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Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India

CYNTHIA TALBOT

THE COMMON MODEL OF THE Hindu temple of South India has stressed its significance as the main integrative factor binding the disparate elements of precolonial society into one social fabric. As a focal point for economic redistribution, the South Indian temple was the conduit through which exchange occurred: material goods were transformed into the symbols of prestige and influence known as temple honors (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1976). The legitimacy of the medieval South Indian ruler rested on his role as the donor *par excellence*, and his sovereignty had a ritual basis that was far stronger than his more mundane methods of control (Stein 1980: 45–46). The foremost reason South Indian temples were able to perform this integrative function was their wide appeal in the society—their ability to incorporate members of different communities into one community of worship. By providing employment to artisans, peasants and shepherds and by lending money to agriculturalists in their vicinities, South Indian temples also redistributed the property of the wealthy to other segments of society (Spencer 1968:292). The widespread approval accorded to patrons of temples meant that, during the later Vijayanagara age, religious gifting could be used as a strategy by outside warriors for creating allegiances on the local level in Tamil Nadu (Appadurai 1977:55–59).

Scholarly interest has focused on those temples about which the most was known, large temple complexes in royal centers or sacred sites. In the process, the great range in temple size has been overlooked, as well as the considerable diversity in types of terrain and socioeconomic patterns. Between the famous temple complexes in the fertile delta and the inconsequential small temples of the dry peninsular

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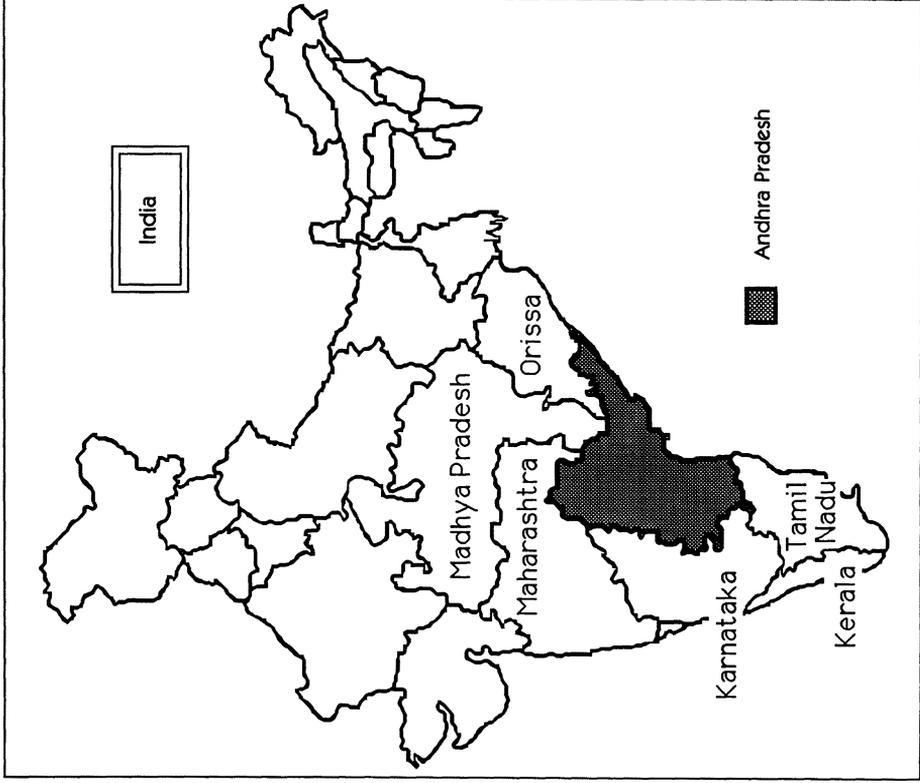
interior existed a world of differences, and some of these differences will be my subject. Of particular importance is the variable character of the gift item and the social background of the typical donor, both of which differed according to the size and location of the endowed institution. Such systematic variations in endowment patterns clearly indicate that a multiplicity of strategies motivated religious gifting in medieval South India. From a perspective gained through examination of records of temple patronage over a large region, I will argue that we need to recognize that this one institution may have performed varying roles, serving primarily as a means of incorporating a wide range of communities in some cases, while functioning elsewhere as a method of vertically incorporating local elites.

For my investigation, I have chosen both an area and a time period that have rarely been examined—the state of Andhra Pradesh, located on the southeastern coast of the peninsula, between the years A.D. 1175–1325 (map 1). This state has been relatively neglected as an area of scholarly research, no doubt because it offers less data to the historian of medieval South India than do the neighboring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Falling between the imperial heyday of the Cālukya and Cōḷa dynasties on the one hand, and the grandeur of the Vijayanagara empire on the other, the one-hundred-fifty-year period under consideration also has not received much attention. For Andhra Pradesh, however, this was an era when an indigenous dynasty—the Kākatīyas of Warangal—established hegemony over much of the modern state's territory and contributed greatly toward the formation of a regional Telugu identity and culture. Beyond the intrinsic interest of this period for those concerned with the history of Andhra, this investigation offers the additional possibility of illuminating the sources of the Vijayanagara polity, founded by warriors from the Andhra and Karnataka regions, that gradually extended over much of South India.

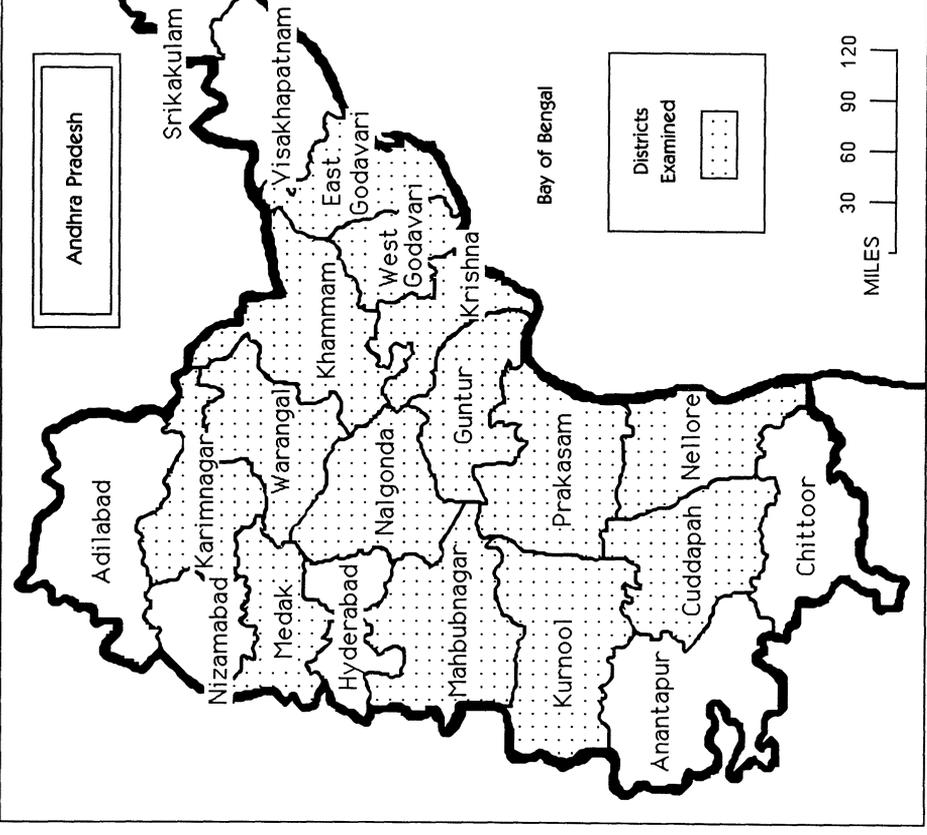
The sources for this study are 895 inscribed records of endowments made to temples, all in reasonably undamaged condition, that document gifts to the sites at which they are now located. These 895 records have been culled from a larger collection of almost one thousand inscriptions that comprise an estimated 90 to 95 percent of all extant donative records from the period and area under consideration. Much of the territory of modern Andhra Pradesh is encompassed in this body of data, drawn from fourteen out of the total of nineteen districts (map 2). The area of study is largely equivalent to the geographical expanse within which Telugu inscriptions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries can be recovered. Only two districts where Telugu records from this period occur—Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam—have been omitted because they belong to the political and cultural sphere of the Kalinga territory that crossed over into southern Orissa. In essence, then, the region examined here represents the greatest limit of eventual Kākatīya hegemony in Andhra.

Distribution of Temple Records

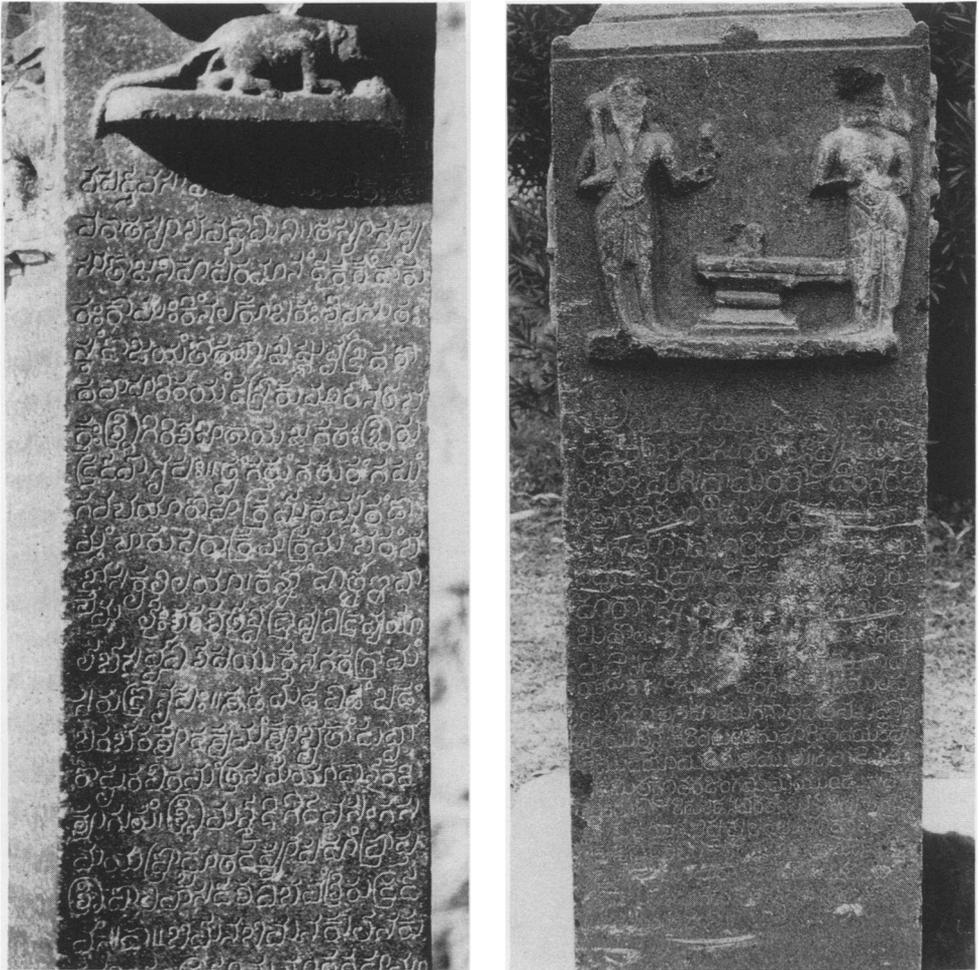
The vast majority of inscriptions from thirteenth-century Andhra are recorded on stone and found within the precincts of a temple complex, either on the walls of a main shrine or on stone slabs and pillars on the temple grounds (illustrations 1 and 2). Ranging in length from seven to 250 lines, these records document a wide variety of religious endowments made to deities and temple employees, sometimes in simple Telugu prose written by a member of the temple staff, other times in



Map 1. Location of Andhra Pradesh



Map 2. Districts of Andhra Pradesh Surveyed



Ill. 1 (left). Close-up of the Hanamkonda inscription of Rudradeva, dated A.D. 1163, located at the Thousand Pillar Temple (Hanumakonda, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh). The text has been translated in HAS 13. Photograph courtesy of Phillip B. Wagoner.

