
Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas (India) No 1670

1 Basic information

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas

Location

Channakeshava Temple:
Town of Belur
Hassan District
State of Karnataka

Hoysaleswara Temple:
Town of Halebidu
Hassan District
State of Karnataka

Keshava Temple:
Village of Somanathapura
Mysuru District
State of Karnataka

India

Brief description

The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas is a serial nomination of the three most representative examples of Hoysala style temple complexes dating from the 12th to 13th centuries in the present State of Karnataka in southern India. The Hoysala style was created through the careful selection and integration of temple features from the past with those of contemporary temples in the region, with the intent of creating an identity different from the culturally strong neighbouring kingdoms. The stellate-shaped shrines are characterised by hyper-real sculptures and stone carvings that cover the entire architectural surface, a circumambulatory platform that follows the shape of the shrines, a large-scale sculptural gallery of religious, epic, and other stories thematically arranged along the circumambulatory platform, a multi-tiered frieze, and sculptures of the Sala legend. The excellence of the sculptural art underpins the artistic achievement of these temple complexes, which represent a significant stage in the historical development of Hindu temple architecture.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of three *groups of buildings*.

Included in the Tentative List

15 April 2014

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 12 to 18 September 2022.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 3 October 2022 requesting further information about the description, rationale for selecting the component temples, boundaries, enclosure walls of the Hoysaleswara Temple and Keshava Temple, integrity, monitoring indicators, and visitor management at the religious festivals.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 7 November 2022.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 21 December 2022 summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the Interim Report including: the historical context, boundaries, Site Management Plan, previous interventions, intangible dimension of the property and engagement of the local community, monitoring, carrying capacity, and interpretation and presentation.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2023.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2023

2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report provides only a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

The nominated property comprises three temple complexes considered to be the most representative of the architectural and artistic achievements of the Hoysala kingdom in southern India.

Component part 1: Channakeshava Temple

Located in the town of Belur, the early royal capital of the Hoysala rulers and at the heart of a traditional settlement for the Brahmin or priest community, this temple complex is enclosed by a quadrilateral wall with two entrances, one of which is a *gopura* (a barrel roofed temple gateway). The

building complex comprises eight primary and ten subsidiary structures. The primary structures are the Channakeshava Temple (the main shrine), Kappe Chennigaraya Temple, Vira Narayana Temple, Saumyanayaki Temple, Ranganayaki/Andal Temple, Vasudeva Sarovara (temple tank), and the two entrances. The subsidiary structures are the Garuda shrine and flag pole, lamp pole, Swing Pavilion, South-Eastern Pavilion and ancillary structures, North Pavilion, Muzrai office, granary, Kalyana Mandapa, East Pavilion, and rampart walls.

The Channakeshava Temple is the main shrine of the complex. Its central axis is aligned with the *gopura* to the east. It is a single-celled (sanctum) shrine with a sixteen-pointed stellate plan. To the east is the central pillared hall linked to the sanctum through an antechamber. It is accessed through entrance halls from the south, east, and north. A raised platform carrying all these structures follows the shape of the stellate plan of the sanctum, with a much larger footprint serving as the circumambulatory path for worshipers. This type of platform was the first amongst Hoysala dynasty temples and was adopted by the later temples of the Hoysala kingdom. Flanking the three entrances to the shrine are Hoysala symbolic sculptures showing the legend of Sala killing a tiger.

Both the exterior and interior of the building are fully decorated with sculptures and stone carvings of extremely high quality. At the plinth level of the external wall, the sculptures of the Kalyani Chalukyan idioms are arranged along the circumambulatory path. The corbelled shallow dome-ceiling over the central bay of the pillared hall features gods and goddesses, scenes from the epics, dwarves, lions, dancers, musicians, and decorative motifs. There are twenty-one inscriptions in the temple bearing the names of the sculptors and their home towns, which is unusual in Indian temples.

Outside the rampart walls in the proposed buffer zone there are several historical and religious sites associated with the temple complex.

