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TEMPLE ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE KAKATIYAS- A STUDY

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Abstract

An outstanding example of architectural Brilliance during the regime of Kakatiya Rule. The temples all are mesmerized to the historians and scholars. It all has a historical significance. In ancient India, art and religion were inseparable. It may not be wrong to say the religion was the vehicle through which the art developed, evolved and flourished. Kings and their representatives were the major patrons of art. More often than not they commissioned artists to build temples devoted to their family or state deities. Whenever a region has been ruled long enough by a dynasty, we find a cluster of temples built by the generations of the dynasty. The best Kakatiya temples were built when the rule of the Kakatiya dynasty was at its peak. In the medieval history of Deccan, Hindu temple remains of the Rastrakuta period here are very few, but temple building activity was vigorously carried by the Chalukyas of Kalyani and this was continued by the Kakatiyas. Under the kakatiya rule telugu region was developed in various fields. They promoted agriculture and temple construction activity. This research paper to be critically analyzed of Temple administration under the Kakatiyas.

Keywords: Unique Architecture, Temple Administration, Natural Sculptures, Holy Temples, Permanent Constructions Ramappa and Thousand Pillars Temple.

Introduction

Statement of Problem

The fort of Warangal referred to as Orugallu, Orumgallu or Ekasilanagaram in the inscriptions and literature rose to prominence, when it was the capital of Kakatiya kingdom during the reign of Ganapati Deva Maharaja (1199-1261). The group of temples and temple complex related structures in Warangal of Kakatiyan empire, signify a distinct architectural pattern, style and technology of the period and representative of the distinct regional style, exhibiting local innovation in temple building tradition and establishment of a prominent temple of Ramappa during 1213 AD by General Recherla Rudra, during the period of the Kakatiya ruler Ganapati Deva. The representative temples and temple complexes include Archaeological remains of Swayambhu temple and Keerthi Thoranas at Warangal fort, Rudreswara Temple, locally known as Veyi Sthambala Gudi (Thousand pillars temple) at Hanumakonda and Rudreswara (Ramappa) Temple, which is located about 65 km from Warangal.

Though most of the temples are characterized and evolved from later Chalukyan style of temple architecture and decoration, all the temples, and temple complexes of Kakatiyas have a distinct style, technology and decoration exhibiting the influence of Kakatiyan sculptor. Trikutaalyas and the sculptural art and decoration specific to the time and Kakatiyan Empire are the main justifying components for the Outstanding Universal Value. Keerthi Thoranas is another example of distinct style of Kakatiyas for the gateways to temple complexes, unique only to this region and testimony to highly evolved proportions of aesthetics in temple and town gateways in South India. The Thoranas demonstrate both a creative masterpiece, and a continuity and transformation through interchange of cultural values like that of Buddhist art traditions from 2nd Century BC to 11th Century AD. The initiative and a deviant path of experimentation of skill over dolerite by the Kakatiya sculptors continued to be used by subsequent Vijayanagara artists.

The Glorious Temples in Kakatiyas Dynasty

The three proposed serial sites have a common linkage characteristic of Kakatiyan kingdom with Tank, Temple and Town as an example for Creative masterpieces, interchange of cultural values and unique testimony to Kakatiya Cultural Tradition. Though the three edifices may give isolated view of their role of the period, invariably the water tanks (water conservation structures) resulting in raise of Towns flourished with temples and knitted to each other.

The cultural and administrative distinction of the Kakatiyas was greatly referred in contemporary literature like Kridabhiramamu and also later by the famous traveller Marco Polo. Prominent among the rulers are Ganapathi Deva, Prathapa Rudra, and Rani (queen) Rudrama Devi. After the defeat of Pratapa Rudra, the Musunuri Nayaks united seventy-two Nayak chieftains and captured Warangal from Delhi sultanate and ruled for fifty years.