Ill. 2 (right). Uparpalli inscription of A.D. 1236, located at Uparpalli (also known as Godisala, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh). The text of the record has been translated in *Inscriptions at Palampet and Uparpalli* (Hyderabad 1919). Photograph courtesy of Phillip B. Wagoner.

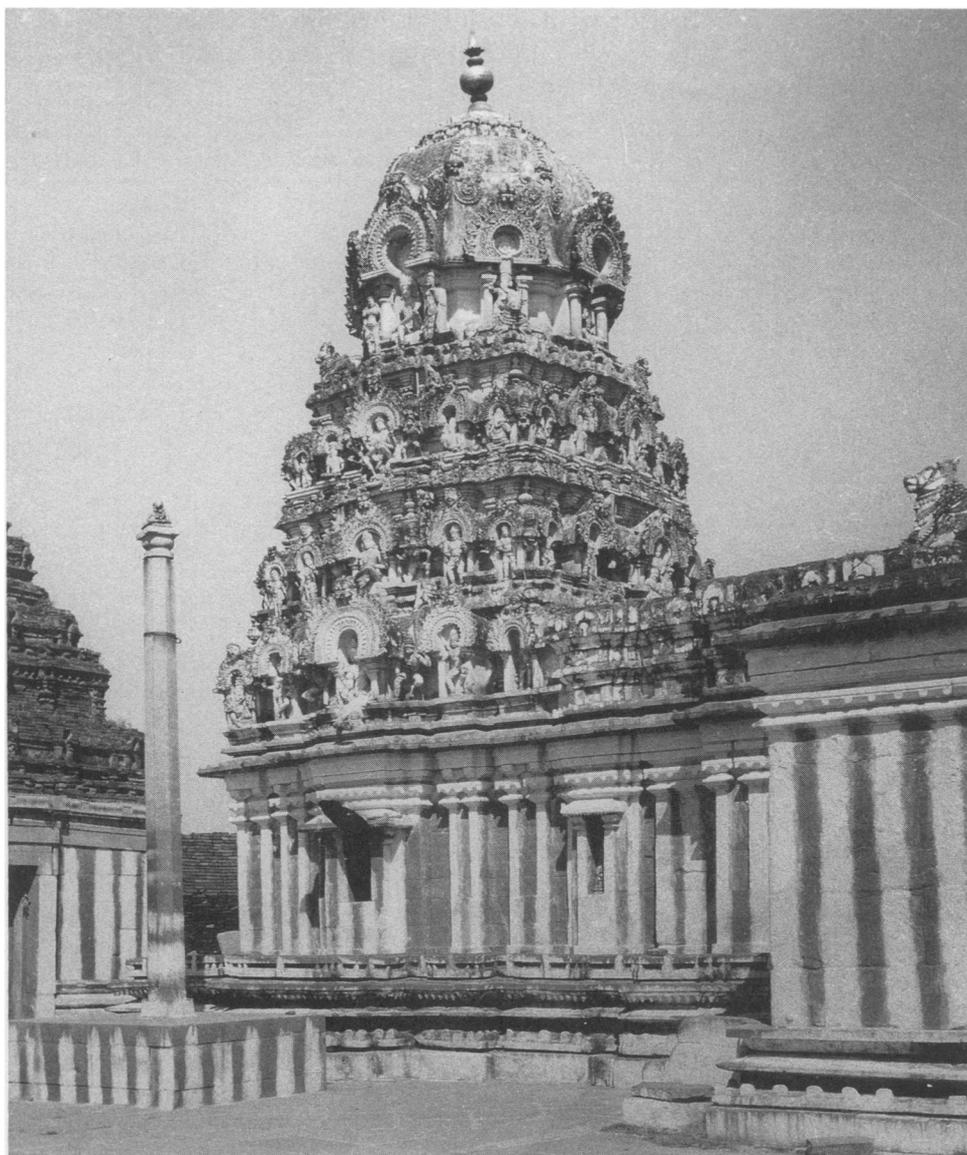
the ornate and highly convoluted Sanskrit favored by medieval court poets. Only those inscriptions that have survived the vagaries of weather and changes in political control over the past seven centuries are included in this study, so we cannot assume that the current distribution of inscriptions is an exact reflection of the conditions in the thirteenth century. Nor do all temples that appear, on stylistic grounds, to have been constructed during this period possess inscriptions (Wagoner 1986: 160–70). Since no survey of all extant temple sites in Andhra has been made or is likely to be made, we have no recourse but to rely on epigraphical sources for a large-scale investigation of medieval temples and the religious gifts made to them.

Table 1. Endowments and Temple Sites by District, Andhra Pradesh 1175–1325

District	Records	Sites	Average	District	Records	Sites	Average
Cuddapah	17	13	1.3	Mahbubnagar	34	16	2.1
East Godavari	71	8	8.9	Medak	6	5	1.2
Guntur	221	108	2.0	Nalgonda	60	26	2.3
Karimnagar	13	7	1.9	Nellore	33	17	1.9
Khammam	11	11	1.0	Prakasam	146	46	3.2
Krishna	140	29	4.8	Warangal	34	26	1.3
Kurnool	7	5	1.4	West Godavari	102	18	5.7
Total					895	335	2.7

A striking feature of the corpus of temple inscriptions from thirteenth-century Andhra is its uneven geographic distribution: the bulk of the records are situated along the coastal strip of the state. Three-fourths of the inscriptions originate from only five of the fourteen districts covered in this survey: Guntur, Prakasam, Krishna, West Godavari, and East Godavari (table 1). Guntur alone possesses 221 donative records from this period, 25 percent of the entire corpus. The districts located in the interior portions of the state yield far fewer inscriptions, as few as six in the case of the northwestern district of Medak. The main reason for the differential distribution of inscriptions between the coastal and inland regions of Andhra is the existence of several important coastal temple complexes that were successful in attracting disproportionately large numbers of endowments. A high percentage of records—29 percent—come from just nine sites within the state. Since there are 335 sites possessing undamaged inscriptions from the years A.D. 1175–1325, this means that slightly less than 3 percent of the sites accounts for over one-quarter of all the records. Conversely, in 178 temples, only one endowment was recorded during this period; in other words, 53 percent of the sites yields only 20 percent of the inscriptions. The remaining sites constitute 44 percent of all temples and account for 51 percent of all the records in the corpus.

The three most popular temple complexes were located at Tripurantakam (Prakasam district) with sixty-eight inscriptions (illustration 3), Daksharama (East Godavari district) with fifty inscriptions and Vijayavada (Krishna district) with forty-nine inscriptions. The remaining six sites with the greatest number of donations possess from nine to thirty records (table 2). Only Srikakulam houses a Vaiṣṇava deity; this was a period of Śaiva dominance, with two-thirds of all temples sharing that allegiance (Talbot 1988:99–102). The nine most endowed temples are concentrated in five contiguous coastal districts—from East Godavari district north of the Godavari River down through Prakasam district south of the Krishna River—and only Tripurantakam lies outside the deltaic belt formed by the Krishna and Godavari rivers (map 3). This fertile region of deltaic, alluvial soil, regarded by geographers as the core or nuclear area of Andhra Pradesh, had long been the center of political power in the state (Subba Rao 1948:173). Much of the lowland territory of the state is included within the deltaic zone, since the interior portions of the state have higher elevations (map 4). Red sandy soils which developed *in situ* from the underlying peninsular bedrock are prevalent throughout the interior; these soils are highly permeable and therefore of limited fertility without a regular and copious



Ill. 3. View of the main shrine at the Tripurāntaka-mahādēva temple (Tripurantakam, Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh). This site is the foremost of the major temples discussed herein, with sixty-eight recorded endowments from the period 1175 to 1325. Photograph courtesy of AIIS.

supply of water. The delta area continues to house the bulk of Andhra's people and, with the exception of Tripurantakam, all these temples are currently situated in well-populated localities.

A second trait that characterizes the most popular temples of the thirteenth century (henceforth called major temples), in addition to their common location in coastal Andhra, is their relative antiquity. Three of the temples—those at Daksharama, Palakol, and Amaravati—were built in the late Eastern Cālukyan period (tenth and eleventh centuries) on sites already considered hallowed (Srinivasachari 1971:217; Meister and Dhaky 1986:165, 174); Amaravati was an important Buddhist site in

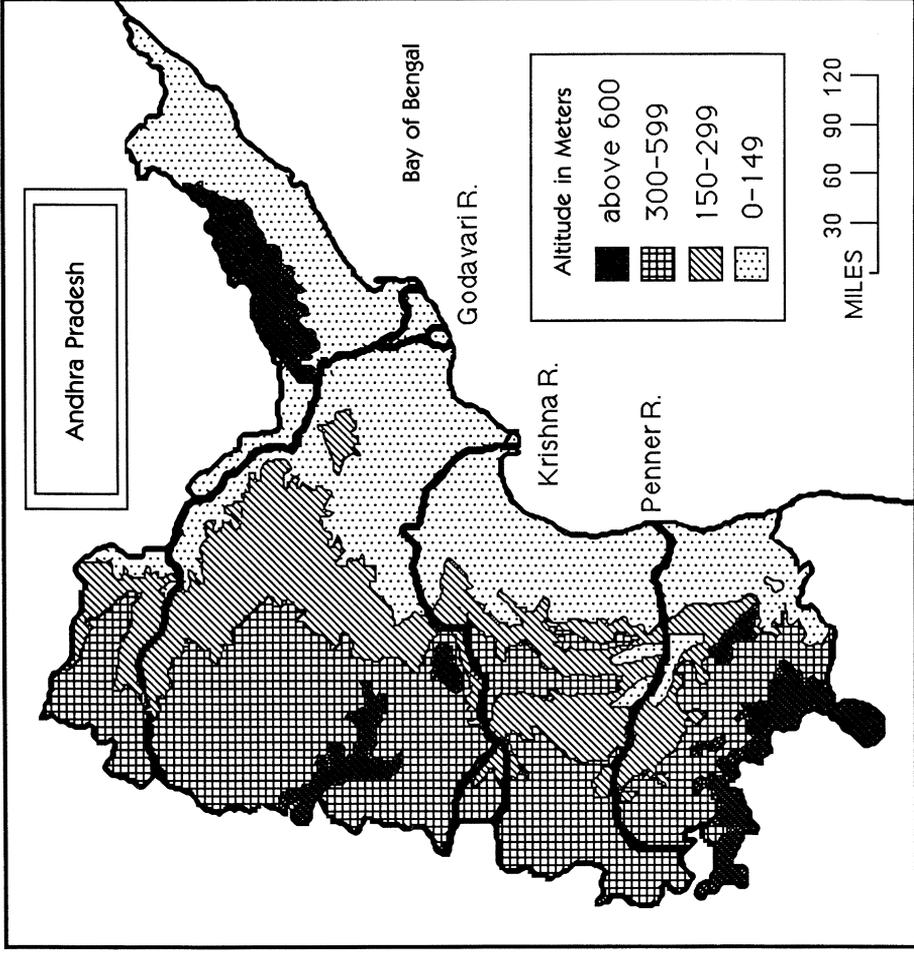
Table 2. Well-endowed Temples of Andhra Pradesh, 1175–1325

