic program and its relation to the development of a synthesized Nātha order awaits further study, all of this speaks to the growing influence and presence of Nātha traditions during and post-Vijayanagara rule in the larger Deccan and Andhra regions of South India.[99]

Returning again to Hampi, we find another Matsyendranātha image inside the *mahāraṅgamaṇḍapa* of the Virūpākṣa temple (Fig. 28) displaying many stylized elements of the *siddha* iconography recognizable across Hampi and Śrīśailam: flaming-*jaṭā* hair, large hooped earrings, armlets, anklets, waistband, and other jeweled ornamentation. His right hand extends downwards fixed in a *mudrā*, while his left arm rests on a *yogadaṇḍa*, palm open in a gesture of offering. Seated upon his fish mount, his right leg crosses over the left, bound with a "yoga strap" (*yogapaṭṭa*) fastened around his knee and waist. This seated twist is reminiscent of a medieval yogic *āsana* attributed to the *siddha* himself—and again, one is left to speculate the direction of influence between stone image, practice, and text. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* describes the posture as follows:

> Having grasped the right foot, which is placed at the base of the left thigh, [with the left hand,] and the left foot which has covered the outside of the [right] knee, [with the right hand,] [the *yogin*] whose body is twisted thus, should remain. This is the *āsana* taught by Śrīmatsy[endr]anātha.[100]

Although the bodily configuration prescribed in the text differs from the visual depiction of Figure 28 at Hampi,[101] it is plausible that this eponymous seated twist was inspired by such sculptural traditions of Matsyendranātha. Before his section on *āsana*, Svātmārāma informs readers that some of the postures he will disclose are known by

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[98] I am grateful to Anila Verghese for directing me to both of these temples, and drawing my attention to the *navanātha* visual programs.

[99] This is not to say, however, that there was a singular unified or monolithic Nātha *sampradāya*. Different lists of nine Nāthas continued to appear in the texts, and different visual configurations of Nāthas on animal *vāhanas* appeared in sculpture, demonstrating the fluidity and changing nature of Nātha identity and representation in the premodern period.

[100] *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.26 (*vāmorumūlārpitadakṣapādaṃ jānor bahirveṣṭitavāmapādam | pragṛhya tiṣṭhet parivartitāṅgaḥ śrīmatsyanāthoditam āsanaṃ syāt* ||). Here I am following Brahmānanda's *Jyotsnā* in understanding the syntax of this verse. I thank Jason Birch for directing me to this gloss.

[101] Later traditions provide further alternatives of Matsyendra's twist, for example, *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 2.22–23. In modern postural yoga schools, its variations are often referred to as *ardhamatsyendrāsana* ("half lord of the fish posture"), for example, Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* describes three (1994 [1966], 259-62 and 270–73).

"Matsyendra and other yogins" (*Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.18), endorsing the great *siddha* as an authority on yogic *āsana*.

In the opening chapter of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (1.9), Svātmārāma places himself in a genealogy of *mahāsiddhas*, tracing the practice of Haṭhayoga back to Ādinātha (i.e. Śiva), Matsyendranātha, Gorakṣanātha, Caurańgī and Allama Prabhu, among others. Mallinson has argued that the *Haṭhapradīpikā* should thus be conceived as a *siddha* yoga text, rather than an explicitly Nātha one, for the cast of *mahāsiddhas* in Svātmārāma's list are certainly not all Nātha yogis, and represent more of a disparate group of *siddhas* than a singular tradition or *sampradāya* (Mallinson 2014, 226: n. 2). In particular, and relevant to Vijayanagara, is the curious inclusion of Allama Prabhu, the celebrated Vīraśaiva yogi-saint of Karnataka. Hagiographical accounts in Kannada depict polemical tales between Allama and Gorakṣanātha, with the former making fun of the yogic feats and getting the best of the latter.[102] However, despite Gorakṣanātha's denigration in the local imaginaire, his purported *guru* appears to have been immensely popular in the region. The ubiquitous presence of Matsyendranātha imagery across nearly all Vijayanagara temples (Figs. 27–29) attests to the strong influence of this tantric *siddha* in South India, and to the yogi orders who invoked him.