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Remnants of Swayambhu temple and Keerthi Thoranas, Warangal fort

Warangal fort is 12-km from Hanumakonda, built by King Ganapathi in 13th century and completed by his daughter Rudrama Devi, in 1261 A.D., The fort has two walls, with the traces of the third. The fort has 45 towers and pillars spread over a radius of 19 km, and a temple of Mother Earth called ‘Swayambhudevi Alayam’ in the middle.

The Warangal Fort was a huge construction with three distinct circular strongholds surrounded by a moat. Four paths with decorative and lofty gateways known as Keerthi Thorana or Hamsa Thorana, set according to the cardinal points, lead to the center where a huge Shiva Temple (Swayambhu Gudi) once existed. The archaeological remains through the explored ground plan of the Swayambhu temple suggests the huge dimensions of the temple, as corroborated by the contemporary work of Kridabhramamu. The gateway is obvious but much of the temple is in archaeologically significant for its clear visibility of the total temple complex along with gateways. The archaeological remains of Swayambhu temple complex and Keerthi Thoranas demonstrate both a creative masterpiece, and a continuity and transformation through interchange of cultural values for many years of Indian and Asian art history.

Rudreswara Temple (Thousand pillars temple), Hanumakonda

Rudreswara Temple locally known as Veyisthambala Gudi (Thousand pillars temple) is one of the fine and earliest available examples of of Kakatiya art, architecture and sculpture. It was built by Rudra Deva, and named after him as ‘Sri Rudreswara swamy temple with the presiding deity as Rudreswara, in 1163 AD in the style of later Chalukyan and early Kakatiyan Architecture, star shaped and triple shrined (Trikutalaya). The temple is a fine specimen of architecture and sculpture with One thousand pillars implying that the temple has many pillars. There are richly carved pillars, perforated screens, exquisite icons; rock cut elephants and the monolithic dolerite Nandi as components of the temple.

Strengthening of foundations like sand box technique, the skill of Kakatiya sculptors is manifest in adroit craftsmanship and flawless ivory carving technique in their art. The ingenuity of Kakatiya sculptors is visible in likes of lathe turned, and shiny polish in dolerite and granite stone sculpture and craft work of Nava rangamandapa.

Ramappa temple, Palampet

Ramappa temple is Situated 65 km from Warangal at Palampet. The Ramappa Temple, probably is the only temple in India known by the name of the sculptor who built it. The head sculptor was Ramappa, after whom the temple is known today, rather than after the presiding deity, Ramalingeswara, as is the general norm. The temple of Ramappa was built on behalf of the king, Kakati Ganapathi Deva by his chief commander Rudra Samani at a place called Ranakude in Atukuru province.

This temple has been rightfully described as the “brightest star in the galaxy of medieval temples of the Deccan” a repository of Kakatiyan creative genius, with intricate carvings adorning the walls, pillars and ceilings of this marvellous edifice. The temple is a Shivalaya and stands majestically on a 6 ft high star shaped platform. The hall in front of the sanctum has numerous carved pillars that have been positioned to create an effect that combines light and space wonderfully and the exquisitely chiselled walls and ceiling are unique to the time of Kakatiyan sculptors and empire.

The sculptural work of dance postures in the temple appears like frozen record of dances of the region in stone and was of great inspiration for the famous work ‘Nritya Ratnavali’, by Jayapa Senani. The postures pertaining to Bharata Natya, Shringa, Bharunga, Rathi, Perini Nritya etc., are engraved on the pillars and top-beams of ‘Mukha Mandapam’, The mythological episodes such as ‘Gopika Vastrapaharanam, Tripura samharm, Daksha Samharam, Ksheera Sagara Madhanam, Girija Kalyanam etc., stand for the highest standards of Kakatiya Sculpture. The ‘Nagini’ and other eleven devanarthakis are arranged as supporting beams on both sides of each entrance. The aesthetic sense which scaled innumerable heights in Kakatiya sculpture is clearly evident in these twelve postures of devanarthakis. The desi (local) varieties of dances such as Perini, Prenkana, Sudda Nartana, Dandarasak, Sivapriya, Chindu and Kolata are some dance forms in the sculptural art of the temple. The famous treatise of dance ‘Nritya Ratnavali’ of Kakatiya period is said to have been inspired by the construction and art work on Ramappa temple.