Temple Deity	Site	Records	District
Tripurāntaka (Śiva)	Tripurantakam	68	Prakasam
Bhīmēśvara (Śiva)	Daksharama	50	East Godavari
Mallēśvara (Śiva)	Vijayavada	49	Krishna
Kṣīrarāmēśvara (Śiva)	Palakol	30	West Godavari
Rāmēśvara (Śiva)	Velpuru	14	Guntur
Amarēśvara (Śiva)	Amaravati	16	Guntur
Vallabha (Viṣṇu)	Srikakulam	12	Krishna
Sōmēśvara (Śiva)	Eluru	11	West Godavari
Aruṇēśvara (Śiva)	Tadikalpudi	9	West Godavari
Total		259	

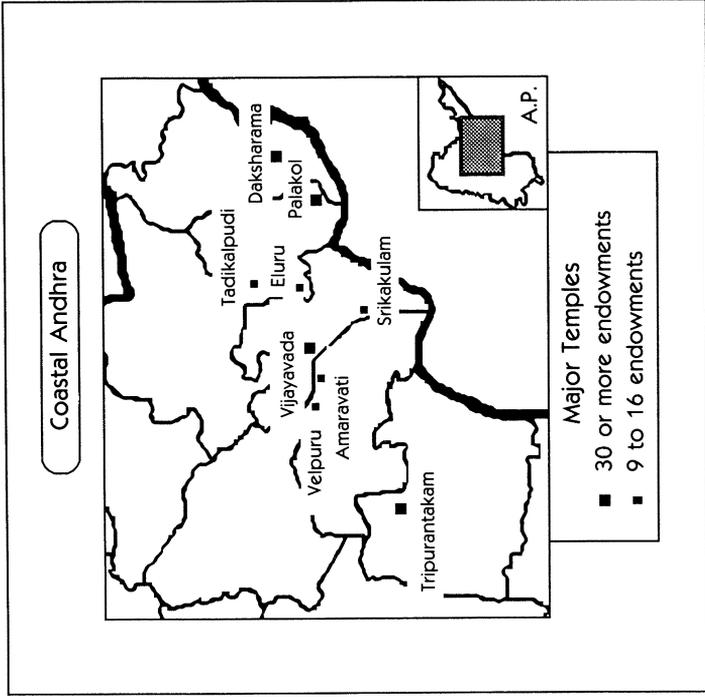
the third and fourth centuries, and some scholars believe that Daksharama and Palakol were also originally Buddhist centers (Ramesan 1962:88, 114–15). The Mallēśvara temple at Vijayavada has similarly been attributed to the late Eastern Cālukyan period on architectural grounds, but rock-cut shrines were constructed at Vijayavada as early as the late sixth and early seventh centuries (Ramachandra Murthy 1983:307; Meister and Dhaky 1986:165). The other five temples have received less scholarly scrutiny; although these sites were certainly used for worship prior to the thirteenth century, the dates of their origin are not known.

The presence of large numbers of inscriptions at these major temples today is not absolute proof of their popularity at the time because historical accidents have destroyed similar evidence at other sites. However, the inclusion of several major temples in contemporary classifications of Andhra sacred centers, used by pilgrims to determine which sites to visit, is a sign of the high esteem in which they were held. The most famous of the classificatory schemes, dating back to at least the eleventh century, was that of the five *ārāmas* (Sundaram 1968:46). According to legend, these were the places where pieces of the demon Taraka's skull descended to earth after he had been killed by Śiva's son, Kumārasvāmi. Temples were erected to mark the locations sanctified by their contact with the body of Taraka, who was revered as a great devotee of the god Śiva (Rao 1973:221). The five *ārāmas* include Daksharama (*Dakṣārāma*), Amaravati (also called *Amarārāma*) and Palakol (or *Kṣīrarāma*), three of the major Andhra temples of the thirteenth century.

Only holy sites in northern coastal Andhra were encompassed in the *ārāma* scheme; inland Andhra had its own classification of Śaiva pilgrimage spots centered around Srisailam in the Kurnool district, a site of pan-Indian fame. Pilgrims headed for the Srisailam hill were expected to first circumambulate the area surrounding it, stopping at each of Srisailam's four satellite temples or "gateways" (*dvāra*) (Rama Rao 1966:41). Tripurantakam derived much of its sacred character from its identity as the eastern gateway of Srisailam and is the temple with the largest number of extant records from the thirteenth century; no records prior to the year 1312 exist at Srisailam. The case of Srisailam is a good example of how current epigraphical distributions may be distorted: the Vīraśaiva takeover of the site in the early fourteenth century appears to have been accompanied by the deliberate destruction of existing inscriptions in order to efface any record of the intended purposes of earlier endowments



Map 4. Relief Map of Andhra Pradesh



Map 3. Location of Well-endowed Temples



III. 4. Inscribed column at the east entryway of the Bhīmēśvara temple at Daksharama (East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh). Photograph courtesy of AIIS.

(Parabrahma Sastry 1982:17). Had this not occurred, Srisailam most probably would yield the greatest number of inscriptions from the period.

The great religious prestige of the major temples, acquired over the centuries and justified through association of their deities with pan-Indic mythology, granted them a special status and the ability to attract religious gifts: major temples received almost one-third of the gifts recorded in the area of Andhra that was surveyed. In their own vicinities, the dominance of these coastal institutions was even more marked. Endowments to major temples comprise from 40 to 70 percent of all extant donative

Table 3. Minor Temples and Temple Foundations by District, Andhra Pradesh, 1175–1325

District	All Records	Minor ^a Records	% Minor	Founding ^b Records	% Founding	Founding Minor	% Minor Founding
East Godavari	71	2	3%	1	1%	0	0%
West Godavari	102	3	3%	2	2%	1	33%
Krishna	140	13	9%	6	4%	3	23%
Prakasam	146	24	16%	15	10%	9	38%
Mahbubnagar	34	6	18%	8	24%	1	17%
Nalgonda	60	11	18%	13	22%	3	27%
Nellore	33	8	24%	6	26%	4	50%
Guntur	221	63	29%	24	11%	11	17%
Karimnagar	13	5	38%	5	38%	3	60%
Kurnool	7	3	43%	2	29%	1	33%
Cuddapah	17	9	53%	5	29%	2	22%
Warangal	34	20	59%	16	47%	13	65%
Khammam	11	7	64%	3	27%	3	43%
Medak	6	4	67%	2	33%	2	50%
Total	895	178	20%	108	12%	56	31%

^aMinor refers to temples with only one recorded religious gift from the period.

^bFounding refers to the establishment of a new temple.

inscriptions in the coastal districts north of the Krishna River (East Godavari, West Godavari, and Krishna); the major temples there acted as focal points in a concentrated network of religious patronage. Few other sites possessing inscriptions from this period exist north of the Krishna River, so magnetic was the attraction of the major temples. East Godavari district, for example, has only seven temples with documented donations from the years 1175 to 1325 besides the Bhīmēśvara temple at Daksharama (illustration 4). These seven temples are located in just five different villages, all outside the subdistrict or taluk where Daksharama is situated. Because of the intensity of donative activity at their major temples, the northern coastal districts have high ratios of endowments per site (expressed as the figure “average” in table 1), ranging from almost nine in East Godavari district to almost five in Krishna district. The corollary to the prominence of major temples in these three districts is the unimportance of the minor temples, the institutions with only one recorded endowment. Less than 10 percent of all endowments in the coastal districts north of the Krishna River were made at such places (table 3), although, on a statewide basis, minor temples were the recipients of 20 percent of all gifts.

The southern coastal districts of Guntur and Prakasam, on the other hand, owe their large number of records not only to the presence of major temples, but also to the many inscription-bearing sites within their borders—108 temples in Guntur and forty-six temples in Prakasam. As a consequence of the conjunction of major temples with many other lesser sites, Guntur and Prakasam head the list of districts in occurrences of inscriptions. Yet, these records are not concentrated as in the northern coastal districts, for the average number of inscriptions found per site is quite low (between two and three per temple, see table 1). The distributional pattern of inscriptions in Guntur and Prakasam Districts is far more diffuse than in the region north of the Krishna River and bears a close resemblance to the situation in

the interior districts of the state, where the ratio of inscriptions per site is consistently less than three.

The inland districts yield few inscriptions overall, since none possesses more than twenty-six sites where inscriptions from the period are to be found, nor do they boast any major temples (tables 1 and 2).¹ Only 214 records, or 24 percent of the corpus, are located in the hinterland (including Nellore district), a negligible number considering the vastness of the territory. Because the inland districts received so little in the way of religious patronage, the actual number of minor temples found in them is quite small. But minor temples were significant institutions for most of the inland area because they were the recipients of a large share of all the religious gifts given there (table 3). Gifts to minor temples accounted for roughly 40 to 70 percent of all donations in the districts on the extreme northern and western peripheries, a proportion double to triple the state-wide figure and similar to the share that the major temples possessed in the northern coastal districts. Donors in the southern coastal districts (including Nellore) and the central inland districts (Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar) made donations to minor temples at about the state norm of 20 percent; here, again, we find that Guntur and Prakasam districts straddle the middle between the two extremes, as they did in intensity of gift-giving activity (i.e., average number of records per site).

The geographical siting of major temples, the ratio of donations to numbers of sites, and the relative importance of minor temples are all traits that differentiate regions of Andhra. In brief, what we can observe from the statewide distribution of inscriptions is the existence of two differing patterns of giving: a tightly focused network in the northern coastal area centered on a few heavily patronized temple complexes and a diffuse network of many small, local temples in the interior region. Guntur and Prakasam districts represent an intermediate zone where the two patterns of religious endowment overlapped and major temples are found beside minor temples. Imbalances in epigraphical occurrences between the coastal and inland regions of Andhra reflect their divergent geo-political histories, for the deltaic region possesses more cultivable land, was settled long before the interior, and had traditionally been the politically dominant territory. Yet, the most dynamic area of Andhra in the thirteenth century was the hinterland. It was the region experiencing the greatest degree of growth—in political power, in wealth, and in religious activity—and this fact had important consequences in determining the nature of the hinterland's socioreligious culture. As we will see, motivations for religious gifting in the hinterland had much to do with the unsettled and changing character of the territory.

