

Sacred ensembles of Hoysalas

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Brief note on Hoysala architecture

Architecture: The architecture of the Hoysalas is a hybrid of the nagara style of temple architecture of north India and the dravidian style from the South. The temples were built on platforms and had a star shaped plan.

Sacred ensembles of the Hoysalas

The sacred ensembles of the Hoysalas were far beyond temples for worship. They were extraordinary expressions of spiritual purpose and vehicles of spiritual practice and attainment. Set in the foothills of the hilly and forested terrain of the Western Ghats on sites of enduring sanctity, the sacred ensembles included grand and small Hindu temples designed on ancient treatises, Jaina temples, numerous secondary structures, intricate sculpture and iconography, temple dances and music, lakes and tanks, town planning with the sacred elements, and a relationship to the natural environment that was both material and symbolic. Following are the architectural marvels of Hoysalas

- A navaranga was usually included as a place for people to gather and participate in cultural programs such as music and dance performances, story-telling from mythology, and religious discourses.
- Mantapa that are pavilions or pillared halls of all sizes are a typical feature and occurred with temples and without.
- Kalyani or stepped wells are commonly found in the Hoysala sacred ensembles. These wells served as an important source of water and were an important architectural structure.
- Rathabeedi : The temple complex had rathabeedi or wide

streets for processions and circumambulation of the deities on enormous chariots.

Sacred Ensemble of the Hoysala at Belur

- Belur was the first capital city of the Hoysalas.
- The Chennakeshava temple(Vishnu) complex was at the center of the old walled town located on the banks of the Yagachi River.
- The complex itself was walled in a rectangular campus with four rectilinear streets around it for ritual circumambulation of the deity.
- Construction of the temple commenced in 1117 AD and took a 103 years to complete
- The richly sculptured exterior of the temple includes sculptures and iconography and horizontal friezes that depict scenes from daily life, music, and dance, and narrate scenes from the life of Vishnu and his reincarnations and the epics, Ramayana, and Mahabharata.
- The layout of the town represents the cosmic diagram with walled kotte, the streets in four cardinal directions, the temples of anjaneya at the gates at the ends of these four cardinal streets, the rathabeedi or chariot streets around the temple, and the remains of the defensive wall and moat.
- Chariot festivals with processions around the temple complex and festivals centered on the Vishnusamudhra lake have continued to this day.

Sacred Ensembles of Halebid

- At the zenith of the Hoysala empire, the capital was shifted from Belur to Halebid that was then known as Dorasamudhra.
- Far bigger and grander than Belur, the city served as the capital for nearly three centuries.
- The Hoysaleshwara temple at Halebidu is the most exemplary architectural ensemble of the Hoysalas extant

today.

- Built in 1121CE during the reign of the Hoysala King, Vishnuvardhana Hoysaleshwara.
- The temple, dedicated to Shiva, was sponsored and built by wealthy citizens and merchants of Dorasamudra.
- More sculpturally and artistically sophisticated than any other Hoysala temple, the Hoysaleshwara temple is most well-known for the more than 240 wall sculptures that run all along the outer wall.
- Bands of intricately carved friezes run along the exterior wall expressing aspirational spiritual qualities, symbolism, and mythology.
- Halebid has a walled complex containing of three Jaina basadi (temples) of the Hoysala period as well as a stepped well.
- The basadi are located in close proximity to the Dorasamudhra lake. The Parshvanatha Basadi, the Adinatha Basadi, and the Shanthinatha Basadi are three Jaina shrines containing tall idols of the Jaina deities.
- The Parshvanatha Basadi, as the largest of them also has niches for idols of the 24 thirthankaras or saints of Jainism.
- The Kedareshwara temple is another exquisitely carved temple dedicated to Shiva that is close to the Jaina basadi complex and with a temple pond adjacent to it.
- Dorasamudhra was built with defensive fortifications. The walls had 5 gateways in addition to the 4 main ones in the cardinal directions.
- Numerous tanks, wells, and ponds, are in and around the town and lakes just outside.
- The largest lake close to the Hoysaleshwara temple is the Dorasamudhra lake. Mantapa of various types are extant around the Dorasamudhra lake.
- Hulikere, located on the southern side of the town is a kalyani (stepped well) of exceptional beauty

Hoysala Dynasty

The Hoysalas ruled a large part of modern day Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu from the 10th to the 14th century.

Founder: Sala

Capital: Dwarasamudra (present-day Halebid)

Emblem: The figure representing Sala attacking the tiger

Great king: Vishnuvardhana