The Ramappa temple is a best example of the love for art, music and dance as patronized by Kakatiyas. The temple is situated in a valley and is built with bricks so light that they can float on water, established after scientific research conducted indicating the creative master pieces of the time. The temple withstood many wars, invasions and natural calamities.



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“We expect the UNESCO teams to visit the temple in the coming months and ascertain its universal values that can put the Ramappa temple under the World Heritage sites. There are four major factors that make the temple truly one of its kind. The first is the floating bricks of the temple,” Rao says.

“The roof (garbhalayam) of the temple is built with bricks which are so light that they can float on water. The second is the sand box technology on which the Ramappa temple was built, which made it resistant to earthquakes and other natural calamities. Depending on the size and area of the construction, the earth was dug three meters deep for the foundation. It was then filled with sand and for the sand mixture to become strong, it was mixed with granite, jaggery and Karakkaya (Chebula),” the professor adds.

Thirdly, the temple is known for its intricate carvings, the most famous one being the flute at the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum, which when hit makes the sound of sa-ri-ga-ma.

“The temple was carved with dolomite rocks, which are so intricate that even a hair can pass through it. The pillars have 13 significant carvings, probably indicating the thirteenth century during which the temple was built,” Rao explains.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The creations of Trikotalaya and Keerthi Thorana in temple typology and entrance gateways in India are representative examples in form and design. They demonstrate both a creative masterpiece, and stand as sole examples for continuity of evolved cultural traits and transformation through interchange of cultural values for many years of Indian art history.

Use, selection and making of materials, traditions and construction techniques followed in thousand pillars temple, Ramappa temple and Swayambhu temple have established scientific research base proving the creative master pieces during Kakatiyan era.

Location and setting of serial sites and in particular environs of Warangal fort indicate the important interchange of cultural values as can be seen in the reign of Chalukyan Kings and early and late Vijayanagara rulers. The sites are not only testimony to Kakatiyan empire who brought major geographical area of Telugu language speaking people under one umbrella and linking reference of valour and might of Kakatiyas. The establishment and continuity of Kakatiyan power that resulted in emergence of these structural marvels - devoid of any perennial water source, stand as examples and characteristic of Kakatiyan kingdom. The link to Dance traditions of Kakatiyan empire and as documented in the Dance treatise Nritya Ratnavali by a military general Jayasenapati of the Kakatiyas is displayed in sculpture of Ramappa Temple. This stands as a remarkable example of the link to establish textual renderings of Dance traditions and sculptural renderings in India.

Criteria (i): The sculptural and form modification, evolution of temple art and sculpture and use of technology in material selection and making as displayed in Keerthi Thoranas at Warangal, Temples of thousand pillars at Warangal and Rudreswara (Ramappa) temple at Palampet are master pieces of human creativity.

Criteria (ii): Exhibits an important interchange of human values over 11th to 14th century AD in Kakatiyan empire region of the Deccan in southern India on development in sandbox technology for geo structural strength. Also, the later Chalukyan is carried over to Kakatiyan in the sculpture and temple form. This indigenously developed method, treatment of divine, human, animal, floral and geometric designs in most appealing proportions, creation of three-dimensional figures, in an immaculate way using tiny tools and implements is a contribution for the human kind universally. This also led to unique style of the region identifiable as Kakatiyan style.