The expansion of the interior's institutional base was related to its growing political and economic importance. The desirable coastal territories of Andhra, while producing their own royal dynasties (such as the Eastern Cāḷukyas of Vengi, who flourished from the early seventh to the late eleventh centuries), had long been a bone of contention between empires based elsewhere. As incessant warfare weakened the once mighty imperial Cāḷukyas of Kalyani in the west and the imperial Cōḷas of Tamil Nadu in the south, the minor tributary kings and chiefs of Andhra began to act in an increasingly independent manner. At about the same time that the coastal Velanāṭi Cōḷas broke away from the imperial Cōḷas, the Kākatīya family

¹Unless otherwise specified, I include Nellore District in the broad category of inland, hinterland, or interior districts. Although situated on the southern coastline of Andhra, it is more akin to the inland region culturally and in terms of past endowment patterns. My usage follows the current practice in Andhra, where Nellore District is usually classified as part of Rayalaseema, the southern portion of the state, rather than as part of Coastal Andhra.

of Warangal, formerly subordinates of the Karnataka emperors, asserted their own sovereignty over Telangana, the northern half of Andhra's interior region (A.D. 1163). For the first time in its history, the political center of Andhra shifted away from the fertile deltaic lands when the Kākatiya dynasty of Warangal became the hegemonic power in the state during the thirteenth century. The Kākatiyas remained in control of much of the territory comprising modern Andhra until 1323, at which time their capital was captured and the last ruler taken prisoner by an army of the Delhi Sultanate (Parabrahma Sastry 1978:88–97, 135–40).

An underlying factor in the political rise of inland Andhra (and particularly of Telangana in the north) was the development of improved methods of irrigation and the consequent increases in agricultural productivity. Irrigation was limited in this dry territory prior to the second half of the twelfth century, but numerous tanks, many of which are still in existence, were built during the next 150 years. These so-called tanks were reservoirs created by erecting embankments across the valleys of small seasonal streams. Traditional accounts also credit the Kākatiya dynasty with the clearing of large forested areas and the establishment of many new villages (Venkataramanayya and Somasekhara Sarma 1960:681). A further indication of economic expansion comes from the evidence of coins: a spate of currency was issued in Andhra during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the primary hoards have been discovered in the interior, indicating that the volume of inland trade rose sharply at this time (Chattopadhyaya 1976:245–50).

Accompanying this growth of political and economic power was the territorial expansion of inscriptions documenting religious endowments; such records occurred in only thirty taluks (subdistricts) between 1175 and 1199, but spread to forty-nine taluks during the years 1300 to 1325, including several on the southern and western borders of the modern state. In many localities where donative inscriptions were scarcely to be found formerly, the thirteenth century witnessed a sharply accelerated rate in their creation. This is certainly true of Karimnagar, Warangal, and Cuddapah districts, for which complete inscriptional surveys have been published (IAP-C, IAP-K, and IAP-W). Their analysis reveals that most taluks in these inland districts experienced increasing rates of inscriptional production during the thirteenth century. Hence, during this period, donative activity was becoming more widespread and spreading from the eastern and central portion of the state to the peripheries as inhabitants of the interior acquired sufficient resources (and motivation) to engage in gift-giving to religious institutions.²

Another measure of the dynamism of the religious culture of inland Andhra is the high rate of new temple construction; the proportion of inscriptions recording the founding of a temple is significantly larger in the hinterland than in the coastal districts, although the absolute numbers of new establishments are not great in comparison with the coast (table 3). Between 20 and 50 percent of the records from the interior districts document the setting up of an institution, a charitable act of great magnitude that involved not just the construction of buildings but ordinarily also the granting of lands for the temple's subsistence. In a dramatic contrast, only 1 percent of all the donative inscriptions in East Godavari records a temple foundation. A considerable segment of the resources made over to religious institutions in the interior was thus dedicated to the creation of temples where none had previously existed, while donors of the coastal region continued to direct their monies to older institutions.

²Further discussion of this issue can be found in Talbot 1988:60–68. The inscriptions utilized in this paper are listed in the appendixes of that work.

Patronage of Major and Minor Temples

I have argued that the major and minor temples characterized two different areas of Andhra. The representative religious institution of the northern coastal districts was the major temple—a large complex, dating back at least to the Eastern Cālukyan period, that was renowned as a pilgrimage site. Conversely, the typical establishment of the interior, and especially of the peripheries of the state, was the minor temple—a local institution of recent origin that attracted little patronage. Many of the minor temples were founded between 1175 and 1325: 31 percent of the 178 minor temple records are foundation inscriptions, whereas the overall average of inscriptions documenting the establishment of temples is only 12 percent (see last two columns of table 3). More than varying locations, age, and patronage levels differentiated these two institutional types, however, for the social background of their donors and the kinds of gift objects they received also show a marked divergence. The fact that entire clusters of opposing traits define the major versus the minor temple confirms the belief that they represent two separate donative patterns or styles and justifies the distinctions drawn between coastal and interior Andhra.

Before analyzing the temple patrons, an explanation of my method of classifying them is required, since any attempt at a social typology of the donors is severely limited by the sparsity of information in the inscriptions. For the most part, we are either provided only with genealogical details going back one generation (i.e., the names of the donor's father and mother) or with no genealogical information whatsoever. This leaves us with the donor's name as the only indicator of social status and ranking in a good number of instances. In addition to the personal names that every individual possessed, male names in thirteenth-century Andhra could contain several extra components. Two such titles preceded the personal name: the so-called "administrative" title—indicating a man's official positions and/or rank—and the "house-name" (*īṃṭi pēru*), derived from his ancestral village or an illustrious ancestor (Thurston 1975, 3:314, Somasekhara Sarma 1948:260). Neither the house-name nor the personal name are helpful in establishing the social identity of the donor, and administrative titles were held by only a small number of persons. A good number of men also possessed an honorific title or status marker which followed their personal name. Some of the status titles of the inscriptional records are understood as caste names in modern Andhra. But the status title of the thirteenth century was not automatically passed on from father to son, as there are a number of instances where the father possessed a title and a son did not (e.g., SII 10.307 and 422, SII 5.177, NDI Kavali 26, HAS 19 Nalgonda 3). We also find the reverse situation, a donor who possessed a status title but whose father was without one (e.g., SII 4.1019, SII 10.293, and NDI Kavali 23). We can view this title as an honorific associated with different modes of livelihood and assumed only by those of sufficient eminence; thus, we find examples of sons who bear different status titles than their fathers (e.g., SII 4.756, 1178, 1370; SII 10.291, 300, 331, 483). Because the status title was widely used, I have chosen to classify male donors on this basis.

The most common status titles are *nāyaka* or warrior leader (14 percent of all records issued by individuals), *rāju* meaning a nobleman or his minister (13 percent), *reddi* or peasant landowner (9 percent), *mahārāja* or king (7 percent), *setṭi* or merchant (6 percent) and *bōya* or herder (5 percent).³ Overall, the donors of 53

³By far the most common gift recorded in the corpus is the gift from one person, which comprised a total of 86 percent of all donative records in the corpus (771 endowments). At other times, several individuals would join together to make one gift. Seventy-four such

Table 4. Patronage of Major Andhra Temples, 1175–1325
Individual Donor Types and Locations

Temple	Number of Endowments							All
	Bōya	Woman	Seṭṭi	Rāju	Reḍḍi	Rāja ^a	Nāyaka	
Tripurantakam	1	7	2	6	4	11	3	63
Daksharama	—	11	3	1	3	1	5	44
Vijayavada	12	—	3	6	7	—	4	45
Palakol	—	7	4	1	3	—	5	30
Velpuru	2	3	2	3	—	—	1	14
Srikakulam	4	1	—	2	2	—	2	12
Amaravati	—	12	—	2	—	1	—	16
Eluru	—	3	3	2	—	—	—	11
Tadikalpudi	1	—	2	—	—	—	1	9
Total	20	44	19	23	19	13	21	244
% records ^b	54%	52%	41%	35%	26%	25%	20%	32%

^aRāja is an abbreviation for the title mahārāja.

^bShows the percentage of each donor type's donations to major temples.

percent of all individual gifts held one of these six titles. Another twelve status titles are possessed by the male donors of 13 percent of the gifts made by individuals—among them ministerial and clerical names such as *pregaḍa*, *mantri* and *amātya*; military titles such as *leṃka* and *camūpati*; and religious titles such as *bhakta*, *dāsa*, and *ācārya*. Women donors are responsible for a further 12 percent of all individual donations. The remaining 22 percent of the donations were made by men without status titles. Partially as a consequence of the sheer volume of major temple endowments—32 percent of all individual donations—the social groups represented among their patrons are highly diverse. Table 4 shows the number of gifts made to these institutions by women and members of the six main categories of male donors.

Because the size of these social groupings varies so, mere numbers tell us little about the degree to which these donors were preferentially attracted to the major temple as the recipient of their gifts. At the bottom of table 4 are figures displaying the proportion of gifts made to major temples by each donor type, a better indication of their inclinations. These figures reveal that the donations of the various peoples were not equally apportioned; that is, each social group did not make one-third of their gifts to these institutions. Especially striking is the success of the major temple in drawing patronage from three groups—*bōyas*, *seṭṭis*, and women. Instead of 32 percent of their gifts, the major temples account for 54 percent of all *bōya* donations, 52 percent of all donations by women and 41 percent of all *seṭṭi* donations. In the last few centuries, the name *bōya* has been principally applied to hunting communities, members of which often served as mercenary soldiers for the armies of petty kings (Thurston 1975, 1:180–85; Ramachandra Rao 1976:305). However, during the thirteenth century, *bōya* was synonymous with other terms for herders such as *gōpa*

joint group donations are represented in the data. Corporate bodies such as merchant guilds or village assemblies also made endowments as a unit in fifty instances. In the interest of clarity, I am focusing on gifts made by individuals in this discussion.

or *golla* (today the name of a caste of Telugu pastoralists). *Seṭṭi* (and its Tamil equivalent *cheṭṭi*) almost always appears today as the caste name or occupational designation of merchants, money-lenders, and traders, but has also been used in the past by artisan castes throughout South India and by the Telikis or oil-mongers of Andhra (Rudner 1987:372, Sundaram 1968:39). In its broadest sense, therefore, *seṭṭi* refers to a man who was involved in the production, trade, or sale of commercial goods. Herders, merchant-traders, and women all gave to major temples at significantly higher rates than the norm—something about this type of institution was particularly appealing to them.

Minor temples, even though far greater in number (178 instead of nine), received much less in the way of gifts than did the major temples. Only 20 percent of all recorded endowments appear at these sites, with 19 percent of those made by individual donors. Just as with the major temples, we find that specific types of donors tended to patronize these institutions. The patronage pattern at the minor temple is the reverse of that at the major temple: groups such as the *nāyakas* and *mahārājas* figure as patrons at above-average rates, instead of women, merchants, and herders (see table 5). In attempting to define the meaning of the title *nāyaka*, Burton Stein has pointed out its ambiguous nature: *nāyaka* is used for military officials as well as for personages of local power (Stein 1980:407). We can most accurately interpret it as an honorific name borne by prominent individuals who were militarily active. The term *mahārāja* or king was used by the Kākatiya rulers and by several other dynasties with noble pretensions from interior Andhra or the southern coastal region. Possession of this title was not always an indicator of independent sovereignty, as families whose power derived from association with greater kings are known to have employed it.