Component part 2: Hoysalesvara Temple

Located in the town of Halebidu, the ancient capital of the Hoysala dynasty between the mid-11th and mid-14th centuries, and bordered by Dorasamudra Lake on the east, the temple complex is a symmetrical double-celled shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva. Facing east, the shrines are arranged side by side, one on the north and the other on the south, and are linked by a corridor through two central pillared halls. The stellate-shaped sanctums are accessed from the central pillared halls through their antechambers on the east. Each sanctum has a pavilion on the axis east of its entrance hosting a Nandi sculpture (Shiva's sacred bull). The southern pavilion is larger than its northern counterpart, having an extension dedicated to Surya, the Sun God. The raised platform follows the shape of the shrines and serves as the circumambulatory path. The enclosure walls were lost in the past. Archaeological excavations have revealed sections of the walls and the

plinths of an unidentified group of temples. The southern entrance of the temple has been partially reconstructed. In the southwestern corner of the main temple stands a memorial pillar with a dedicatory inscription to Kuvira Lakshma, who killed himself after the death of his king Ballala II. An open-air archaeological museum with a display of independent sculptural blocks stands northeast of the temple.

Both the exterior and interior of the temple are fully decorated with carvings and sculptures. The lower portion of the exterior walls is an eight-tiered horizontal sculptural narrative frieze, which became a standard feature in later Hoysala temples. The themes of these sculptures are the Hoysala idiom, epics such as *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Bhagavata Purana*, and mythical aquatic creatures. On the interior, square or rectangular ceilings are of flat or corbelled forms. The sculptures of the Sala legend are found in the interior. Approximately twenty names of sculptors are found, a few of which overlap with those at the Channakeshava Temple, suggesting that some sculptors worked on both temples.

Component part 3: Keshava Temple

Located in the strategic village of Somanathapura fronting the neighbouring Chola kingdom during the Hoysala dynasty, the Keshava Temple is the last major temple built in the Hoysala style of temple architecture, and represents this culmination of this style. It comprises triple-celled shrines, an enclosure wall, and a lamp pole.

The temple sits in the centre of a rectangular courtyard. The temple takes a cruciform configuration with three identical sanctums hosting three different forms of the god Vishnu. Each sanctum has a sixteen-pointed stellate plan and each is accessed through an antechamber. The antechambers link to a common pillared hall at the centre of the cruciform. The central hall is approached from the entrance through a spacious nine-bay entrance hall to the east. A six-tiered moulded platform follows the stellate floor plan of the temple, serving as both the circumambulatory path and access to the temple. The enclosure wall is rectangular in form, with an entrance hall in the middle of the east wall. It was reconstructed in its original form at its original place, though using granite. A granite lamp pole with a slender sixteen-sided circular shaft is located outside the temple, northeast of the entrance.

Both the exterior and interior of the main shrines are fully decorated. The exterior is decorated with nearly 200 figures arranged at eye level, making the act of circumambulation an intimate bodily encounter with the god. The superstructures are fully decorated. At least ten names of artists are repeated under specific sculptures, amongst which the work of two distinct guilds can be detected.

The area of the nominated property totals 10.47 ha for the three component parts, and the buffer zones, as revised by the State Party in November 2022, total 195.87 ha.

History and development

The Hoysalas, initially a mountain chieftainship in the Western Ghats, expanded their territory into the adjacent plains, transformed into a feudatory of the Kalyani Chalukyas, and gained independence in the early 12th century. The kingdom ruled over large parts of the present-day State of Karnataka from the 11th to the 14th centuries.

Along with their expansion and transformation, the Hoysalas seemed to be consciously forging a distinct identity to distinguish themselves from their long-lasting and culturally strong neighbouring kingdoms. The invention of the legend of the heroic Sala killing a tiger, along with continuing patronage of architecture, art, and literature by the royal family and elite class, were all parts of the same pursuit. In a region where religions played the dominant role in society, the functions of the temples were not just for fulfilling the needs of local believers, they were also used as displays of power by the Hoysala dynasty.

In this context, the Hoysala style temples were created through a careful and selective adoption, adaptation, and combination of temple forms prevalent in the region and in other parts of India, integrated with Hoysala art and literature. This new form of temple complex is distinctly different from the styles of its neighbouring kingdoms. The Hoysala style is the combination of several features, including stellate sanctums, platforms following the shape of the sanctums, multi-tiered friezes, thematically arranged sculptural galleries of religious, epic and other stories along the circumambulatory path, extensive sculpture and stone carvings that cover the entire surface, and, most importantly, sculptures of the legend of Sala killing a tiger, serving as the quintessence of the temples. During their ruling period more than 1,500 temples were constructed by the Hoysalas, of which about 140 survive today.