Criteria (iii): Unique testimony to Kakatiyan kingdom in the temple building tradition and art history of South India. The serial sites are an outstanding example of temple architecture evolution illustrating a phase of development in the technology, science and art of temple building and construction in South India.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity

The proposed serial sites containing Tank, Temple and Town maintain authenticity for their material, form, design and construction techniques displaying the original values of Cultural and building traditions of Kakatiyan Empire.

Creation of Trikotalaya and Keerthi Thorana in temple typology, selection and making of materials, traditions and construction techniques, link to dance traditions of Kakatiya empire and as documented in the dance treatise of the time; display integrity in their form and material.



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The site of Swayambhu temple is an Archaeological site, requiring further exploration, as the total complex is yet to be reinterpreted for original link and layout with Warangal fort Town and other historical structures in and around fort. The serial sites with three locations and components together form a representative of the criteria and demonstrate the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, without any need of future additions to the series.

Comparison with other similar properties

The Kakatiya temples and gateways are excellent examples of architectural, structural and sculptural ingenuity and can be compared to the following World Heritage Sites sharing common typological aspects of being historic building ensembles comprising temples and/or temple complexes. However, as the description above explains, the Kakatiyan architecture has unique components that are not seen elsewhere. The strengthening of foundations through sand box technique, the skill of Kakatiya sculptors manifest in adroit craftsmanship and flawless ivory carving technique in their art, the ingenuity of Kakatiya sculptors visible in likes of lathe turned, and shiny polish in dolerite and granite stone sculpture and craft work of Nava rangamandapa are some such aspects.

The Kakatiya temples and gateways are comparable to the WHS Group of Monuments at Hampi as both are creative masterpieces in temple building and technology. Developed over three centuries before the Vijayanagara period, the Kakatiya architectural traits and the experimentation on hard granite were indeed proto type of the Vijayanagara art style. For the imposing Jagati and Kakshasanas, the Kakatiya temples are comparable with Khajuraho group and Hemakuta group of temples at Hampi. Though in form and material appear to be similar with Hemakuta group of temples at Hampi, the Kakatiya temples and Gateways exhibit proto type nature standing as testimony to the future Vijayanagara art style.

Kakatiya temples and gateways are comparable to WHS Khajuraho Group of Monuments for the development of distinct style in temple building and depicting balance between architecture and sculpture. However, the manifestation in the former through architectural typologies and features like Keerthi Thoranas, Jagati and Kakshasanas during Kakatiya period is unique and represents a different kind of architectural, structural and artistic ingenuity. Kakatiya temples and gateways are comparable to WHS Great living Chola temples, in the important interchange of human values within Chalukyan and Kakatiyan regions for the development of distinct style in temple building and Architecture. The sites stand as testimony to Kakatiyan temple building tradition like Chola temple building tradition.

Kakatiya temples and gateways are comparable to WHS Group of Monuments at Pattadakal which is representative of the high point of eclectic art in the 7th and 8th Centuries CE and achieved a harmonious blend of architectural forms from northern and southern India. A similar high point was achieved with the Kakatiya temples and gateways but with a distinct manifestation as seen in the temple complexes with the construction technology of Kakatiyan builders, viz., Keerthi Thoranas, sandbox technology for foundations, use floating bricks in Ramappa temple. The archaeological remains of Swayambhu temple complex and Keerthi Thoranas demonstrate both a creative masterpiece, and a continuity and transformation through interchange of cultural values for many years of Indian and Asian art history.

In ancient India, art and religion were inseparable. It may not be wrong to say the religion was the vehicle through which the art developed, evolved and flourished. Kings and their representatives were the major patrons of art. More often than not they commissioned artists to build temples devoted to their family or state deities. Whenever a region has been ruled long enough by a dynasty, we find a cluster of temples built by the generations of the dynasty. The best Kakatiya temples were built when the rule of the Kakatiya dynasty was at its peak. In the medieval history of Deccan, Hindu temple remains of the Rastrakuta period here are very few, but temple building activity was vigorously carried by the Chalukyas of Kalyani and this was continued by the Kakatiyas. Under the kakatiya rule telugu region was developed in various fields. They promoted agriculture and temple construction activity. The three proposed serial sites have a common linkage characteristic of Kakatiya kingdom with Tank, Temple and Town as an example for creative masterpieces, interchange of cultural values and unique testimony to Kakatiya cultural tradition. In that time the temple was not only a place of worship, it filled a large place in the cultural and economic life of the people. Its construction and maintain offered employment to number of architects and craftsmen who vied with one another in bold planning and skillful execution.