Nāyakas are the group most strongly represented at minor temples, since 29 percent of all their donations were made at such places, followed by *mahārājas* (27 percent, designated as “rāja” in tables 4, 5, and 7). Both *nāyakas* and *mahārājas* favored the gift to the minor temple over that to the major temple, where their rates of gifting fell considerably below the norm: *nāyakas* and *mahārājas* gave only 20 percent and 25 percent of their gifts to these places, respectively. In contrast, merchants and women endowed minor temples at somewhat lower levels than the average (13 and 12 percent, respectively), while herders gave to these sites even less frequently (5 percent). The three social groups strongly associated with patronage of major temples are thus under-represented among the patrons of minor temples.

Falling in the middle are the two remaining social types—*reḍḍis* and *rājus*—who gave gifts to major and minor temples at about the average rate. *Reḍḍi* is a name associated today with a dominant landowning caste-cluster in Andhra, but in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the use of the term as a caste name had not yet fully evolved; it does appear to denote peasant origin or some connection with agriculture, however. Some *reḍḍis* in both the Kākatiya and post-Kākatiya periods were eminent warriors and founded chiefly lineages; so the title was used even by persons who had transcended their peasant backgrounds. Unlike the royalty of the southern coastal districts, royal and noble lineages of the northern coastal districts rarely employed the kingly title *mahārāja* in their inscriptions, relying instead on the Telugu variant *rāju*. But not all *rājus* were of noble family, for approximately one-third of the people with this status name were of humbler ancestry and possessed administrative titles such as *pradhāni* (minister), *mantri* (minister), and *karnam* (accountant). *Rāju* may therefore designate a person (sometimes said to be brahmin) employed by a lord in a ministerial capacity, as well as a prince or lord, and perhaps

Table 5. Patronage of Minor Andhra Temples, 1175–1325
Individual Donor Types and Locations

District	Number of Endowments							
	Nāyaka	Rāja ^a	Rāju	Reḍḍi	Seṭṭi	Woman	Bōya	All
Cuddapah	3	3	—	—	—	1	—	8
East Godavari	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Guntur	19	4	4	2	2	1	—	50
Karimnagar	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	4
Khammam	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	5
Krishna	1	—	3	—	2	—	2	11
Kurnool	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3
Mahbubnagar	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	5
Medak	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	3
Nalgonda	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	7
Nellore	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	5
Prakasam	3	4	2	—	1	2	—	24
Warangal	—	1	1	5	—	2	—	18
West Godavari	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
Total	30	14	12	12	6	11	2	147
% records ^b	29%	27%	19%	17%	13%	12%	5%	19%

^aRāja is an abbreviation for the title mahārāja.

^bShows the percentage of each donor type's donations to minor temples.

referred to that group of brahmins, today called *niyōgi* in Andhra, who engage in secular occupations as opposed to *vaidiki* or Vedic brahmins.

The dichotomy in the social background of the predominant major and minor temple donors is mirrored in the dissimilarity of the characteristic item donated to these two institutions (table 6).⁴ While the overall figures for Andhra show that land plots were the gift of choice for the largest segment of donors (35 percent of all donated objects), livestock was by far the favorite gift at the major temples, where the average frequency of this gift was 61 percent. The chief purpose in giving land to temples was to provide for the food offerings made to deities in the daily ritual worship, although sometimes the land was meant for the subsistence of the temple staff. When fields of land were donated, it appears that rights approaching full possession were transferred, since the temple-recipient was able to make arrangements for the leasing of land to cultivators. The fairly common practice of purchase of land (generally from brahmin proprietors) immediately prior to its being given to a temple also supports this view. In the case of the donation of milk-bearing animals, the intent was to supply sufficient butter to maintain votive lamps in the dark temple interiors. Livestock was the second most popular religious gift in the state, comprising 25 percent of all items given; yet half or more of the gifts

⁴These figures are based on the number of occurrences of each particular type of gift item. Thus, they do not reflect the actual numbers of items given as religious gifts, which would be impossible to calculate accurately, but rather the number of times a donation of a certain kind of object was made. Table 6 reflects the statistics for the entire corpus of records, including donations from groups and corporate bodies, unlike tables 4, 5, and 7, which pertain only to gifts made by individuals.

Table 6. Gift Items at Major and Minor Temples, Andhra Pradesh 1175–1325

Gift	Entire Corpus		Minor Temples		Major Temples	
	No.	% Gifts	No.	% Gifts	No.	% Gifts
land plot	418	35%	109	39%	51	16%
livestock	306	25%	20	7%	197	61%
foundation ^a	91	8%	45	16%	—	—
village	63	5%	18	6%	16	5%
implement ^b	53	4%	9	3%	28	9%
building/pillar	45	4%	9	3%	6	2%
miscellaneous ^c	41	3%	7	3%	7	2%
garden	39	3%	13	5%	2	1%
tax income	37	3%	14	5%	3	1%
group tithe	35	3%	10	3%	2	1%
irrigation	30	3%	12	4%	—	—
cash	26	2%	3	1%	10	3%
tax remission	17	1%	8	03%	3	1%
Total	1201	99%	277	98%	325	102%

^aFoundation refers to financing the construction of a new temple, defined as a substantial shrine housing an independent deity.

^bImplement refers to a metal object used in ritual worship.

^cMiscellaneous includes gifts of oil presses, salt pans, timber, and foodstuffs.

made at eight of the nine major temples consisted of livestock, with the trend most prominent at Amaravati (94 percent of all donations).⁵ In comparison, only 7 percent of minor temple gifts were livestock, a frequency far below the statewide average. Patrons of minor temples gave fields of land at slightly higher rates than the norm and also made numerous donations of incomes or taxes derived from land (see items “tax income,” “village,” and “tax remission” in table 6). The gift of a village, for instance, normally meant that the portion of village taxes due to the donor was henceforth transferred to the temple. Minor donors also granted remission or exemptions of various taxes more commonly than did major temple donors.

Why livestock was the most frequent gift at the major temple and land at the minor temple becomes clear if we look beyond the endowment figures of these two types of institutions to the larger statewide patterns of donation. Table 7 illustrates a definite correlation between donor category and gift item on the state level, with a strong preference on the part of herders, merchants, and women for the gift of livestock and a lower frequency of land grants. In view of their primary occupations, one would not expect *bōyas* and *setṭis* to have access to much in the way of land. Indeed, it is explicitly stated in over a third of the sixteen instances in which merchant-traders made land grants that the land was purchased immediately before it was donated to a temple, showing that little of their wealth was vested in this form of property (ARIE No. 76 of 1958–59; IAP-K.38; SII 5.136, 137, 148, and 152).

⁵At Palakol, only 35 percent of gifts are livestock, outweighed by the 41 percent that consist of land plots. The anomaly can be explained by the common practice at that site of donating small fields of land to the herder to whom livestock donations were entrusted. This is made explicit in fourteen instances of land grants at Palakol and probably also occurred in another six cases.

Table 7. Gift Items by Individual Donor Type, Andhra Pradesh 1175–1325

Item	Percentage of Endowments							
	Nāyaka	Reḍḍi	Rāju	Rāja ^a	Seṭṭi	Woman	Bōya	All
land plot	45	39	38	31	24	23	16	35
livestock	17	21	32	9	49	39	69	27
foundation ^b	8	9	7	9	6	9	2	8
village	2	3	8	27	1	5	—	5
implement ^c	6	3	2	8	6	6	—	5
building/pillar	5	9	—	3	1	6	2	4
miscellaneous ^d	2	4	2	—	3	2	5	3
garden	3	1	5	5	—	4	—	3
tax income	2	3	4	2	4	—	—	3
irrigation	3	1	1	5	1	3	—	2
cash	1	4	—	—	4	2	5	2
tax remission	6	2	2	2	—	2	—	2

^aRāja is an abbreviation for the title mahārāja.

^bFoundation refers to financing the construction of a new temple, defined as a substantial shrine housing an independent deity.

^cImplement refers to a metal object used in ritual worship.

^dMiscellaneous includes gifts of oil presses, salt pans, timber, and foodstuffs.

Our data show that some thirteenth-century Andhra women had property rights over land, despite the fact that brahmanical legal literature indicated strong disapproval of female landownership (e.g., HAS 13.42, SII 4.1259, SII 5.125, SII 10.353); however, it seems likely that the bulk of women's personal property then, as now, consisted of movable goods such as jewelry. Compared to the formalities involved in purchasing land, the granting of livestock for the purpose of lamp maintenance must have been more straightforward. Since each temple had a set number of livestock (e.g., 55 ewes or 25 cows) which it stipulated as required to supply one lamp, it is quite possible that the donor had only to furnish cash or goods deemed equivalent in value to the animals. Some herders even gave their own flocks of sheep to temples with the understanding that they themselves would be responsible for delivery of the contracted amount of butter (SII 4.751, 6.162, 10.441).

The antithesis of the correlation between livestock donations and merchants, herders, and females is the connection between the gift of land and the typical patron of minor temples. *Nāyakas* favored the gift of land plots more strongly than any other group on a statewide basis, with a total of 45 percent of their gifts consisting of fields, while *mahārājas* were the main donors of rights over village incomes, which comprised 27 percent of their endowments (table 7). The counterpart of the *nāyaka* and *mahārāja* preference for the gift of land was their low frequency of livestock donation, at 17 and 9 percent, respectively. Although not agriculturists, *nāyakas* and *mahārājas* clearly had the privilege of granting land rights and incomes derived from agriculture, as did *reḍḍis* and *rājus*. Since kings, military chiefs, and influential peasants all ultimately subsisted on the proceeds of agriculture, they would logically be more likely than merchants and pastoralists to either possess land that could be alienated or have the authority to transfer revenues from land. The chief factor in determining what gift would be donated at a temple thus was the degree to which the patrons of the institution had control over land. It was because major temples

Table 8. Characteristics of Major and Minor Temples, Andhra Pradesh 1175–1325

Major Temple	Minor Temple
Large number of endowments	Only one recorded donation
Located in coastal district	Located in inland district
Relative antiquity	Relatively recent origin
Variety of patrons	Limited range of patrons
Favored by non-landed donors	Favored by land-controlling donors
Recipient of livestock	Recipient of land

attracted patronage from so many members of non-landholding groups that they received such large quantities of gifts other than land. At minor temples, it was land-controlling groups such as *nāyakas* and *mabārājas* who figured as patrons at above-average rates and the non-landed groups who were relatively under-represented, accounting for the high frequency of land grants at these places.

Occupation and Temple Preference

Based on aggregate data, we can formulate two abstract models of the representative temples of the coastal and interior regions of Andhra, each with a set of characteristic features (table 8). The second and third features in table 8 are logically related to the first; that is, the relative age and favored location of the major temples in the more fertile and well-populated region of the state were certainly related to a greater number of religious donations, whereas the minor temples suffered from less favorable locations and lack of religious prestige. The larger pool of donors at the major temples meant that a greater diversity of social backgrounds would be present. The causal relationship between the last two characteristics of each type of temple has also been established—the kinds of property possessed by their prevalent donors determined to a large degree the nature of the popular gift at these sites. Why land-controlling and non-landed social groups should be so differentially attracted to the minor and major temple is a question that has not yet been satisfactorily addressed.

