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978-0-521-17416-9 - The Political Economy of Craft Production: Crafting Empire in South India, c. 1350-1650

Carla M. Sinopoli

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The Political Economy of Craft Production

Crafting Empire in South India, c. 1350–1650

The study of specialized craft production has a long tradition in archaeological research. Through analyses of material remains and the contexts of their production and use, archaeologists can examine the organization of craft production and the economic and political status of craft producers. This new study combines archaeological and historical evidence from the author's twenty years of fieldwork at the imperial capital of Vijayanagara to explore the role and significance of craft production in the cities' political economy of the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. By examining a diverse range of crafts from poetry to pottery, Sinopoli evaluates models of craft production and expands upon theoretical and historical understandings of empires in general and Vijayanagara in particular. It is the most broad-ranging study of craft production in South Asia, or in any other early state empire.

CARLA M. SINOPOLI is Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan and Curator of Asian Archaeology in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. She is the author of *Pots and Palaces: The Earthenware Ceramics of the Noblemen's Quarter of Vijayanagara* (1993), *Approaches to Archaeological Ceramics* (1991) and co-editor of *Empires: Comparative Perspectives from Archaeology and History* (2001).

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*In memory of
Richard Carl Sinopoli
and Channabasappa S. Patil*

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Acknowledgments

In the spring of 1981, when I was studying for my doctoral exams in Near Eastern archaeology, I received a letter from John Fritz, inviting me to join an archaeological field project he was beginning at the site of the historic South Indian capital of Vijayanagara. His letter started a journey that has lasted for more than twenty years, and if this book is not its culmination, it is at least an important way point. My first fieldwork at Vijayanagara took place in 1983 and 1984 as part of my doctoral research on the earthenware ceramics from the city. In 1988, I began a new field project, in collaboration with Kathleen D. Morrison – The Vijayanagara Metropolitan Survey – the field component of which ended in 1997.

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