The making of icons in stone and metal gave scope to the talents of the best sculptors of the country. The daily routine, especially of the larger temples, gave constant employment to number of priests, chariots, musicians, dancing girls, florists, cooks and many other classes of servants. The periodical festivals were occasions marked by fairs, contests of learning, wrestling-matches and every other form of popular entertainment. Schools and hospitals were often located in the temple precincts, and it also served often as the town hall where people assembled to consider local affairs or to hear the exposition of sacred literature. The large endowments in land and cash bestowed on each temple by successive generations of pious donors tended to make it generous landlord and a banker



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whose aid was always available to those that needed it. The practice of decorating images, particularly those used during processions, with numerous jewels set with precious stones encouraged the jeweler's art to a considerable extent. It is no exaggeration to say that the temple gathered round itself all that was best in the arts of civilized existence and regulated them with humaneness born of the spirit of Sanatana **Bharathiya Dharma**. As an agency of social well-being the medieval Indian temple has few parallels. The reason for this position is due to the temple being a *devalaya* or the house of God.

During the kakatiya period innumerable majestic temples were built and dedicated to different gods & goddesses and the temples are classified into Ekakuta (single shrine), Trikuta (triple shrines) and Panchakuta (five shrines). When new villages were constructed, the architects invariably make provision for a temple by leaving proper site for it. Installation of temples in those days was treated as one of the seven pious deeds popularly known as **Sapthasanthanas**. As we know from epigraphs, literature and monuments there was the popular temple of God Svayambhudeva at Orugallu, the tutelary deity of the kakatiyas. The Thousand pillared temple of Rudreswara, the Padmakshi temple and the Prasannakesava temple were some of the important shrines in Anumakonda. The temples at Palampeta, Pillalamarri, Ghanpur, Nagunuru and Nagulapadu are the other famous among those, built during that period. The Kakatiya temples and gateways are excellent examples of architectural, structural and sculptural ingenuity and can be compared to the following World Heritage Sites sharing common typological aspects of being historic building ensembles comprising temples or temple complexes. However, as the description above explains, the Kakatiyan architecture has unique components that are not seen elsewhere.

The strengthening of foundations through sand box technique, the skill of Kakatiya sculptors manifest in adroit craftsmanship and flawless ivory carving technique in their art, the ingenuity of Kakatiya sculptors visible in likes of lathe turned, and shiny polish in dolerite and granite stone sculpture and craft work of Navarangamandapa are some such aspects. All these temples are endowed with lands and villages and they maintain their own system of administration run by the respective governing bodies. The temple was organized by the four kinds of the employees like *sthanapatis*, *manulu*, *sanulu* and *nibandanakaras*. About services also, the temple was such a concern there any unemployed person could seek shelter, do some work or other and make his livelihood. It is not a problem for the temple with its enormous resources to feed the helpless poor. Nobody can deny this fact that the distinctive personality of the present Telangana region had evolved out of the cultural roots of the Kakatiyas. This research paper titled 'Temple administration under the Kakatiyas in Warangal- A study' an attempt of exclusive study. Therefore, it is proposed to bring in to light detailed study of the Temple administration under the Kakatiyas in Warangal and its impact on the society.

