



## **Landscape as Temple: Ideologies of Food, Water, and Irrigation in Middle Period Southern India**

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What happens when entire landscapes “become” temples? In this paper, Kathleen Morrison considers both Vijayanagara-era temple culture in northern Karnataka and its extension to the regional landscape. After around CE 1000, in this region—and elsewhere across southern India—similar sets of elite South Indian cuisines developed, focusing on rice and associated food crops such as coconut, cane sugar, and bananas, all of which require water- and labor-intensive production regimes. In the semi-arid interior, around the capital city of Vijayanagara, the production of such crops proved to be a significant challenge. Access to elite foods, just as access to sources of water uncontaminated by contact with lower categories of persons, was critical for recruiting and maintaining the elite residents of aspiring states such as the Vijayanagara polity—soon to become the major imperial power in the region; yet, creating the exacting conditions of elite consumption required significant changes in regional landscapes as well as regimes of land, labor, and social relations. The paper considers the ways in which cultural regimes of value and power worked in concert with the constraints of the semi-arid landscapes of the peninsular interior to produce a material record of structures and water-related features whose impressive diversity of form, scale, and long-term resonance speaks to the complex and variegated set of social and ritual actors involved in their construction and use.