At the heart of the old city of Warangal in southern India, which once served as the capital of the Kakatiya kingdom, there lies an open field strewn with five acres of broken architectural fragments: smashed columns, overturned slabs, and fractured beams (fig. 1). Truly, “a more vivid picture of willful destruction can hardly be imagined,” as George Michell has observed, and it is perfectly fitting that a photograph of these ruins should grace the cover of the paperback Indian edition of Partha Chatterjee’s *The Nation and its Fragments* (Michell, “City as Cosmogram”).

My concern for the moment, however, is not with the metaphoric fragments of a nation, but rather, with the literal fragments of what was once a Hindu temple complex dedicated to the god Svayambhusiva. When standing, this temple would have been one among the marvels of medieval Deccani architecture. But, in the third decade of the fourteenth century, the temple was subjected to a thoroughgoing demolition when the Kakatiya capital was taken by the army of the Delhi Sultanate under the Tughluq prince Ulugh Khan.1

What is particularly enigmatic about this field of ruins is that it is bounded by four monumental stone portals, known as *kirti-toranas*, or “portals of glory,” which were spared from the general destruction of the temple and still remain standing in almost pristine condition today (fig. 2).2 Towering over 30 feet high and 40 feet wide, these structures possess a monumentality that is only vaguely sensed through photographs. Why should these lofty portals have been spared, when everything else within the intervening space was razed? And even more puzzling, why is it that this unusual pattern of destruction and preservation has not even been commented upon by most scholars of Deccani art and architecture? Oddly, the problem remains ignored, and instead, Warangal’s four *kirti-toranas* have simply been accepted as unproblematic vestiges of the Kakatiya past.3 Indeed, they have by now become emblematic icons of the Kakatiyas who built them, and by extension, of the Telugu Hindu identity that the Kakatiyas are often held to represent.
1. Warangal, view of ruined Svayambhusiva site from southwest. Photograph by John Henry Rice.

2. Warangal, southern kirti-torana from south, with northern torana visible in the distance. Photograph by John Henry Rice.