3.2 The Glory of Pampā: Śaiva Ascetics and Yogis at Hampi

Regarding the identity of sculpted yogi figures at Hampi, as previously noted, Vijayanagara art historian Verghese remarks, "since they are represented in a stereotyped manner, it is almost impossible to group them according to sects and sub-sects" (Verghese 1995, 111). However, in a later publication, she does accord them the category of Śaiva ascetics (Dallapicolla and Verghese 1998, 81). Here Dallapicolla and Verghese are drawing on the *Pampāmāhātmya*, an important literary source that attests to the presence of Śaiva ascetics at Vijayanagara. The *Pampāmāhātmya*, the "Glory of Pampā" (also known as the *Hemakūṭakhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*), is a local *sthalapurāṇa* for the area of Hampi.[103] In the second chapter of the "Middle Portion" (*madhyamabhāga*) of the *Pampāmāhātmya*, there is a revealing account of Śaiva religious praxis at Hampi. Having descended from the celestial path, a group of seven sages arrive at Pampākṣetra (i.e., Hampi) and bathe in the holy Tuńgabhadrā river. After performing the appropriate religious rites, they enter the sacred area of Pampā through

[102] See the *Śūnyasaṃpādane Upadeśa* 21.

[103] For a general summary of the extant manuscripts, contents, and the challenges of dating the *Pampāmāhātmya*, see Das (2006) and Evensen (2007, 285–313).

its western gate, where, upon entering, they become awestruck at the sight of numerous Śaiva ascetics and yogis performing arduous penances and yoga:[104]

> [They saw] those standing on one foot (*ekapādasthita*), those with arms lifted (*ūrdhvabāhu*), those standing on the big toe, those in various types of postures (*āsana*), divine ones, those practicing various forms of yoga and [maintaining] ascetic observances [40], those drinking in rays of light, those drinking water, those eating roots, those fasting, those eating air, as well as those eating bulbs, roots, leaves, and fruits [41]; those with three matted locks, those with only one matted lock, those with five matted locks, those who are bound with various kinds of matted locks, those who are grey from covering themselves with ash [42], those bearing *rudrākṣa* [beads], pure ones, those seeking liberation, Śivayogins, Mahāmāheśvaras, Śaivas, as well as Pāśupatas, sages [43], Kalāmukhas, those [performing] *tapas* well, those shining bright, and Mahāvratas; those who have acquired Śaiva initiation, those who are *brahmacārin*s for life, and those maintaining ascetic observances [44], those with *liṅga*s in

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[104] *Pampāmāhātmya Madhyamabhāga* 2.40–49ab
(40ab *ekapādasthitān ūrdhvabāhūn aṅguṣṭhataḥ sthitān* |
40cd *nānāvidhāsanān divyān nānāyogavratakramān* ||
41ab *marīcipān jalāhārān mūlāhārān anāharān* | [em. *anāhatān*; spelling *metri causa*]
41cd *vāyvāhārāns tathā kandamūlapatraphalāśanān* ||
42ab *trijaṭān advayajaṭān jaṭābhiḥ pañcabhir yutān* |
42cd *nānāvidhajaṭābaddhān bhasmoddhūlanadhūsarān* ||
43ab *rudrākṣadhāriṇaś śuddhān mumukṣūn cchivayoginaḥ* |
43cd *mahāmāhēśvarān śaivāns tathā pāśupatān munīn* ||
44ab *kalāmukhān sutapasas sudīptāṅś ca mahāvratān* |
44cd *śivadīkṣānvitāṅś caitān naiṣṭhikān vratacāriṇaḥ* ||
45ab *karasthaliṅgān ārūḍhān avasthāpañcakojjhitān* |
45cd *ūrdhvaikvapādān yamino ghore tapasi tiṣṭhataḥ* ||
46ab *tīvrābhir vratacaryābhis tiṣṭhataś cāpy adhomukhān* |
46cd *dhyāyataś ca paraṃ tattvaṃ paṭhataś ca śivāgamān* ||
47ab *pañcākṣarīṃ prajapato rudrasūktaparāyaṇān* |
47cd *rudropaniṣadāsaktān munīn nagnavratān api* ||
48ab *tathā pañcāgnimadhyasthān kṣetrapītamukhān api* |
48cd *nirvikārapadaprepsūn ananyān ekacetasaḥ* ||
49ab *dṛṣṭvā vismayam ājagmur munayas te pade pade* |)

