

AMENDMENT/PROPOSAL

Agenda Item	WHC/23/45.COM/8B Nominations to the World Heritage List
Draft Decision	45 COM 8B.38
Submitted by the Delegation of....	Japan
Co-author(s) (if any)	Belgium, Greece, Bulgaria, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Oman, Egypt, Argentina, Mali
Date of submission	7 September 2023

TEXT

E.3 ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

E.3.1 New Nominations

Property	Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas
ID No.	1670
State Party	India
Criteria proposed by State Party	(i) (ii) <u>(iv)</u>

Draft Decision: 45 COM 8B.38

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC/23/45.COM/8B and WHC/23/45.COM/INF.8B1,*

2. ~~Inscribes Refers the nomination of the~~ **Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas, India,** on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria (i), (ii) and (iv); ~~back to the State Party in order to allow it to:~~

3. Adopts the following Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:

Brief synthesis

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas is a serial property comprising three component sites in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. The three components of the serial nomination, viz., the Channakeshava temple in Belur, the Hoysalesvara temple in Halebidu and the Keshava temple in Somanathapura, are the three best representatives of the 12th - 13th century Hoysala oeuvre of sacred architecture.

The early Hoysala rulers who established their new kingdom and state fashioned a distinct and novel sacred architecture that set their temples apart from those of contemporary kingdoms and dynasties, even as it drew inspiration from them.

Hoysala temple plans and forms were the result of adaptations, modifications, and experimentation with features drawn from different temple-building traditions including the Nagara tradition predominant in north India, the Dravida tradition prevalent in south India, the Bhumija tradition of central India and the Karnata Dravida tradition of the Kalyani Chalukyan territories. The multi-pointed stellate ground plan common in Karnata Dravida and Bhumija temples inspired the extremely complex, stellate plans of the Hoysalas, with rhythmically indented walls of a kind not seen before. Horizontal sculptural bands of elephants and people first featured in temples in western India in the 11th century. The Hoysalas built on this germ of an idea to create the stunning multi-tier friezes that are unique to their temples. Similarly, ceilings featuring corbelled domes, also inspired by temples of western India, have been used and embellished here very differently, thereby making them quite emphatically local.

Hoysala temples are characterised by profuse embellishment and an exuberant horror vacui. The temples' external walls are animated with a continuous parade of life-sized or larger sumptuous images of gods, goddess, musicians, dancers, ascetics and attendant figures. Along the temple plinths, a teeming multi-tier frieze comprising vigorous elephants, horses, crocodiles, plants, humans and birds-a microcosm of the living worlds-twists around the whole temple. The interiors of these temples showcase finely carved, highly polished pillars in myriad profiles, along with exquisite bracket figures of dancers and musicians, their sensuality and dynamism expertly rendered in stone. Ceilings are adorned with figurative sculptures and with floral, geometric and botanical motifs, the stone resembling wood in its ornateness.

The Hoysala aesthetic emphasised intricacy and hyperreal detail across all levels of sculpture, whether it is pillars, ceilings or wall sculptures. Carvings are in high relief with deep undercutting, and artists have delighted in minutiae, detailing each bead, fingernail or leaf blade with great attention. This extravagant ornamentation and relentless pursuit of detail was made possible by fully exploring and exploiting

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the qualities of schist the fine-grained, relatively soft mineral that the Hoysalas chose for their temples.

This technical mastery over their material complemented a creative genius in translating beliefs, stories and abstract ideas into the medium of stone. In their narrative scenes and figural sculptures, artists varied perspective, composition and points of view to best convey the drama or essence of a scene.

The creative interventions and innovations of the Hoysala artists and architects created visually stunning masterpieces that also served to emphasise sacral meanings. Thus, the large sculptures of deities on the temple's outer walls invited greater interaction with the divine as devotees performed the ritual circumambulation of the temple. The practice of having stories from the Hindu epics and puranas unspool in sequence along the walls similarly deepened the religious experience of the circumambulation. The idea of an unfolding narrative along the circumambulation path, first introduced by the Hoysalas, is carried forward in some 15th century temples in the World Heritage Site of Hampi and elsewhere around Karnataka.