Ethnographic studies of modern Tamil Nadu on differing religious practices in South India indicate that patterns of religious worship and patronage vary radically between castes that base their livelihood on agriculture—called right-hand castes—and those that pursue other occupations such as trade, banking, or the crafts—called left-hand castes. This indigenous conceptualization of society as divided into two sections first developed in the Tamil country not later than the eleventh century, spreading thereafter to Karnataka and Andhra (Appadurai 1974:222–23). According to Brenda Beck's study of the Kongu region of Tamil Nadu, the right-hand section of the community is closely bound to the land upon which it works and has elaborate clan and lineage groupings based on territorial divisions. In contrast, castes of the left-hand section do not possess territorially-based clan and lineage groupings and are much less locally oriented. Instead, their work often involves them in travel and communication with caste members in other localities. The larger perspective of the left-hand castes is relevant in their economic and social lives, and extends also to their religious concerns. While the right-hand castes have an extensive hierarchy

of local temples connected exclusively with their various clans and lineages, members of the left-hand castes in Kongu prefer to worship at large pilgrimage temples, sacred centers used by all communities. Furthermore, while the various clans and lineages of the right-hand castes come together periodically to worship at their temples, the left-hand castes seldom undertake group worship (Beck 1972:13–14, 61–62, 74, 99, 106).

It is not my intent here to mechanically apply a right-hand/left-hand classification to the donors in Kākatiya period inscriptions. Not only are such distinctions absent in the data, but the appropriateness of characterizing all merchant castes as belonging to the left-hand division is also questionable (Appadurai 1974:226–31). However, such a twofold paradigm of society is helpful in distinguishing between the lifestyles of Andhra landowning and non-landowning peoples, which are reflected in the divergent values of their caste epics. Landed groups of Andhra have caste epics of a martial nature, stressing heroic values, while those of the non-landed groups stress self-sacrifice and brahmanical standards (Narayana Rao 1986). The differences observed in modern Kongu between the religious worship of the right-hand and left-hand groups also shed light on the varying institutional preferences of thirteenth-century Andhra donors.

The appeal of the major temple to thirteenth-century Andhra merchants and artisans must have been related to their greater mobility and participation in wider networks, whether kin-based or occupational, just as in contemporary Kongu. *Settis* were less strongly bound to specific localities than groups that derived their wealth and power from agriculture. By patronizing famous pilgrimage sites, merchants and artisans could concurrently extend their own personal networks and alliances over a larger territory. In other words, patronage of major temples meant that non-landed persons could have gained acceptance (and commercial contacts) in a community of worship that encompassed varied segments of society and a considerable territorial expanse. The process of expanding commercial activities through religious gifting has been documented by David W. Rudner for the Tamil Nakarattar caste of salt traders, who became patrons of the famous Murugan temple at Palani during the seventeenth century (Rudner 1987:365–68).

Herders (*bōyas*) are the other prominent group of male patrons of the large temples of coastal Andhra and, indeed, comprise the social category most closely linked with patronage of these sites. While they are similar to merchants and artisans in being more mobile and less bound to specific territory, the extent of the herders' preference for the larger temples is rather surprising. So, too, is the fact that not a single existing endowment from this period records a religious gift by a herder in the interior districts of Andhra, which today possess high ratios of sheep and other livestock in comparison to the human population (Sopher 1975:189). Nor do any of the few endowments of livestock in inland Andhra mention the existence of herders to whom the animals were to be handed over. Yet persons engaging in herding activities would surely have been dwelling in the interior regions of the state during the thirteenth century, since Telangana, in particular, is ecologically suited for pastoralism (Alam 1968:293–94).

In his study of contemporary Indian pastoral castes, David Sopher draws a clear distinction between animal husbandry as an economic activity and the social designation of pastoralist or herder. Only in regions of the subcontinent where there are large numbers of livestock *and* where the caste system is well developed do we observe castes specifically labeled as pastoralists. To restate Sopher's point, a mixed economy of field cultivation and animal husbandry is required before pastoralism becomes a defined occupational specialization (Sopher 1975:204–7). Research on the Dhangar

pastoralists of present-day Maharashtra reveals that such groups have a symbiotic relationship with the farming villages near their seasonal camps, which rely on sheep manure to fertilize their fields; pastoralists and agriculturalists are economically dependent on each other (Sontheimer 1975:166–69).

In modern India, then, pastoralism may exist even in areas where no social groups are specifically designated as herders. Accordingly, the absence of herders from interior Andhra in the inscriptional records does not attest to lack of animal husbandry. What the inscriptional records do suggest is that pastoralists had little to do with the agriculturalists inhabiting the interior region. In the more densely populated and long-settled coastal county, however, herders would have had to come to some sort of terms with peasant agriculturalists if they were to retain any rights over grazing land and preserve something of their own style of life. Our epigraphic evidence indicates that temple endowments were a significant method of assimilation and accommodation of this originally marginal community of people. Through gifts to religious institutions, herders, like merchant-traders, became part of a larger social unit and established links with other communities.

The third group of donors who patronized major temples in large numbers was women. Quite a few female donors were wealthy and influential—the wives of powerful kings and princes who, at times, even acted as rulers after the death of their husbands. Others (roughly 50 percent) were of humbler descent—the wives or daughters of peasant leaders (*reddis*), warrior chiefs (*nāyakas*), herders (*bōyas*) and merchants (*setṭis*). The greater sanctity associated with the large temple cults that arose from the orthodoxy of their rituals and the Sanskritic affiliations of their myths is the most likely explanation for the appeal to women of such varied backgrounds. Indeed, patronage of religion may have been the only public activity women could engage in; it is noteworthy that thirteenth-century Andhra inscriptions praise men mostly in terms of their military accomplishments, whereas women are eulogized almost solely for their religious beneficences. It is because social norms restricted their opportunities for enhancing prestige that royal women of medieval South India often played a more prominent role as donors of temples than did the men in their families. As an example, the queens and princesses of the imperial Cōḷa dynasty donated far more direct gifts to temples than did the kings and princes (Heitzman 1987:41–42; for more on donations by Cōḷa women, see Spencer 1983). Although many women donors of the nonroyal class would have been drawn from local peasant and warrior elites, they were not as directly involved in the power structure as their menfolk and, for that reason, were probably less interested in supporting local institutions.

It is tempting to equate the Andhra minor temples with the temples of right-hand landowning castes in modern Tamil Nadu, for both are similar in their close association with the immediate locality. It is obvious, however, that the thirteenth-century Andhra minor temple and the modern right-hand clan temple are not the same kind of institution. First of all, the minor temples had brahmin priests and rituals (including vegetarian food offerings) and were dedicated to local versions of the pan-Indic male gods; they were thus far more Sanskritized than the modern clan and lineage temples of the right-hand castes with their non-brahmin priests, animal sacrifices, and village goddesses. (Kongu caste temples with female tutelary deities began to appear only from the fourteenth century onward, complementing the already existing local Śiva temples, according to Stein 1978:25–38.) Second, the Andhra minor temples were not patronized lavishly by *reddis*, the only actual donors of peasant affiliation among the many types represented in the inscriptions. In fact, *reddis* made donations to both major and minor temples in about the same



Ill. 5. Front view of the Uparpalli temple, one of many minor temples discussed in the article, in which religious worship is no longer conducted. Photograph courtesy of Phillip B. Wagoner.

proportion. More relevant than a left-hand/right-hand distinction in understanding the character of the minor temple is the distinction between sites possessing networks of regional, versus merely local, significance. A number of the smaller local temples constructed during the Kākatiya period have been abandoned, demonstrating that the patronage of particular local families was mainly responsible for their existence. Phillip Wagoner believes that worship in these temples was primarily private in nature and restricted to the founding family and its associates; in contrast, the worship at the large pilgrimage temples was more “public” in tone (Wagoner 1986:162–63).

The minor temple of the thirteenth century was not a caste temple in the modern sense, nor was it specifically patronized by peasant elites. Yet these temples received much support from prominent individuals connected with the land, those who occupied the intermediate strata between the overlord and the local agriculturalists. This is true of most of the *mahārājas* appearing in the inscriptions; they were not independent sovereigns but tributary chiefs to the Kākatiya royal family of Warangal. *Nāyakas*, too, were subordinate military leaders: two-thirds of the *nāyaka* records explicitly mention royal overlords, and slightly less than one-third of the donors bear administrative titles such as *mahāpradhāni* (minister), *sāmanta* (feudatory or subordinate chief), and *sēnāpati* (general). *Nāyakas* ranked below kings and princes, by whom they ordinarily were employed. Given that we have so little information on their background, it is not possible to determine whether they were agents of kings sent to the localities from elsewhere or whether they were local notables in their own right. Regardless of the source of their power, it is evident that both *mahārājas* and *nāyakas* had the authority to alienate land revenues for their own purposes, seemingly without needing the permission of the overlord. Donations to temples within the territories over which they wielded military power and economic control enabled these individuals to affirm their ties with the locality and consolidate their power base.

The significance of the major temples—and the reason non-landed social groups chose to make religious donations to them—lay in the fact that they brought together all the important property-holding communities of the period. The intensity of patronage at these sites created a pool of wealth—drawn from many sectors of society—that was parceled out to numerous individuals, pastoralists as well as agriculturalists. By integrating non-landowning social groups with landed groups, the large pilgrimage temples served as significant channels for establishing linkages between various types of peoples. They provided avenues—and kept clear records—for individuals from many walks of life to participate in a culturally meaningful and honored activity.

Many of these features of major temples are noticeably lacking when we turn to the smaller temples more characteristic of the Andhra hinterland. Surplus economic resources were extracted from only a segment of the society of the interior regions and redistributed among a limited sector. Due to the smaller number of livestock donations, the concomitant absence of pastoralists connected with the temple economy, and the limited range of patrons at minor temples, fewer social groups were involved in their support and maintenance. Instead of being collected at central foci, this wealth in inland Andhra was scattered among numerous exchange points in a diffuse pattern of temple patronage. Religious endowments were routed to many small, local temples, thereby creating links only among members of the local society, and primarily among the social groups involved with land and its control.

Temple Functions

If dissimilar motives for religious worship and patronage led thirteenth-century donors to associate with different kinds of institutions, as I have suggested, the question then arises: can these two types of temples be regarded as equivalent in a functional sense, i.e., were they performing the same role in society? Anthropologist C. J. Fuller has posed a related issue in an article on the topic of temple cults where he points out a noteworthy distinction between temple cults with Sanskritic deities and those with non-Sanskritic ones. Analysis of temple rituals shows that the power of the non-Sanskritic deity in the local caste temple is thought of as extending only to a specific locale and social space, while the realm of a Sanskritic deity, such as the goddess *Mīnākṣī* of Madurai, is conceived as being limitless and universal. Such differences have led Fuller to call for greater investigation into the significance of variations in temple cults (Fuller 1988:65–66).