Here I am following the Śāstri (1933) Telugu script edition. I wish to thank Shubha Shantamurthy for kindly providing this edition and for her transcription of its verses from the Telugu. My translation of the *Pampāmāhātmya* has also been assisted by the English translation of the late Asim Krishna Das (aka Allan Shapiro). I am grateful to Anila Verghese and John Fritz for sharing with me Das' unpublished work.

> their hands, those having attained [yoga], those who are free from the five states [of consciousness], those with one foot raised, those who are restrained, those who remain in frightful *tapas* [45], those remaining with extreme ascetic observances, and even those [hanging] downward-facing (*adhomukha*); those meditating on the supreme reality, and those studying the Śivāgamas [46]; those whispering the five-syllabled mantra, those who are immersed in the *Rudrasūkta*, those who are zealously following the *Rudropaniṣad*, and even sages who maintain the observance of [remaining] naked [47]; as well as those remaining between five fires (*pañcāgni*), those ones who are yellow-faced from the soil, those seeking the unchanging abode, and those who are undistracted, whose minds are [fixed] on a single [object] [48]. Having seen [all of them], the sages were bewildered at every step [49ab].

The *Pampāmāhātmya* names several Śaiva sects and types of practitioners including: Śaivas (likely Siddhāntins), Mahāmāheśvaras, Pāśupatas, Kalāmukhas (i.e., Kālāmukhas), and Mahāvratas (i.e., the Kāpālikas).[105] Many of these Śaiva groups are well-attested in South India,[106] and indeed there is a strong record of their existence at Hampi (Verghese 1995, 16–33), as well as at Śrīśailam (Linrothe 2006, 128). As previously noted, the *rājagurus* to the founding Saṅgama *rāyas* were likely Kālāmukhas (Verghese 1995, 7; Clark 2006, 193–202), and although their influence waned, particularly with the rise of Śrīvaiṣṇavism during Tuḷuva rule of the late fifteenth century, the abundant presence of Bhairava sculpted imagery across the Vijayanagara temple structures attests to strong Kālāmukha activity within the capital (Verghese 1995, 22–23). As Verghese notes, many of these descriptions found in the *Pampāmāhātmya* of Śaiva ascetic praxis seem to

[105] The term *mahāvrata* ("great vow") is one of the key referents to the Kāpālikas in Indian literature in reference to the penance prescribed in Dharmaśāstras for the slaying of a Brahmin. To expiate one's sins for such an act, the perpetrator must carry the skull of the slain Brahmin for a period of twelve years. The Kāpālikas, emulating their tutelary Brahmin-slaying deity Bhairava, are often identified by the accoutrement of a human skull, either atop a wooden staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), or carried in hand, commonly used as a begging bowl or drinking vessel (Lorenzen 1972, 73–82). This sectarian marker is complicated further, however, as other orders of wandering Śaiva ascetics adopted the *mahāvrata,* including the Kālāmukhas, who are also known as Lākulas (Sanderson 2006; Törzsök 2012).

[106] In Tamil Nadu, the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosopher Yāmunācārya (*c.* 1050) described four Śaiva sects in his *Āgamaprāmāṇya,* which was closely followed by his disciple Rāmānuja (*c.* 1017–1137) in his *Śrībhāṣya* commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*: Pāśupatas, Kāpālas [i.e., Kāpālikas], and Kālāmukhas. The relation between and development of these Śaiva orders is highly complex and has generated varying interpretations among scholars (see, e.g., Lorenzen 1972; Dyzkowski 1988; Sanderson 2006). Sanderson has made the case that "the Kālamukhas were Pāśupatas who had adopted the Great Observance (*mahāvratam*) otherwise known as the Kapālavrata" (Sanderson 2006, 183).

accord with the sculptures of ascetics and yogis on the temple pillars at Hampi. When read alongside the extant sculptural record, this regional account in the *Pampāmāhātmya* seems to suggest a rich milieu of Śaiva ascetics and yogis intermingling at Vijayanagara.