The Hoysala style was initially formed in the early 12th century, as represented by the Channakeshava and Hoysalesvara temples, and reached its mature stage in the mid-13th century, as demonstrated by the Keshava Temple. This style was carried forward in the region after the fall of the Hoysala kingdom in the 14th century.

Research shows that the use of schist played a significant part in the formation of the Hoysala style. The locally abundant schist is a type of stone that is soft, malleable, and ductile at the time of quarrying, but becomes harder once exposed to the sun. This special quality made possible the profuse ornamentation and fine detail that characterises the Hoysala Style. The soft quality of the schist also dictated the size of the temples. They had to be relatively small, without room for an internal circumambulatory around the sanctums as was common in temples constructed of granite. To compensate for this limitation, platforms were constructed following the shape of the sanctums but with larger footprints to serve as exterior circumambulatory paths. At the same time, the

height of the temples was raised to allow enhanced veneration.

Consecrated in 1117 CE to commemorate a successful military campaign to capture the town of Talakadu, the Channakeshava Temple was continuously patronised by the royal family, generals, and wealthy merchants throughout the Hoysala dynasty until the end of the kingdom in the 14th century. Enclosure walls were constructed during this period. The Kappe Chennigaraya Temple, Vira Narayana Temple, temple tank, granary, and entranceways were built, and miniature shrines were added to the main temple and Kappe Chennigaraya Temple.

After the fall of the Hoysala dynasty, the temple was continuously used as the religious centre of the region and was patronised by the rulers of the subsequent dynasties. During this period up to the end of the 19th century, the Ranganayaki/Andal and Saumyanayaki temples, Swing Pavilion, and several other structures were added. The entrance tower was reconstructed several times, and the tower of the main temple was dismantled in the late 19th century to save the temple itself from collapsing. The temple complex took on its current configuration by the end of the 19th century.

Sponsored by Ketamalla Dandanayaka, a prominent merchant and general, in honour of the ruling king Vishnuvardhana and his principal queen Shantaladevi, the Hoysalesvara Temple was consecrated in 1121 CE. The southern pavilion was extended possibly in the 12th and 13th centuries in the form of a shrine dedicated to Surya, the Sun God. After the fall of the Hoysala dynasty, the rulers of the subsequent dynasties continuously patronised the upkeep of the temple.

Constructed by Somanatha Dandanayka after having received funds from the reigning King Narasimha III, the Keshava Temple was consecrated in 1268 CE. After the fall of the Hoysala dynasty, the temple was continuously patronised for its upkeep and religious functions. Buttresses were constructed in 1930 to support the outer walls of the complex. The area surrounding the complex was landscaped in the 1960s, which has been maintained and improved to the present.

State of conservation

A long conservation history for each temple complex is provided, with more than 150 entries of conservation activities undertaken in the modern era of conservation, which started in the 1890s. These activities can be categorised as structural stabilisation, waterproofing, cleaning and consolidating sculptures, improving drainage systems, repaving courtyards, landscaping, installing electricity and other modern facilities, documentation, and monitoring. Benefiting from these activities, the nominated property is in good condition.

The buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple complex contains historic remains, some of which are in fragile condition, and important views of the complex are obscured.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is good. ICOMOS considers, however, that the conditions of the historic remains and important views in the buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple component part should be improved.

Factors affecting the nominated property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated property are natural deterioration of the stone sculptures and damage by human activities and birds.

Natural deterioration of the sculptures has been a slow process in the past, as evidenced by the still well-preserved details. However, with increasing air pollution the decay process may accelerate. ICOMOS considers that systematic monitoring and research are needed to keep a close watch on this issue, followed by mitigation measures.