This coming together of creative genius, architectural eclecticism and symbolism led to outstanding and unequalled sacred architecture and the birth of the novel 'Hoysala temple'.

Such creativity was accompanied by an unprecedented degree of artistic agency as evidenced by the hundreds of artists' 'signatures' in Hoysala temples. While many are only names or initials chiselled just below a carving, several epigraphs also include details such as the artist's lineage and his titles, in language reminiscent of royal epithets. Such artistic agency was unusual in the precolonial Indian subcontinent and points to the high standing that artists enjoyed in Hoysala society.

Criterion (i):

The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas, represented by the three components chosen here, testify to the creative genius of the Hoysala architects and artists. In their profuse embellishment, high relief and joyous horror vacui, the temples are testimony to the artists' technical expertise over stone carving, a skill that remains matchless. The richly experiential and visually astounding temples they built demonstrate their creativity in translating religious beliefs and stories into sculpture. This coming together of technical mastery and symbolism to create novel masterpieces of architecture is an outstanding achievement of the Hoysala artists.

Criterion (ii):

The three components of the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas chosen here are examples of the new forms of temple architecture developed by them. These novel temple forms were a result of creative modifications of the plans and elements of temple architecture as prevalent elsewhere, complemented with indigenous innovations. Although some elements of this new and distinct language of temple architecture were carried forward in other regions, the masterpieces of sacred architecture built by the Hoysalas remain unequalled.

The 'Hoysala' temple form emerged from considered and informed choices of elements and features that were used in very self-conscious ways, with a clear understanding of the overall outcome that was desired. This deliberate and reflexive architectural eclecticism on the part of the temple builders is a unique Hoysala aesthetic.

Criterion (iv)

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas is an exceptional testimony to the Hoysala-style temples, which illustrate a significant stage in the historical development of Hindu temple architecture. It is an exceptional physical testimony to the diversity of religious architecture in India.

Integrity

The three components of the serial nomination with all their elements represent the significant style that developed in this region in the 12th - 13th century. These representative temples demonstrate one hundred and fifty years of building activity where the Hoysalas have adopted elements of temple building from different regions and creatively developed it into a novel style of their own.

The temples collectively bring out a holistic understanding of the context, society, culture, religion, politics and economy of the Hoysalas, expressed through their art and architecture. The typologies of these temples, built in chloritic schist, the elements of planform such as stellate plans and their complex variations, the elements such as adhisthana, the sculptural panels, many with artists' signatures, the intricate carvings in the interior and exteriors, all form an integral part of the temple expressing the outstanding universal values. The artistic excellence became the hallmark of the temples as demonstrated in the elements of the three components.

The integrity of each of these components in its architecture, sculptures and carvings continue to define the experience of the characteristic style of this region in this period. Though there have been damages to some sculptures, nonetheless, the features of the sculptures are clear enough to convey the sacral meanings of the iconography in these components and to show the creative skills in the intricacies of the carvings which became the hallmark of this dynasty.

Each of these components are nationally protected monuments and thus have defined boundaries for nominated property and the buffer zone. The buffer zones adopted for the management of the components are based on the law and therefore are regulated. In Belur, where the temple is a living temple, the buffer zone defines the context of the temple with the community still engaged with temple rituals and activities. In Halebidu, the buffer includes the context of the tank and the other nationally protected monuments. In Somanathapura, the temple has a large open space all around, protecting the nominated property. The three components along with their buffer zones are the best representative sites of the cultural era of the Hoysala temple style of the 12th and 13th century.

Authenticity

The three components of the serial nomination constitute the most significant temples of the Hoysala cultural era, representing a significant level of authenticity of the attributes which give the OUV to the serial nomination collectively as well as for each individual component. All these three components are built with chloritic schist and reflect the features such as stellate plans, horizontal friezes of the adhisthana, artists' signatures, sculptural panels and carvings that became the hallmark of this period.