Little attention has been paid to possible variations in temple types and function because of the assumption that the same principles were operative on all levels, from the most humble local shrine to the most magnificent royally endowed pilgrimage center. In other words, the recent trend in South Indian history has been to stress homologies, regardless of scale, whether the subject is the temple, kingship, or state structure.⁶ This is principally due to the influence of Stein's segmentary state model, which envisions the *Cōḷa* state structure as composed of a pyramidal series of discrete and essentially uniform units (the semi-autonomous localities) interconnected chiefly through the religious networks created by the widespread giving of donations

⁶Nicholas Dirks's work on local chiefs of Pudukkottai state in Tamil Nadu has viewed these little kings as basically homologous to the big kings or emperors from whom they derived their legitimacy and whose example they imitated (Dirks 1982). The importance of questions of scale in the study of South Indian history is the subject of a provocative article by Breckenridge (1985).

to temples and brahmins (Stein 1977). The main function of the temple as an institution is thus considered to be integration: economically through the redistribution of accumulated resources, socially through the incorporation of diverse social groups into one community of worship, and politically through the conferment of ritual prestige to sovereigns and local elites.⁷ The various forms of integration initiated by the temple are classified succinctly by Carol A Breckenridge:

The cultural form of the gift [to temples] and its ritual actualization permitted the VERTICAL incorporation of the political order while the technical (and material) context of the gift accomplished the HORIZONTAL incorporation of disparate agricultural localities into agricultural and urban networks.

(Breckenridge 1986:25)

Horizontal incorporation, in Breckenridge's phraseology, refers to the creation of economic ties between different regions of a territory through resource redistribution. Revenues from a village in one region would be sent to a temple, which might then invest these revenues in agricultural development elsewhere or lend this money to another village for its use. In this way, temple donations often indirectly enhanced agricultural prosperity. By implication, the process of horizontal incorporation fostered the socioeconomic integration of people from various geographical areas. In our data, we see the unification of many property-holding individuals into the single category of temple donors as well as the bringing together of others in a service relationship with the temple. Herders are one case in point. *Bōyas* were incorporated into temple networks even more fully than merchants and traders since they not only were patrons of these establishments but also acted as temple employees in charge of livestock maintenance. The typical inscription recording the religious gift of livestock was a contract between the donor, the temple, and the herder who received the animals. One such example, dated 1241, comes from the Mallēśvara temple at Vijayavada:

Svasti! In the year 1163 of the Śaka era, on the occasion of *uttarāyana saṅkrānti* [winter solstice], Jakki Raḍḍi gave 25 cows to the illustrious great lord Mallēśvara of Vijayavāḍa for a perpetual lamp as a meritorious deed for (the religious benefit of) his mother and father. Having taken (charge of) these (cows), Male Bōyumuḍu's son Sūre Bōyumuḍu and Nannaya Bōya's son Kommana Bōyumuḍu, and their descendants after them, are to supply a *māna* [unit of liquid measurement] of butter daily as long as the moon and the sun (endure).

(SII 6.92; my translation)

Hence, the effect of these donations would be to bring pastoralists into the web of the temple's socioeconomic network, just as the gift of land would have the result of causing the temple to establish links with individuals who performed agricultural tasks. (Temples might lease out their lands to cultivators or distribute lands to temple servants in lieu of salary.) The bulk of the economic assets received by the major temples of thirteenth-century Andhra was the livestock managed and looked after by individuals belonging to animal-herding communities; their livelihood became closely intertwined with the requirements of ritual worship at these sites.

At the same time that the temple institution brought geographically and socially diverse peoples together through its redistributive process, it established hierarchical relations between property-holding individuals and groups through rituals of worship

⁷Significant studies of religious gifting and its effects include Stein 1960, Spencer 1968, Appadurai and Breckenridge 1976, Dirks 1976, Appadurai 1977, and Ludden 1979.

and gifting. Temple patrons were ranked vertically, partially on the basis of their relative munificence, and this ranking was expressed in the public rituals of the temple cult. Festivals were particularly significant in this regard, for it was on such occasions of procession with the deity that prominent patrons were most publicly rewarded with temple honors. Textual prescriptions on temple entry also imply that different social categories were accorded differing degrees of access into temple grounds, and the degree of patronage was one of the factors considered (Inden 1985:62–70). This hierarchical function of the temple was especially crucial for kings, whose role as patrons of religion was the source of much of their authority (Dirks 1976). In the absence of an extensive bureaucracy and strong central army, the medieval South Indian monarch relied on the moral ascendancy attained through lavish gifting to religious institutions for his legitimacy, rather than on overt domination. Locally dominant groups supported the religious networks created by the kings because of the prestige they derived from doing so; along with the king, the local elites manipulated the powerful symbolism of religious gifting to enhance their claims to superiority (Stein 1980:230).

Vertical and horizontal incorporation both can and do occur within a temple context, but it does not follow that both kinds of incorporation must be equally operative in all religious institutions. Along the same lines, not all divergences in temple endowment patterns can be interpreted merely as a matter of varying scale. We have seen that minor temples were not just miniature replicas of the more successful major temples, for they integrated different social groups and were patronized for different motives. Richard G. Fox has criticized the common depiction of the medieval South Indian temple as a “consensus and homeostatic model,” for implicit in most discussions is the notion that the redistributive process was beneficial to society as a whole. Yet, as Fox points out, redistribution of resources is also a means for the creation of inequalities, both economically and politically (Fox and Zagarell 1982:15–16). While some form of integration or incorporation may occur as the result of religious gift-giving, the more vital consequence may be a greater stratification of society. Having recognized the important fact that societal integration can be fostered by religious institutions, it is now time to critically examine the transaction processes involved in religious gift-giving to determine the exact form of the coalitions being assembled in each situation.

We are limited in having only the inscriptional record to rely on in trying to reconstruct the effects of religious gifting in thirteenth-century Andhra. Observations of actual worship and of festivals are more helpful than endowment documents in assessing the degree of community involvement and the extent to which religious worship involved social ranking. But donative inscriptions also had a public significance, for they were highly visible documents situated on temple walls and columns or on separate slabs and pillars within the temple compound. Their intent was to honor the benefactors of the temple, just as did the bestowal of cloths and other objects during rituals (Stein 1980:132). Since individuals other than the actual temple donors are mentioned in the records, inscriptions can be used as a means of deciphering social relations.

Most pertinent to our discussion is the fact that references to political superiors are far more common in records from minor temples, suggesting that the creation or affirmation of political ties between lords and their subordinates was one of the main motives at these temples for both making a donation and having it recorded in an inscription. There are only forty-five records at major temples where the political allegiance of a donor is stated (i.e., name of the overlord given)—just 17 percent

of the 258 major temple records. But donors at minor temples were almost four times more likely to express a political allegiance, for 65 percent of their inscriptions (116 out of 178) contain the name of an overlord. (The overlord was a Kākatiya ruler in three-quarters of the records from major and minor temples.) Therefore, whereas major temple donors typically expressed solidarity only with their kin, other donors (and especially those at minor temples) made a point of identifying the political networks to which they belonged.

The embedding of political strategies in the act of religious gifting is manifested in several forms, one of which was the transfer of merit from the religious gift to a political superior (e.g., ARIE Nos. 24 and 39 of 1929–30; SII 5.157; SII 6.592; SII 10.348, 437 and 526). Although the authority of a political subordinate (or little king) in medieval South India was typically derived from the honorific emblems, insignias, and epithets bestowed on him by the overlord or big king (Dirks 1982:678–81), we find that thirteenth-century Andhra subordinates honored their lords in return through religious gift-giving. In effect, this was a type of service rendered by the subordinate to his overlord, akin to the military service central to their relationship. Dedication of religious merit to an overlord was additionally a symbolically important sign of subservience. The practice of a donor dedicating the merit of a religious gift to someone other than a family member seems to be a new phenomenon that emerged in this period and was rarely found at major temples. The beneficiary of the gift's religious merit is stipulated in approximately half the records from both major and minor temples, but it is almost always the donor or a member of his/her family at the major temple (43 percent of all major temple records). Seldom is merit dedicated to an overlord (twelve instances or 5 percent). At minor temples, however, almost as many records dedicate merit to the lord (forty records or 22 percent) as to the donor and his/her family (forty-four or 25 percent).

Another method of honoring one's overlord was to name the deity of a newly founded temple after him or her. The naming of a deity after a specific individual was a widespread practice at this time, occurring in slightly more than half of the newly established temples (55 percent or fifty-nine out of 108 temples). As a rule, it is explicitly referred to in the foundation inscriptions with the phrase "in the name of" (*pēranu*). For example, the deity Rudrēśvara was consecrated in A.D. 1194 in honor of the Kākatiya ruler Rudradēva (APRE No. 407 of 1967); the deity's name was compounded from the personal name Rudra and the title Īśvara, denoting a Śaivite deity. Technically, the term Rudrēśvara meant Rudra's Lord or Rudra's God, indicating that it was the favored deity of Rudra, rather than implying that Rudra himself was a god. In the majority of cases, deities were named after the temple founder, his/her father or other relative. But in almost 20 percent of the new temples, at least one of the newly established deities was named after the founder's overlord.⁸ Thus, five *nāyaka* brothers who state that their ruler was Kākatiya Gaṇapati established a triple shrine in Nalgonda district with deities named after their father, mother, and Gaṇapati (HAS 13.49). New temples housing deities

⁸In five records, only one deity was consecrated and it was named after the overlord (APRE No. 407 of 1967, ARIE No. 325 of 1934–35, EI 3.15, HAS 19 Mahbubnagar 41, SII 10.373); in another six instances, one out of two or three newly established deities was named after the lord (APRE No. 358 of 1966, ARIE No. 322 of 1937–38, HAS 13.49, HAS 19 Mahbubnagar 46, IAP-W.61 and 69). There is also an instance in which the deity was named after the overlord's religious teacher (ARIE No. 40 of 1942–43).

named after the overlord are found scattered throughout the state and were erected by temple founders of diverse backgrounds. The one common feature in these instances is the fact that the temple founders usually held some form of administrative title or service relationship with an overlord.

Social relations between individuals and/or groups are further exhibited in a peculiar type of inscription, that which records a set of endowments made by different donors on the same day to the same deity. In format, these inscriptions resemble the typical epigraph with its single documented endowment, but the donative core of the record is replicated more than once. The inclusion of more than one act of donation in the inscription indicates that the various donors were somehow associated; it was not merely a matter of convenience that their endowments should be recorded together, since we have numerous complete inscriptions (with both an introductory portion containing the date as well as benedictory-imprecatory verses concluding the record) from some sites dated on the same day. One-quarter of all donations in the corpus are recorded in such multiple-act inscriptions (223 out of the total of 895 endowments).⁹ High frequencies of these inscriptions are found in the hinterland: in the districts of Medak, Karimnagar, Warangal, Nalgonda, and Nellore, between one-third and two-thirds of all religious gifts are recorded in such a form; they are found infrequently in the coastal districts of East and West Godavari. Multiple-act inscriptions do not appear at minor temples, of course, since by definition a minor temple is an institution receiving only one endowment during this period. Although their geographical distribution does not correlate exactly with the distribution of minor temples, multiple-act inscriptions are more typical of the hinterland districts and less common at major temples, where only 10 percent of all donations are documented in multiple-act inscriptions. (In fact, multiple-act inscriptions are found at only three of the major temple sites—Amaravati, Tripurantakam, and Palakol.)