Channakeshava Temple is one of the primary tourist attractions and religious centres in the State of Karnataka. Daily visits average about 500 to 1,000 on a regular day and about 2,000 in the peak season. However, more than 100,000 visitors are present at the complex during the annual fourteen-day religious festival of Belur. In October 2022, ICOMOS requested additional information from the State Party on the safety and security of both the crowd and the sculptures. The State Party responded in November 2002 that administrative arrangements are made amongst the staff and the event organiser, aided by the police force. According to the State Party, these potential risks are well under control. The ritualistic application of anointing oil on pillars and sculptures is believed to have a negative impact on the stone and has been stopped by the site management body.

Birds' nests can be found under the eaves of several temples. Timely removal of these nests is essential to prevent the sculptures from being damaged by bird excreta and physical contact.

The temple complexes are located in an area where natural disasters such as earthquakes, cyclones, and flooding are unlikely to occur. However, disaster management plans at the district level are in place to address any unexpected disasters.

ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is good and that factors affecting the nominated property are minor and are under control. ICOMOS considers that improvements should be made to the conditions of the historical remains and important views in the buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple component part, and the impacts of the increasing air pollution on the sculptures should be closely monitored, followed by mitigation measures.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The extremely complex stellate plans with rhythmically indented walls of the Hoysala style temples, their horizontal sculptural bands, and multi-tier friezes featuring intricate and hyper-real detail across all levels of sculpture reflect an exuberant *horror vacui* (fear of emptiness) of exterior and interior surfaces while demonstrating the relentless pursuit of detail and technical mastery over materials of the artists.
- There is a creative genius in translating beliefs, stories, and abstract ideas into the medium of stone. The innovative use of the large sculptures of deities, combined with stories from the Hindu epics and puranas, unfold in sequence along the outer walls, allowing a religious experience of circumambulation that has been carried forward in later temples in the region and beyond.
- The unprecedented number of signatures of the artists, such as their names, initials, titles, epithets, and lineages, reflects the high standing of the artists in Hoysala society.

Based on the nomination dossier, the key attributes of the nominated property include the layouts and orientations of the primary and subsidiary structures in the three temple complexes; the Hoysala style plans and forms of the various structures; the exterior and interior decorations; the sculptures, stone carvings, and friezes; the surviving enclosure walls; and the inscriptions in the temples bearing the names of the artists.

ICOMOS considers that in the past, the temple styles in India have been classified into three broad categories namely the northern, southern and mixed ones. Recent researches show that many temple styles, including the Hoysala style, do not fit comfortably in this system. The Hoysala style was consciously created to distinguish itself from its contemporary counterparts in the region and beyond. It holds an important position in the historical development of temple architecture and thus deserves international recognition.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around the following three parameters identified by the State Party: architectural eclecticism; profusion, ornament, and embellishment to enhance sacredness; and artistic agency. It has examined properties inscribed on the World Heritage List both within and outside India, a property on the Tentative List of India, as well as other similar places in India not currently on either list.

Twenty-three Hoysala dynasty temples in India, including the three component parts of the nominated property, are briefly compared in terms of religious inclusiveness,

iconography, variations in plan typologies, artistic tastes, profusion, ornament, embellishment, integrity, and authenticity. The comparison concludes that, amongst the 140 surviving Hoysala temples, the three component parts of the nominated property are the most representative in terms of their completeness of architectural forms and artistic works.

Temples of the Kalyani Chalukyas (973-1189 CE, once the overlords of the Hoysala kingdom) and Solanki (Maru-Gurjara) temples (10th to 13th centuries, western Indian regions) are compared. The analysis concludes that the Kalyani Chalukyan architecture shows experimentation in terms of combining the northern and southern Indian temple styles, creating the stellate plan, and using platforms to raise the majesty of the temples. The Hoysala temples took these elements to a mature stage, featuring a developed form of stellate plan with a raised platform, a fully decorated surface, and a much more developed level of sculptural art. The Hoysala temples distinguish themselves from their Solanki counterparts by their much more realistic style of sculpture, more organic decorations, well-planned themes of the stone carvings that unfold the narratives of the epics and ancient texts placed continuously along the circumambulatory path, and the platforms that follow the contours of the sanctums.

A comparison is made with Evolution of Temple Architecture – Aihole-Badami-Pattadakal (India, Tentative List). Envisioned as an extension of Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (India, 1987, criteria (iii) and (iv)), it comprises several temple complexes in the Malaprabha River Valley dating from the 6th to 8th centuries. The State Party concludes that the nominated property demonstrates the unique Hoysala style in terms of architectural eclecticism, intricate carvings in the embellishment of the sculptures, narratives, and ornamentation of the architectural structures.