At Channakeshava Temple at Belur, there is a continuity of worship, rituals and all festivals since its inception in 1117 CE. At Hoysalesvara Temple at Halebidu, worship has long been discontinued. Presently, only symbolic worship is allowed, and no rituals or festivals are allowed. The third component, Keshava Temple at Somanathapura, is also a non-worshipping temple.

In form and design, Somanathapura represents a complete example with all elements of Hoysala temple architecture including the shikhara or tower over all the three sanctums. The main temple which carries all the attributes of OUV is surrounded by a prakara which was completely dismantled and reconstructed in the last decade. The reconstruction was carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in a scientific manner. The attributes which express the outstanding universal values are part of the main temple and have not been impacted.

The shikhara or temple towers are absent at Hoysalesvara Temple at Halebidu. There is no clear evidence of its existence in any epigraphical collection. The Hoysalesvara Temple, also retains authenticity by virtue of its sumptuously carved exterior and interior which are all present in their original form. Towards the eastern side of the temple are the Nandi mandapas (pillared halls built to enshrine the sacred bulls) associated with the main temple. The temple still retains all the attributes which express its OUV. The setting of the temple on the banks of the large tank is well maintained.

At Channakeshava Temple, the main temple expresses all the attributes which convey the OUV. There are other shrines in the temple complex which were built over a period of time since the inception of the temple. The stylistic features of these temple structures reflect the time period in which they were built. They were built around the main temple and hence have not disturbed the setting of the Channakeshava Temple itself, the main temple in the complex. The shikhara or the tower over the main temple was dismantled in the late 19th century and was thereafter never rebuilt. However, this has not affected the living temple which continues to be an important place of worship. All the features which define the attributes are still very evident in the temple.

Thus, the three components retain authenticity in form and design, materials of the attributes which clearly express the OUV of the components.

Management and protection requirements

The components of the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas are protected and managed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), an attached office and organization under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. All three temples are safeguarded by the Ancient Monument and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR), the national-level law amended in 2010. The conservation, maintenance, and management for these ensembles are guided by the National Conservation Policy for Monuments, Archaeological Sites, and Remains 2014. Designated as "Ancient Monuments" of national significance, these components are safeguarded well defined buffer comprising a Prohibited Area extending 100 meters in all directions from the monument's boundaries. Additionally, there is a Regulated Area of 200 meters beyond the Prohibited Area. In these protected and regulated areas, all activities are subject to prohibition and regulation, as outlined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules 2011. In addition, the buffer zone of Channakeshava Temple, Belur has been extended to incorporate the Vishnusamudra tank and tank street (Kere Beedhi).

The buffer zone is managed as per the statutes of the AMASR Act, 1958 and is guided by a two-tier structure: the Regional Level Apex Committee and the Local Level Committee comprising all concerned stakeholders such as ASI, State Government of Karnataka, Karnataka Hindu religious Institution and Charitable Endowment Department, local municipal bodies, Panchayat and local community representatives.

- a) Expand the property area of the Channakeshava Temple to include the Vishnusamudra Tank and the Kere Beedi (Tank Road),*
- b) Improve the conditions of the historical remains and significant views in the buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple component part,*
- c) Develop and implement a holistic interpretation and presentation plan, including an enhanced contextualised interpretation at all component parts, improved tourism facilities, an increased number of qualified tour guides and interpretative materials, and develop a diversified presentation of the lost temple structures and enclosure walls,*
- d) Establish the carrying capacity for the nominated property to use it as the baseline for tourist management;*

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3. 4. Recommends the State Party to give consideration to the following:

- a) Monitoring the impacts of the increasing air pollution on the sculptures and develop mitigation measures,*
- b) Encouraging community involvement in the conservation and management of the nominated property.*
- c) Improving the conditions of the historical remains and significant views in the buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple component part.*
- d) Developing and implementing a holistic interpretation plan and tourists' amenities*

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5. Requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2024, a report on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations for review by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th Session.

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