Since we have seventy-two multiple-act inscriptions, we have evidence of seventy-two instances of donative action by affiliated people and groups. They can be classified into three categories on the basis of the relationship between the donors. Some of the affiliations between donors in multiple-act inscriptions cannot be identified—this miscellaneous category comprises 18 percent. Second, in 30 percent of these sets of grouped donation, the individuals are related by ties of kinship or bear the same status title, and must have been neighbors or friends. These associations of relatives and friends appear mainly in the coastal region. Instead of kinship bonds, however, some multiple-act inscriptions uncover associations between people that have their basis in ties of a political nature. Typically, in this third category, the status of the two (or more) donors will be dissimilar and one person will be the political subordinate of the other. (Many of these inscriptions include donations by corporate bodies such as village assemblies and merchant guilds, which fell under the jurisdiction of a lord or official.) Fifty-one percent of all the donations made in multiple-act inscriptions fall into this category (110 records or 12 percent of all endowments in our corpus). Thus, in half of the instances in which people came together to engage in religious gifting, they did so not because of shared caste or kin bonds, but due to some political affiliation. None of the records in this category

⁹The corpus contains records of 895 distinct acts of religious gifting (by individuals, joint groups and corporate bodies) contained in 774 separately inscribed epigraphs. Because of the quantitative emphasis in my approach, I have chosen to consider the 895 instances of religious gifting as separate records and have used the word inscription to describe them in this paper, although that is not strictly accurate.

are found at major temples and most of them are located in Guntur district, Prakasam district, or the Telangana districts of the northern interior.¹⁰

Religious gifting by coalitions of political associates was not always initiated by the person of superior status. In slightly less than half of these cases, the first donor noted in the multiple-act inscription—the one who made the initial gift—was subordinate to another donor (commonly an individual with the title of *mahārāja*, *rāju*, or *nāyaka*). Often the primary donor had founded a new temple, which the overlord then endowed with lands (e.g., ARIE No. 21 of 1929–30, HAS 19 Mahbubnagar 5, IAP-K.38, IAP-W.40 and SII 10.283). The overlord's financial support for the institution established by his subordinate was a public acknowledgment of their relationship, as well as a practical means to help the subordinate enhance his local position. When the first donor was superior in status, he was generally the chief of a region or an official in charge of supervising a town—in such cases we frequently find corporate bodies making donations, presumably to gain the favor of this official or chief by endowing his favored deity (e.g., EI 3.15, IAP-C.156, NDI Darsi 35, SII 4.939, SII 10.420).

To summarize, the phenomena of merit dedication to the overlord, the naming of temples after overlords, and the multiple-act inscriptions by political affiliates prove that consolidation of political networks was an important objective in the making and recording of many religious gifts. These political alliances were not composed of equals in different locales who united to form a common front, but were vertically aligned factions of political superiors and subordinates. Participation in such power factions was far more typical of hinterland and minor temple donors than of northern coastal and major temple donors. A patron of a small local temple therefore might not only be enhancing his own prestige and legitimacy in the locality through an act of religious donation, but also be concurrently confirming his membership in a powerful political network, usually headed by the Kākatīyas of Warangal.

All donors, of course, had economic and social incentives for donating a religious gift, regardless of where the gift was made, since this was a culturally sanctioned and honored act. And a king could be facilitating both horizontal and vertical forms of incorporation through patronage of a religious center, for he not only could confirm his own supreme status in relation to that of other elites but also instigate the economic integration of his realm. The thirteenth-century Andhra situation differs from that generally depicted in the secondary literature, however, in the absence of any conscious royal policy to rely on large pilgrimage sites for such a purpose. The Kākatīya rulers made few gifts themselves, and their patronage was distributed among a range of temples, most often in newly conquered territories (Talbot 1989). Nor is there any evidence of their active intervention in the affairs of large temple complexes within their kingdom, unlike the Cōḷa emperors who commonly arbitrated disputes and allocated temple resources (Heitzman 1987:42–43). This may be due to the weakness of the Kākatīya state system, which lacked even the few centralized features possessed by the Cōḷa empire. It was the Kākatīya subordinates who engaged in religious gifting, not their overlords, and their interest was in consolidating their

¹⁰The multiple-act inscriptions which document religious gifting by political associates are: ARIE Nos. 21 and 26 of 1929–30, No. 274 of 1949–50, No. 89 of 1958–59; Bharati 54:56; Epigraphia Andhrica 4.14; EI 3.15; HAS 13.18, 25, 34 and 53; HAS 19 Mahbubnagar 4 and 5; IAP-C.156; IAP-K.38; IAP W.40, 61 and 65; NDI Darsi 35 and Kanigiri 24; SII 4.933 and 939; SII 5.070; SII 6.120, 165 and 214; SII 10.275, 282, 295, 334, 373, 377, 420, 422, 427 and 526.

positions in the locality. For this reason, the attainment of high ranking was the stronger principle at work in the minor temple; vertical incorporation (though not synonymous with political objectives) was more manifest in patronage of the minor than of the major temple. Conversely, the major temple acted mainly as a force for the horizontal integration of socially and geographically diverse peoples, although the desire to be ranked among the prestigious body of temple donors was certainly a motive for patronage even there.

Conclusion

The diffuse pattern of donative activities in the hinterland can be best understood in the context of the dynamic changes that occurred in this portion of the state. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the hinterland economy experienced great expansion due to the creation of irrigational facilities and the growth of trade. This economic growth accompanied an extension of agricultural settlements into previously uncultivated territories. In effect, the Andhra hinterland was a frontier region, with much movement of peoples and a still-evolving organization of society. The volume and frequency of religious donations rose along with the increase of population, and the numbers of religious establishments escalated. As land and the labor of the populace became economically more valuable, political stratification among the peoples of the hinterland intensified with the appearance of local chiefs and military leaders who attempted to assert control over these newly emergent resources. Governance by such local military chiefs was typical of the interior upland areas of Tamil Nadu as well, unlike the fertile river regions where peasant elites ruled through assemblies (Stein 1980:110–11).

Patronage of religious institutions was a crucial source of social prestige and political legitimacy for prominent individuals and was additionally a means for them to allocate surplus resources in the locality to those institutions and social groups that supported them. Many of the political leaders of the interior had only recently risen to dominance, chiefly through military ability, and depended to a large extent on the greater might and prestige of their Kākatiya overlords—whom they often honored in their inscriptions—to bolster their tenuous positions of power. The diffusion of donative activities in the hinterland was therefore a result not only of the dispersed settlement patterns but also of the fragmentation and instability of political power in this situation of flux.

The delta region of the state was experiencing far less change. There are no striking indications of economic expansion or of population growth; rates of donative activity were relatively level, and new temples were rarely founded. But the lack of dynamism can be regarded as a consequence of the maturity of this region's development. The well-diversified economy and complexity of social organization in the long-settled coastal districts is evidenced by the variety of occupational categories represented among temple donors, and economic as well as social interdependence between the various communities of the delta is demonstrated in the wide-ranging networks of the major religious institutions there. Political elites of this territory, such as the Kōṭa dynasty of Guntur district or the Paricchedis of Krishna district, had been entrenched for some centuries and had long-standing claims to lordship, revealed in the elaborate genealogical portions of their inscriptions. These acknowledged princely lineages of the coastal region had less need to assert their power in every locality under their sway and could continue to rule over their principalities as

tributary kings long after conquest by the expanding Kākatiya kingdom based in the state's interior.¹¹ The concentrated pattern of donative activity in coastal Andhra, particularly in the area north of the Krishna River, is thus a mark of the long history of integration that had already occurred there.

The differing histories of settlement and political backgrounds of the two distinct regions of Andhra had an impact on the role the temple played as an institution in their respective societies. On the one hand, we have the major pilgrimage temples of the coast, whose patronage was broadly based and whose function was to incorporate varied social communities over a wide area. The minor temples of the hinterland, in contrast, had limited patronage and functioned as a means of strengthening political alliances among social groups wielding power and authority over land in a given locality. These variances between major pilgrimage temples and local rural temples apparently existed elsewhere in the Deccan; in Karnataka, as in Andhra, the small local temples received endowments primarily from political notables intent on furthering their personal political objectives (Parasher and Naik 1986:14–20).

Taking a broader perspective, this study uncovers strong continuities between thirteenth-century Andhra and Tamil Nadu of the later Vijayanagara age, suggesting that some characteristics of inland Andhra temple patronage were transplanted to Tamil Nadu by the Telugu *nāyakas* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The political objectives which could be subsumed in the act of religious gifting enabled Vijayanagara period *nāyaka* chiefs to use temple patronage as a means of creating political allegiances at the local level in Tamil Nadu, where they were initially outsiders (Appadurai 1977:58–59). In his study of the rule of *nāyakas* in two districts of Tamil Nadu during the sixteenth century, Noboru Karashima notes the use of donative records by *nāyakas* as a means of expressing allegiance to an overlord through the dedication of the gift's merit to them: a phenomenon widespread in the Andhra hinterland during the thirteenth century but not found in earlier periods of Tamil history (Karashima 1985:16–18). The close connection of these *nāyakas* with local temples, their granting of taxes derived from trade and their granting of tax remissions is again reminiscent of the earlier situation in Andhra. The existence of numerous intermediaries between the cultivator and the king, which characterized *nāyaka* rule during the sixteenth century, is interpreted by Karashima as a sign that great changes in the society of Tamil Nadu had occurred between the Cōḷa and Vijayanagara periods, but such intermediaries had long been present in the societies of Karnataka and Andhra. While Tamil society of the Vijayanagara era may have undergone a radical departure from its earlier patterns, therefore, the new socioeconomic formations appear to have evolved out of patterns established in the Deccan during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

By focusing on the two extremes in temple types—the large pilgrimage temple and the small local temple—I have attempted to highlight the range of functions performed by these institutions and the differing strategies that motivated donors to make endowments to them. In the process, the differences between these two kinds of temples has been accentuated to some degree, leading to the formation of

¹¹The Kōṭa dynasty flourished in Guntur district from at least A.D. 1067 to 1269. Among their published inscriptions are SII 4.933 and 939; SII 6.207, 224, 228, 229; SII 10.198–200, 281, 344, 358, 399; EI 3.16 and 6.15-A. The Paricchedis were based in Krishna and Guntur districts between A.D. 1040 and 1290. (SII 4.969, 985; SII 6.120; SII 10.269, 282, 426). For at least the first century of Kākatiya expansion, their policy was to rule the coastal region indirectly through the princely lineages already in power there. In the hinterland, on the other hand, the Kākatiyas relied on low-level warrior chiefs with whom they established more direct bonds.

two models which are essentially ideal types and not true representations of any actual temples of thirteenth-century Andhra. My primary intent is not to assert that all temples fit one or the other of these two models, but to propose that the role performed by the temple can vary according to the time, place, and kind of patronage it received. Such an observation may seem quite obvious; yet in the zeal to produce overarching theories, this variability and the concomitant complexity of social processes have largely been overlooked.

List of Abbreviations

APRE	Andhra Pradesh Report on Epigraphy
ARIE	Annual Report on (Indian) Epigraphy
EI	Epigraphia Indica
HAS 13	Corpus of Telingana Inscriptions, Pt. 2. (Hyderabad Archaeological Series No. 13)
HAS 19	Corpus of Telingana Inscriptions, Pt. 3. (Hyderabad Archaeological Series No. 19)
IAP-C	Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh: Cuddapah District
IAP-K	Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh: Karimnagar District
IAP-W	Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh: Warangal District
NDI	Nellore District Inscriptions
SII	South Indian Inscriptions

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