The Governing body of Temple Administration

Numerous temples were built during the Kakatiya period by the kings, royal family members, officials and chiefs. The main purpose of building temple was to acquire religious merit. Lot of grants were made in the form of lands, villages and money for the maintenance of temples. Rich temples conducted various festivals and rituals in large scale and naturally many people were employed to meet the demands of the temple. Thus, the temple became a big employer. The governing body of temple is called **sthana**. Several inscriptions of this period mentioned that **sthanapathi** is the head of the temple or governing body. The *sthanadipathi* is a *vritti*-holder appointed to look after the temple administration. Apart from *sthanapathi*, the priest of the temple and local assembly also played important role in receiving the gifts made to the temples and their proper utilization. The temple staff was paid wages in the form of land granted specially for this purpose. The Durgi inscription of Rudrama gives a list of persons involved in the conduct of *rangabhoga* of the god Gopinathadeva who included musicians, players of various musical instruments and dancers. All of them were granted share in the land gifted towards their wages. A servant meant for cleaning (*kambhapu muttu celagedi uligapu banesa*) was also granted four *tumus* of land. In an early instance a sweeper of a *basadi* (*basadiya kasam geleva*) was paid one *paga* towards wages. The Durgi inscription lists 43 employees in which 36 were musicians and dancers and the rest were attending to other duties. The Gopinatha temple at that time rich and had an effective administration.

Employees of the Temple

The Sathuluru inscription of Velanati chief Gonka dated A.D.1135 mentions that there were four types of temple employees i.e. *Sthanapathis*, *Manulu*, *Sanulu* and *Nibandakaras*. Among the *Sthanapathis* the priests of the temple also include. The Tripuranthakam inscription dated A.D.1312, which mentions *sthanapathi* and priests differently shows that the position of priest in the temple administration is not same as the position of *sthanapathi*, who is a member of the governing body.

The second category of employees in temple is called *manulu*. The word *manu* is derived from the Sanskrit word *manya*. In some cases, the officers like *kottaruvu* (store keeper), *bhandari* (treasurer), *boya* (shepherd) and *srikaranam* (accountant) are mentioned as *manulu*. Priests (*pujarulu*) and *telikas* (oilman) also comes under this category. An inscription at Juttiga dated A.D.1255 mentions all these employees. The Chebrolu inscription dated A.D.1152 states 300 *sanis* and 300 *ayyanulu*, *manulu*.



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The third type of employees are known as sanulu. The sanis of the temples are a special category of women in those days. Devotees donated these women to the temples for the purpose of conducting dance of daily rangabhoga in the rangamandapam. They have no specific salary their income depends on the grants of the donors. They were not ordinary prostitutes. They were married women living a dignified family life, who were attached to the temples to perform dance before the god on behalf of the donor.

The fourth category of employees are the servants. They were called as Nibandhakandru, karanakarmikulu. The servants, cooks, watermen, watchmen, sweepers, masons and other artisans comes in this class. The Durgi inscription of Ganapathideva dated A.D. 1269 mentions 20 types of employees like bhāratha-kamdrū, maddela-kamdrū, siyanetalu, sampradayapu vennakuta, gradaguvadu, patralu etc. who were involved in rangabhoga. Nadendla inscription dated A.D.1133, mentions about 48 employees including singers, player on veena and flute, potter etc. gold smiths who prepared jewellery to the goddess and sculptors are also included in these employees.

Summing Up

Kakatiyan rule was largely synonymous with prosperity and wellbeing of the common people, widespread agrarian developments, and strong trade connections with foreign countries. Today 900 years down the line when we see joy and happiness resonating from the sculptures in this temple, we observe a historical documentation, a look into a society where once lives were filled with prosperity and ensuing happiness. Due to the devotion of the people, all the valuable products reach the temple first, and even the sanis also reach the temple. After the royal palace, the temple is the largest employer of that level, employing a large number of employees both on regular salaries and on vrittis in the form of lands. During the Kakatiya period, the administration of the temples continued to serve the purpose of raising awareness about the community in order to serve the people.

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