Comparisons are next made with four contemporary temple complexes in India already on the World Heritage List. The differences between each World Heritage property and the nominated property are analysed in great detail. The analysis concludes that the nominated property is distinctively different from these counterparts in terms of eclecticism, ornamentation, and surface treatment with sculptures.

The nominated property is compared to two contemporary World Heritage temple complexes outside India, Angkor (Cambodia, 1992, criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv)) and Prambanan Temple Compounds (Indonesia, 1991, criteria (i) and (iv)). A very detailed and positive comparison is made with each complex.

In October 2022, ICOMOS requested additional information on the rationale for selecting the component parts and on whether more temples should be included in the nominated property to better support the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. In its response, the State Party provided a comprehensive explanation of its

reasons for selecting the three component parts. The response included a detailed illustrated inventory of twenty-three prominent Hoysala temples, including the three temple complexes that comprise the nominated property.

While ICOMOS considers it would have been more effective and the conclusion would have been clearer if the Hoysala style *per se* was used for comparison, it considers the methodology of the comparative analysis to be sound, and the conclusions to be justified.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (i) and (ii).

Criterion (i): *represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the profuse embellishment, high relief, and joyous *horror vacui* (fear of emptiness) are an exceptional testimony to the combination of the matchless technical expertise in stone carving and creativity in translating religious beliefs and stories into sculptures of the artists. In addition, the unusually rich signatures of the sculptors reflect a large number of artisans of the time and their respected position in society.

ICOMOS considers that the creation of the Hoysala style temple architecture and the artistic achievement of the sculptural art of these temple complexes are exceptional testimonies to the outstanding creativity and inventive genius of the Hoysala people. ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified.

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property is a new form of temple complex that was a result of creative modifications to the plans and elements of temple architecture prevalent elsewhere, complemented with original innovations. This form emerged from considered and informed choices of elements and features that were used in very conscious ways, with a clear understanding of the overall outcome that was desired. Some elements of this new language of temple architecture were carried forward in other regions.

ICOMOS considers that the Hoysala style, as demonstrated by the nominated property, is the successful outcome of the interchange of human values that was motivated by the desire to establish an identity distinct from neighbouring kingdoms and was executed through a consciously navigated process. The Hoysala style exerted a strong influence on later temple

constructions in the region and beyond. ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion was not proposed by the State Party. ICOMOS nevertheless considers that the nominated property is an exceptional testimony to the Hoysala style temples, which illustrate a significant stage in the historical development of Hindu temple architecture. Furthermore, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property is an exceptional physical testimony to the diversity of religious architecture in India. ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (i), (ii) and (iv).

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The integrity of the nominated property is demonstrated at two levels: the whole series and the individual component parts.

At the level of the whole series, the selected component parts cover the most significant periods of Hoysala style temple construction, from its initial phase to its high point. The sculptural and structural variations of the component parts complement each other, and collectively they illustrate the richness of the sculptural art and the high degree of artistic agency that characterise the Hoysala style. ICOMOS considers the integrity of the whole series is justified.

At the individual component part level, some past alterations adversely affect the integrity of the nominated property, such as the demolition of the superstructures of the Channakeshava and Hoysalesvara temples and the loss of the Hoysalesvara Temple's enclosure walls. ICOMOS considers that while these past losses have limited adverse impact, the exclusion of the Vishnusamudra Tank and the *Kere Beedi* (Tank Road) associated with the Channakeshava Temple complex impairs its integrity because they are related to the architecture, the planning and the use of the temple complex.

ICOMOS requested the opinion of the State Party on this matter in October 2022. In its response in November 2022, the State Party agreed to enlarge the buffer zone of this component part to include the above-mentioned elements, and submitted a revised map showing the new boundary. In its Interim Report, ICOMOS reiterated this issue to the State Party by requesting the reasons for including the two elements in the buffer zone instead of the area of the property, and what the legal provisions are for their protection. In the additional information provided in

February 2023, the State Party responded that although they are of cultural and religious significance, they are not considered as attributes, and hence have been included in the buffer zone. The Vishnusamudra Tank is in the process of being declared a State Protected Monument for legal protection.