Of the several Śaiva orders mentioned in this passage, however, the Nāthas are notably absent—though the text does seem to distinguish a particular group of Śivayogins. While the *Pampāmāhātmya,* like most *māhātmya* and *sthalapurāṇa* literature, which is based on multiple layers of redaction, is challenging to date,[107] the omission of Nāthas as a particular Śaiva order might be suggestive of an earlier date of composition; or it may point to the Nāthas' early lack of independence from other Śaiva movements of the medieval period in the Hampi and larger Vijayanagara regions.

Verghese acknowledges that many of the ascetics sculpted at Hampi were, indeed, likely Nāthas. Noting the abundance of Matsyendranātha images, she suggests that "the *nāthas* were probably to be found in the city" (Verghese 1995, 113). However, she cautions that in terms of the yogic sculptures, based on a lack of epigraphical and literary evidence, it is not possible "to specifically identify any of the yōgis depicted in the reliefs as nāthas" (Verghese 1995, 113). Yet, the visual and material evidence of sectarian markers such as the *siṅgī,* pointed cap, and other contemporaneous visual, material, and textual evidence of Nāthas in the region suggest otherwise. Moreover, the appearance of such iconic sectarian Nātha-markers in the early 1500s, along with the cultivation of a regionalized *navanātha* iconographic program, suggest the growing independence and development of a specific Nātha tradition or *sampradāya,* even if, as Mallinson contends, it was not yet unified in the institutional sense we find today.

The sculpted images at Hampi further nuance our understanding of the development of a south Indian Nātha tradition, as well as the techniques and traditions of Haṭhayoga—in this case, the development of non-seated yogic *āsana*s. Assessing the available historiographical materials at Vijayanagara, I believe we can identify many of these yogic figures generally as tantric *siddha*s, and be confident that at least some of these were depictions of Nātha yogis practicing *āsana.* That is not to suggest, however, that all of the yogis carved in complex non-seated *āsana*s were Nāthas, nor should they be taken as representing a singular sectarian order or group of yogis. Further critical study of the

[107] Anthony Evensen (2007, 285) notes the considerable range of opinions regarding the date of the *Pampāmāhātmya,* from as early as the ninth to tenth centuries to as late as the sixteenth century. Though Evensen provides compelling topographical evidence for an earlier date of composition, he cautiously concludes: "We can only say that the text was probably written before the construction of the Raghunātha temple on Mālyavanta hill which itself is undated but certainly in existence by 1559" (Evensen 2007, 310).

sculpted yogic imagery and *siddha* iconography at Hampi, Śrīśailam, Śṛṅgeri, and other related Vijayanagara sites remains to be done.

Conclusions

Reading Āsana in Text and Stone

The emergence of Sanskrit Haṭhayoga texts as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries of the common era reveal the codification of soteriological yogic traditions that emphasized the cultivation of the body and bodily techniques. Yet, the early corpus of Haṭha texts continued to list relatively few *āsanas*, and mostly seated ones. The early yoga texts ascribed to Gorakṣanātha, for example, suggest only a few seated *āsana*s—and indeed, there is little *textual* evidence suggesting that Nāthas practiced complex non-seated *āsana*s before the modern period.[108] And yet, at Hampi, the visual and material evidence suggests otherwise.[109]

Following the composition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā,* as Birch has shown, beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a proliferation of *āsana* is documented in a number of yoga texts and anthologies featuring a wide range of *āsana* types: seated, standing, inversions, and balancing postures, as well as the use of props (Birch 2013; forthcoming 2018a). The sculpted images at Hampi accord with this chronology of the development of *āsana*, and yet also appear to anticipate non-seated *āsana*s, for which we have no textual record before the eighteenth century or later, for example: *virañcyāsana, ūrdhvadhanurāsana,* and other unnamed "pretzel shaped" arm-balancing postures.

The visual evidence of non-seated postures at Hampi does not simply affirm the prescriptions of *āsana* in the medieval and early modern yoga texts, however, but also provides variance. In particular, the combination of complex non-seated *āsana*s with hand *mudrā*s, *akṣamālā*s, *yogadaṇḍa*s, and perhaps inversions practiced in a cremation ground—suggests a more distinctly tantric and *siddha* yogic environment than some of

[108] While today, select Nātha yogis can be found performing advanced sequences of non-seated *āsana*s at major public gatherings like the Kumbh Mela, as Mallinson remarks, this is perhaps an example of Agehananda Bharati's "pizza-effect" (1970), in which contemporary Nātha yogis are being influenced by the transnational and cross-cultural feedback loop of yogic norms and practices of 21st-century modern postural yoga (see Bridgeman 2014, 18:48–20:40).

[109] This is also evident in the later mural paintings of Nātha yogis on the walls of the Mahāmandir temple, Jodhpur, commissioned in 1805 under Mān Singh, the Mahārāja of Marwar. See Bühnemann (2007, 103).

the more sanitized Haṭhayoga texts allowed for, which despite their tantric influences, were often aimed at a more general and transsectarian audience.

How do we account for this surge in yogic *āsana*s displayed in both the visual and textual record in the sixteenth century and following? Birch has proposed that the growing popularity of Haṭhayoga may have lead to "greater innovation, experimentation and the assimilation of practices from elsewhere" (Birch forthcoming 2018a, 129). Adding to Birch's observations, I wish to suggest two further reasons that may account for this "proliferation of *āsana*." In the first section of this article, I argued that the significant shift from seated to non-seated *āsana*s may have resulted in part from a notable shift in asectico-yogic theory and praxis. By the end of the first millennium, as tantric and Haṭhayogic traditions sought to more actively stimulate vital energies (*prāṇa*, *kuṇḍalinīśakti*) within the body, new dynamic actions (*karaṇa*), seals (*mudrā*), and indeed yogic postures (*āsana*) are described in the texts. In this way, as *āsana*s were no longer adopted simply as meditative "seats" as in Pātañjalayoga, a new psychophysical context and soteriological function for *āsana* in Haṭhayoga may have opened new avenues for the anatomical potential of the body in yogic praxis, giving rise to new *āsana*s. Second, although it has been proposed that the techniques of early Haṭhayoga were readapted from older ascetic traditions (Mallinson 2011), the Hampi record suggests that the readaptation of ascetic techniques for Haṭhayoga was also occurring in the early sixteenth century. This may partially explain the proliferation of *āsana* seen in yoga texts composed after this time. The broader historical context supports this proposal because it is evident that *tapas* and yogic traditions were intermingling in South India, and that many of these non-seated *āsana*s might have been inspired by these earlier ascetic postural traditions.

As I have aimed to demonstrate in this study, reading the texts alongside the extant archeological, epigraphical, and visual record allows for a more thorough understanding of yoga's past to emerge. The visual and material evidence at Hampi is a reminder that there was always more operating on the ground than the written texts lead on, possibly from yoga traditions that did not commit exhaustive accounts of their techniques to writing. The emergence of written Haṭhayoga treatises offers key historical moments of synthesis and reform, through which authors aimed at systematization and prescription, rather than full documentation and description. A list of fifteen *āsana*s in the fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā*, for example, should not be taken as the sum total of known yogic postures at the time, but rather as an exemplary selection of techniques recommended by Svātmārāma. Or, as Śrīnivāsa cautions in the

Haṭharatnāvalī, "all of the [*āsana*s] are not described for fear it would inflate the size of the text."[110]

Likewise, the sculpted reliefs at Hampi point to a world beyond the images themselves, offering a particular historical window onto what would have been deemed recognizably yogic by artisans during the Vijayanagara period. The fact that they were codified in stone, in this particular region of South India, and at this particular historical moment, suggests that such *āsana*s would have likely been known and practiced in northern Karnataka for some years prior to their artistic rendering at Hampi in the early 1500s.

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[112] I am grateful to Jason Birch for sharing this forthcoming edition.

[113] Thanks to Shubha Shantamurthy for kindly providing this edition and for her assistance transcribing its verses from the Telugu.

[114] I wish to express my gratitude to Anila Verghese and John Fritz for kindly providing me with a copy of Asim Krishna Das' unpublished English translation.

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