ICOMOS considers that the Vishnusamudra Tank and the *Kere Beedi* (Tank Road) are related to the architecture, the planning and the use of the temple complex and contribute to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. The condition of integrity of this temple will be met when they will be integrated to its nominated area.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the three component parts has been preserved over time, with their forms and designs, materials and substances, and locations remaining mostly unchanged. Some alterations have affected their authenticity to some extent. The tower of the main entrance of the Channakeshava Temple has been reconstructed several times. The setting of the Hoysalesvara Temple has been transformed into a modern landscape. The function of the Keshava Temple has changed from a living temple to a museum. Its enclosure walls were reconstructed at the same location in the original form using anastylosis. Past conservation interventions have also cast their marks on the original fabric and settings.

Although such changes have affected the authenticity of the individual component parts to a certain degree, ICOMOS considers that the attributes that define the Hoysala style, which is what makes the nominated property outstandingly significant, have remained authentic. ICOMOS considers, therefore, that the authenticity of the whole series as well as the authenticity of each of the component parts has been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the whole series have been met. The conditions of authenticity of the individual component parts have been met. The condition of integrity of Channakeshava Temple will be met when the Vishnusamudra Tank and the *Kere Beedi* (Tank Road) will be integrated in the nominated area.

Boundaries

No permanent inhabitants live in the nominated property. The number of permanent inhabitants in the buffer zones of the Channakeshava, Hoysalesvara, and Keshava temple complexes is approximately 2,500, 1,200, and 1,500, respectively.

The proposed boundaries of the nominated property are based on those of the nationally protected monuments. The boundaries can be considered appropriate in that they encompass the key attributes that support the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

The proposed boundaries of the buffer zones are based on the legal provisions of the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (Amendment and Validation 2010), which provides for a prohibited area (100 metres wide) and regulated area (200 metres beyond the prohibited area).

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated area of the Channakeshava Temple complex should be expanded to include the Vishnusamudra Tank and the *Kere Beedi* (Tank Road).

ICOMOS notes that in some cases the boundaries of the buffer zones cross over land plots, roads, and houses, which may cause legal complications and management issues. In addition, there is no explanation of the underlying rationale for the delineation the boundaries of the buffer zones. ICOMOS requested additional information from the State Party regarding these concerns in October 2022. In November 2022, the State Party advised that the boundaries of the buffer zones have been delineated according to the legal requirement, taking into consideration the visual quality and functional links. It also clarified that in cases where a plot is partially within a prohibited area and partially within a regulated area, the proponent is asked to remain outside the prohibited area's 100-metre limit for any construction. In its response in February 2023 to the ICOMOS Interim Report, the State Party further elaborated on the ways in which the potential legal complications caused by the demarcation of the boundaries are treated by citing a number of relevant legal provisions. ICOMOS considers that the demarcation of the buffer zone is large enough to include all the supporting and functionally linked elements with adequate legal provisions and management mechanisms.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies the consideration of this property for the World Heritage List. The nominated property meets criteria (i), (ii) and (iv). The authenticity of the whole series as well as the authenticity of each of the component parts has been demonstrated. The conditions of integrity of the whole series are justified, and the conditions of integrity of the Channakeshava Temple will be met when the Vishnusamudra Tank and the *Kere Beedi* (Tank Road) will be integrated in the nominated area.

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Documentation

Most documentation is held at the local branches of the Archaeological Survey of India. Over the past century, records of the conservation interventions carried out on the nominated property have been suitably archived, and have been used to inform the conservation and management of the nominated property. Baseline documentation such as detailed measured drawings has

been made to a high standard and has been used for monitoring, conservation, and site management.

Conservation measures

The conservation measures in place are a combination of daily maintenance and occasional conservation campaigns. The daily maintenance includes cleaning the temple complexes, fixing the infrastructure, and monitoring the conditions of the property. Due to the stable nature of the stone buildings, the daily maintenance activities are minimal. Conservation campaigns are undertaken only occasionally, and follow internationally accepted principles when addressing major problems.

Monitoring

A monitoring table provided in both the nomination dossier and Site Management Plan shows the monitoring indicators, periodicity of monitoring, and location of records. However, the indicators in this table are actually the categories to be monitored. In October 2022, ICOMOS requested additional information about the monitoring system from the State Party, which responded in November 2022 with a detailed table of monitoring indicators together with their periodicity and the responsible institutions.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators provided by the State Party in November 2022 are adequate and practical. However, for the monitoring to inform decisions, a set of actions responding to the monitoring indicators and a triggering mechanism linking the actions to the monitoring indicators should be developed. In its Interim Report, ICOMOS raised this issue. The State Party confirmed in its response in February 2023 that the links between the monitoring indicators and responsive actions are in place, and supplemented it with a detailed table indicating the attributes to be monitored, the monitoring indicators, the periodicity of monitoring, the responsible agency, the threshold, and associated actions. ICOMOS considers that the current monitoring system is adequate.

ICOMOS considers that the documentation is good, and the conservation measures in place are effective. ICOMOS considers that it would be advisable that the monitoring system is adapted for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

5 Protection and management

Legal protection

The nominated property is legally protected at the national, state, and local levels. At the national level, the monuments in all three component parts have been declared of national importance under the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (Amendment and Validation 2010). The proposed boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zones are based on the legal provisions of this Act. The buffer zone of each component part comprises two concentric rings surrounding the nominated property. The inner ring is a 100-metre wide prohibited area in which no construction

of any kind is permitted. The outer ring is a 200-metre wide regulated area in which construction activities are regulated by the competent authorities. In addition, the National Conservation Policy of 2014 lays out the principles governing interventions, the use of traditional craftsmanship and materials, and the acceptable practices to be used in the conservation processes. The Antiquities and Art Treasures Act of 1972 prevents smuggling and the illegal trade of the temple sculptures.

At the state and local levels, the Karnataka Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1961, provides legal protection of monuments and sites other than those of national importance. In addition, the Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, 1961, the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, Amendment Bill, 2014, the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act, 1997, the Karnataka Irrigation Act, 1965, and the Karnataka Tourism Policy 2020-2025 set requirements for managing the nominated property at the state and local levels.

Management system

The Archaeological Survey of India is the key institution responsible for managing the nominated property. The buffer zones are jointly managed by the National Monument Authority, the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, the Government of Karnataka with its relevant departments, local authorities and private owners.

The overall management of the nominated property is undertaken by the Apex Committee, which is chaired by the Chief Secretary of the State Government and supported by the Director General, and the Additional Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Regional Director and the Regional Commissioner, the heads of relevant State Government departments including the Department of Tourism, Department of Urban Development, Revenue Department, and the Department of Town and Country Planning, as well as the Commissioner of the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department. The Apex Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing management issues and policies, coordinating and implementing the Site Management Plan, reviewing conservation interventions, and securing relevant funds. The committee meets monthly. A nodal officer for the proposed World Heritage Site will be appointed to coordinate and implement the decisions of the Apex Committee.

At the individual component part level, the temple complexes are owned and managed by the Archaeological Survey of India. The religious activities at Channakeshava Temple are managed by the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department of the state government. The buffer zones are managed by two district-level committees under the Apex Committee: the Hassan District Committee for Channakeshava Temple and Hoysalesvara Temple; and the Mysuru District Committee for Keshava Temple. These district committees

are the local management bodies that guide the local authorities in managing the buffer zones.

The Site Management Plan, developed jointly by the primary authorities in consultation with stakeholders, is the guiding document of the management system. It sets out the vision and lays out six objectives in terms of monument conservation; guidelines and policies for development; continuity of artistic and cultural tradition; sustainable tourism management; cultural, environmental, mobility and social impact assessment; and education, outreach and awareness. Seven site-level strategies have been developed under these objectives. A detailed table of regulations under these strategies serves as the development guidelines for the buffer zones. An action plan of eleven actions to be implemented in the short, medium, and long term is provided. Heritage Impact Assessment and risk preparedness measures are embedded in the management plan.

The implementation of the Site Management Plan is periodically monitored and evaluated by the Apex Committee at the regional level and two local-level committees. The plan is updated as often as necessary to maintain its validity and is legally required to be revised every five years.

The Archaeological Survey of India has regular staff in the temple complexes for daily maintenance, monitoring, and management. There is technical expertise for maintenance of the physical elements.

The funds for conservation and monument-related works are largely from the governmental budget and are adequate, while religious activities are funded mainly by donations from devotees, as well as the annual budget of the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Department of the state government. Other revenues are from tickets, rents from footwear stands, bookshops, parking, and other services and donations.

The legal provisions for both the nominated property and the buffer zones, the management system, and the powers and responsibilities are understood by all the relevant parties.

Visitor management

Visitor management facilities for the nominated property are limited, but include public toilets, drinking water facilities, footwear stands, signage, information boards, parking lots, CCTV cameras, and security metal detectors. Street vendors scattered around the three component parts provide food and beverages to visitors. There are several accommodations and restaurants in the vicinity of the component parts, but these are insufficient. Most of the facilities and amenities are in good condition, though the parking lots, toilets, and restaurants need to be improved. Trained and licensed tour guides can provide visitors with basic information, but the number of guides is limited.

ICOMOS considers that the carrying capacity of the nominated component parts should be established as the baseline for visitor management, since tourism is encouraged in the Site Management Plan. In view of the potential World Heritage listing, there is often a surge in the number of visitors. In order for the nominated property to be ready for future tourism management, in its Interim Report ICOMOS requested the State Party to provide the timeline for establishing the carrying capacity. The State Party responded in February 2023 that, except during the annual religious festival at the Channakeshava Temple, the number of visitors visiting the property is well under control. The State Party further expressed that if it is so required, a carrying capacity study will be taken up in consultation with the Apex Committee.

The interpretation and presentation of the values of the nominated property, both as a whole and as individual component parts, can be improved. ICOMOS raised this issue in its Interim Report. The State Party replied in February 2023 that each component temple has an interpretation centre that provides information about the key aspects of the Hoysala temple art and architecture, the regional context, and a brief historical background for these temples. ICOMOS considers that a holistic interpretation and presentation plan should be developed and implemented, so that the values of the individual temples and series as a whole can be better communicated to the visitors.

Community involvement

The local communities are involved in the nominated property in four main ways: as members of the local level committees for management of the sites, as employees in the conservation works, as participants in business activities relating to tourism, and as volunteers at the Channakeshava Temple during religious festivals.

The Site Management Plan mentions a series of interactions and consultations with government authorities, local stakeholders, and community members when a vision statement was being developed, and notes that community and stakeholder participation at the grass root level is of utmost importance for sustainable tourism.

Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the current legal framework provides adequate protection for the attributes that convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The current management system is effective, and Heritage Impact Assessment and risk management mechanisms are in place. ICOMOS considers that the carrying capacity for the nominated property should be established, and that a holistic interpretation and presentation plan should be developed.

6 Conclusion

The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas is a serial nomination of the three most representative Hoysala style temple complexes in southern India dating from the 12th to 13th centuries. The Hoysala style is a creative combination of features selected from contemporary neighbouring kingdoms and earlier examples. It contributes significantly to the diversity of the temple styles of India and has exerted a lasting influence on temples of later periods, both in the region and beyond. The excellence of the sculptural art of the temple complexes, as well their architecture, siting, planning and use, underpin the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property.

The comparative analysis justifies the consideration of this property for the World Heritage List. The nominated property meets criteria (i), (ii) and (iv), and the condition of authenticity. The temple complexes are in good condition, and the factors affecting the nominated property are under control. The current legal framework and management system provide adequate protection, conservation, and management of the nominated property. Heritage Impact Assessment and risk management mechanisms are embedded in the management system.

Recommendations are made to modify the boundaries of the nominated property, establish its carrying capacity, develop and implement an interpretation and presentation plan, and address the condition of the historical remains and the important views in the buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple component part.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of the Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas, India, be **referred back** to the State Party to allow it to:

- Expand the property area of the Channakeshava Temple to include the Vishnusamudra Tank and the *Kere Beedi* (Tank Road);
- Improve the conditions of the historical remains and significant views in the buffer zone of the Channakeshava Temple component part;
- 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;
- Establish the carrying capacity for the nominated property to use it as the baseline for tourist management.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party 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;



Map showing the location of the nominated component parts